9 Identification in *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*

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Introduction

The devastating impact of Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* arises from our identification with its primary persona. We walk with the wanderer, privy to his thoughts, and imagine ourselves in his shoes, psychologically associating ourselves with the authorial creation. Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* also inspires identification, but our rapport with its central character gradually grows tenuous. We witness the journeyman's[1] enthusiasm, but become troubled by his choices and perceptions, wondering why common sense or rationality do not intervene. Both cycles set Wilhelm Müller's poetry, feature rejected unfortunates, and address mortality. Yet we regard and respond to their focal figures differently. *Die schöne Müllerin* solicits sympathy for its greenhorn, encouraging us to understand his feelings and regret his unhappiness. Nevertheless, as *Die schöne Müllerin* unfolds, we gradually retreat, distancing ourselves from the journeyman. In contrast, *Winterreise* elicits empathy for its outcast, inducing us to share his emotions and experience similar distress. Consequently, *Winterreise* evokes our own existential fears as we are drawn near to the wanderer.

Our identification with the protagonists of *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* depends on Müller's portrayals. But Schubert's music reifies Müller's characters and reveals their interiority. Studied side by side, the cycles mutually inform and illuminate.

To begin, narrative summaries of *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* will establish the cycles' dramatic foundations for identification and enable comparison.[2] Next, three factors that influence identification will be explored: form, texture, and contextual processes. Surveys of the cycles' song forms suggest that formal diversity and structural complexity, rather than simplicity, may enhance identification by demanding and gaining more involved interpretation. Similarly, textural change and complexity appear to promote identification through heightened engagement. Finally, characteristic contextual processes manipulate expectation and enhance

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dramatic climaxes in certain songs, intensifying identification. Given the richness of *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, comprehensive analysis is impossible. And superiority won't be decided. But the framework and observations provided here should prompt further inquiry into identification as well as new investigations of narrative, form, texture, and contextual processes within these monuments. Let's start with their stories.

The Narratives of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*

In *Die schöne Müllerin*, a miller's helper with wanderlust leaves his master and encounters a babbling brook that leads him to another mill. The journeyman finds work there, plus a maiden who infatuates him. Grateful but curious, he wonders if the maiden or the brook had drawn him. At the mill, his tiring labor dispirits him because it doesn't gain the maiden's attention. So he asks the brook if she loves him, since he's sure she should have seen his interest. No answer arises. One morning when the eager admirer greets the maiden at her window, she turns away. Undeterred, he plants forget-me-nots below her window as a gentle gesture. Perhaps it works, for one evening, the two sit beside the brook, observing the moon and the stars mirrored in its flow. But the simple swain, who watches her eyes move from the water to him within its reflections while she waits for a word, is too shy to speak and becomes spellbound by the brook's babbling. When rain falls, all blurs, she says goodbye, then ups and leaves. Daylight finds him not disheartened but ecstatic, wishing to silence the stream, millwheels, and birds to proclaim that the maiden is his. His heart bursting with joy, the young man can't sing, fearing self-revelation, so he ties a green ribbon around his lute and hangs it on a wall to avoid temptation. When the maiden admires the ribbon (green is her favorite color), the fellow sends it to her, hoping she ties it in her hair. Unfortunately, a passing hunter attracts the maiden, vexing the journeyman. Perceiving rejection, hating the color green, and fixated on hunting, he becomes preoccupied with death, wishing for a verdant grave. Morose, the unfortunate consoles himself with the thought that if he were buried with the maiden's flowers, her remorseful tears would raise new blooms over his grassy mound in spring. Conversing with the brook, the sad soul ventures that when a lovesick heart dies, everything mourns. But the brook differs, asserting such death provides release from sorrow and brings new life. Persuaded of the brook's good will, while wondering how it knows love, the fellow perceives its flow's

relief. So, he bids it to continue. Ultimately, only the brook remains, having welcomed the journeyman to watery rest with a lullaby.

In *Winterreise*, an ardent suitor, mortified by his beloved's marriage to a rich man, slips away from the scene of his rejection, leaving "good night" traced in snow on her gate. With the wind-whipped weathervane mockingly creaking atop her house, he realizes it'd earlier signaled her fickleness and her family's indifference. Frozen tears fall from the outcast's cheeks, surprising him, for he's unaware of his weeping and his waning sensitivity. Curiously, he imagines, the freezing weather has dulled his pain yet preserved the woman's image within his now-numb heart as a souvenir. Should his heart thaw, he muses, her image would drain away. Passing a familiar linden tree, which seems to bid him to stay and rest, the fugitive closes his eyes and resists consolation, shunning the tree's warm memories and sheltering comfort for a cold road. Yet its rustle continues calling after he leaves. While the glacial chill freezes his burning tears as they fall into the snow, he is sure that their fervent glow will return when they melt and run into the brook by his beloved's house. Like the nearby river, now ice-encrusted, the exile suspects that his now hardened heart also might hide a torrent, and wonders if it, too, sees its reflection in the river's frozen flow. Anxious to leave town and escape its memories, yet sorely tempted to glance backward toward his ex-sweetheart's house, he doesn't succumb. Instead, the fugitive follows a flickering "will-o'-the-wisp" into rocky chasms below the town, wending his way in the dark along a dry stream bed into wilderness. Later, an abandoned hut provides refuge though no respite, for his body aches and his heart stings. Nevertheless, he sleeps, dreaming of spring and his beloved, only to wake up cold and alone, ever more wretched in the morning stillness. A distant posthorn makes his heart pound, reminding of the town and prompting him to seek news, but he doesn't respond. Three omens – including frost that greyed the young man's black hair, a crow that trailed him as if he were prey, and a leaf that clung to a tree branch and fluttered like his hope – all forewarn but don't daunt him. Barking dogs in a nearby village, the poor fellow figures, might disturb its residents' dreams, but he has no more dreams nor any need for further delay. So he ventures into the now-stormy morning, led on by another illusory light. Following disused paths and ignoring city signposts, the outcast relentlessly pursues solitude, reaching a graveyard where he might rest for a while, yet the cemetery holds none for him. Without sleep, and without any particular goal, he pushes forward against wind and storm, driven by faithless and fatalistic courage. Phantom suns at the morning horizon transfix him, prompting the figment that since his beloved's bright eyes are gone from his life, his last source of light might as well follow. Outside another village, the wanderer sees a barefoot and

benumbed hurdy-gurdy player grinding alone, ignored except by snarling dogs. Perceiving their similar situations and parallel prospects, the wanderer asks: "Shall I go with you? Will you play your organ to my songs?"

The Journeyman, the Wanderer, and Us

Today, some aspects of these stories seem senseless. Who abandons family, friends, community, connections, and job for utter uncertainty? Who chats with a brook or naps in a boneyard? Even assuming dysfunction, certain parts of these narratives remain foreign, incomprehensible, or indeterminate. Each protagonist transforms from *naïf* to reject to wretch, a progression few of us know. Which conclusion is more tragic – a suicide or a shattering – is debatable. So is whether either story offers catharsis. Yet somehow these tales prompt us to suspend disbelief and identify with their characters, albeit in different ways and to varying degrees.

In *Die schöne Müllerin*, portrayal of a detailed past, unexpected immaturity, extreme behavior, and a supernatural context suppresses identification in favor of observation. *Winterreise* also presents extreme behavior, but its narrative's absorbing events and compelling interiority prompt self-projection. With fewer historical specifics and no supernatural presence, *Winterreise*'s evocative context elicits imaginative compensation that augments engagement. *Die schöne Müllerin* features a more traditional plot, variations on common characters, familiar situational elements, foreshadowing, decisive action, plus an epilogue, all of which would induce and reinforce an observational mindset. But it would seem that the focus on thoughts, feelings, and reactions in *Winterreise* hits home hard by eliciting deep-seated resonances within unguarded and receptive listeners. In any event, certain traits and choices of the central characters induce identification within us. The more we share with a character, the more we identify with and self-project upon him or her. The more that is alien to our nature and experience, the more we disassociate.

All of us can recall being anxious and curious about the future like the journeyman of *Die schöne Müllerin*. We also can remember being excited by our attraction to another while being uncertain about reciprocation and impatient to be noticed. So it's easy to accept the fellow's initial anthropomorphizing of the brook as idle reverie. And it's easy to recall feeling ignored or rebuffed by a heartthrob, hoping that a small kindness might help, as well as being too shy to respond at an opportune moment. Our resonance corresponds to identification. However, the young man's misinterpretation of the maiden's abrupt departure during their rendezvous represents an unsettling and alienating development. And while we may

understand the journeyman's jealousy of the hunter and perceive his depression about the maiden's new fascination, his death wish and delusion regarding the young woman's remorse are too much to bear. His final conversation with the brook elicits rue, as does his irrevocable choice, though both distance us. Serious questions arise. Was that last exchange between the journeyman and the brook imaginary . . . or was it real? Even more disconcerting is the sneaking suspicion that an apparently benign yet possibly malevolent being may have been present all along. Was the brook stalking him from the start? As engaged auditors of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*, we gradually distance ourselves in self-defense, pitying the fellow more than identifying with him. When the brook provides the song cycle's epilogue in "Des Baches Wiegenlied," with the journeyman nowhere near, we are left with a character we neither know nor trust – the brook – and feel pulled back into the scene while the longest song of the cycle unfolds. Although the narrative's primary persona is no longer there, our identification with him continues, causing us to feel uneasy in the brook's presence.

While few of us have suffered the humiliation endured by the wanderer in *Winterreise*, many have felt the need to escape after rejection or betrayal, recognizing signals of imminent rupture only in retrospect. In such situations, one is overwhelmed by emotions of differing intensities – unaware of some because others obscured, unsure what each was, uncertain how to respond, unclear what to do next – and one spurns solace to sublimate pain by whatever works. Of course, seeking seclusion in a nocturnal forest isn't something most would do, nor is staying overnight in a derelict dwelling. However, we can accept these conceits for the sake of the story, the flow of the music, and our own curiosity. Surely sleep's relief is a familiar experience, as is the shock of reality's return at dawn. So is the inability to anticipate welling memories, along with the need for sidestepping situations that summon them. What *Winterreise* does so well in its second half is portray the wanderer's gradual, inexorable descent into a much darker place, one that all of us have glimpsed or can imagine: a depressive and disoriented state in which perceptions and judgement should become suspect, but do not, wherein one steels oneself to press ahead, yet without a clear goal, and through which wellbeing is not a priority, though it should be. While the wanderer doesn't determinedly pursue oblivion, one senses that if Death, Fate, Nature, or some other claimant came for him, he wouldn't resist. The "will-o'-the-wisps," ominous indications, and phantom suns – all readily-explainable sights – seem more immediate and serious than they really are. But to the despondent outcast who's not slept for twenty-four-plus hours, they're plausible parts of his mental landscape. Happening upon an apparently similar soul at the end of

Winterreise, he senses kinship and directly addresses another human for the first time. But serious questions arise here too. Is the hurdy-gurdy player real? What happens next? Unlike with *Die schöne Müllerin*, we do not feel drawn back into the final scene of *Winterreise* because we never really left. Instead, our identification becomes ever more intense, for we, from our vantage point, cannot fully fathom what's going on in the winter wanderer's mind or grasp what his future holds, only guess.

It's not imperative that Müller and Schubert answer any open questions regarding *Winterreise* or *Die schöne Müllerin*. Posing them was the point. By providing a shared aesthetic experience to audiences, the artists increase affiliation, initiate conversation, and perhaps inspire kindness. Clear conclusions constrain cordial conversation! So, how does Schubert enhance our identification with Müller's characters? Form, texture, and contextual processes assist.

Song Forms and Identification in Schubert's Song Cycles

Formal diversity and structural complexity influence identification in Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. How they do so may surprise. Let's examine the song forms.

Within Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*, eight Lieder exhibit simple strophic form, a design primarily founded on the principle of repetition. Each features a repeat-sign-bound span supportive of two to five sections, symbolizable as **||:A(+A′,[etc.]):||**.[3] These include "Das Wandern," "Ungeduld," "Morgengruss," "Des Müllers Blumen," "Mit dem grünen Lautenbande," "Der Jäger," "Die liebe Farbe," and "Des Baches Wiegenlied." Additionally, "Tränenregen" is semi-strophic. It begins with three sections involving repeated music but concludes with an abbreviated variation of that material that serves as a coda, representable as **||:A(+A′,A″):||A‴**.

Four Lieder in *Die schöne Müllerin* employ the principles of contrast, return, and variation to produce ternary forms representable as **ABA′**. These include "Am Feierabend," "Mein!," "Pause," and "Der Müller und der Bach." "Der Neugierige," portrayable as **ABB′**, just stresses the principles of contrast and variation, while "Trockne Blumen," expressible as **AB**, only features contrast. Finally, five may be considered through-composed, including "Wohin?," "Halt!," "Danksagung an den Bach," "Eifersucht und Stolz," and "Die böse Farbe." While these through-composed Lieder certainly draw upon the principles of contrast, return, and variation, plus that of development, all impress more as unique designs rather than instances of a common pattern.

Schubert's *Winterreise* includes only one simple strophic song, "Wasserflut," representable as **||:A(+A′):||**. Another, "Gute Nacht," features modified strophic form expressible as **||:A(+A′):||A″A‴**. Its opening sections present the same accompanimental music, the third incorporates significant variation, while the last bears even more substantial developmental changes. "Der Lindenbaum" lacks repeat signs and stresses variation, presenting a structure symbolizable as **AA′A″** that mixes strophic, ternary, and variational characteristics. Its second section presents a change of mode as well as reinterpreted material with a substantial extension, while the third features further reinterpretation, a brief extension, plus a postlude.

Even more diverse designs that draw upon the principles of contrast, return, variation, and development appear within *Winterreise*, including these thirteen:

ABA′B′	"Die Post"
ABA′B′coda	"Erstarrung"
ABA′	"Rückblick," "Der greise Kopf," "Die Krähe," "Im Dorfe," "Täuschung," "Die Nebensonnen"
AA′	"Rast"
ABCA′B′C′	"Frühlingstraum"
AA′B	"Der Wegweiser," "Mut!," "Der Leiermann"

The remaining eight, including "Die Wetterfahne," "Gefror'ne Tränen," "Auf dem Flusse," "Irrlicht," "Einsamkeit," "Letzte Hoffnung," "Der stürmische Morgen," and "Das Wirtshaus," present even more unique designs and may be best understood as through-composed.

The preceding summary highlights two factors involving formal diversity and structural complexity in Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. One pertains to strophic form, the other to structural design distribution.

Strophic form, characteristic of folk-songs and ballads, bears a bardic impression and elicits a corresponding listening posture. We settle in for an intriguing tale or moralistic story with repeated music and predictable breaks in the action that permit brief relaxation. One might assume that predictable, familiar music, plus time for reflection, would assure automatic and deep immersion in the narrative, but that's not always nor necessarily true. Strophic form's archaic aura distances us, diminishing identification by regular reminding that its recitation relates to a character from the past. Strophic form is interruptive – our concentration recedes, then ramps – and this cannot help but affect our focus, and in turn, the intensity of our identification with the protagonist. And of course, some

stories in strophic forms chafe at their repeated musical vehicles, with later verses not fitting as well as earlier.

Sectional and through-composed songs are less predictable in nature, and their unfolding structures often are more extended in length, more internally complex, and more responsive to their texts. One might assume because they require more continuous attention and sustained interpretation, even over divisions and pauses, that we become overwhelmed. However, their increased interpretive demands actually appear to intensify identification by immersing us in detail, encouraging recognition and association, both consciously and subliminally. Of course, Schubert's engaging musical style contributes too!

Eight of the twenty Lieder in *Die schöne Müllerin* express simple strophic form, while just one of twenty-four in *Winterreise* does. With limited emphasis on that familiar form – which distracts by drawing attention to itself – and a great diversity of forms whose structural complexity requires a consistently high level of focus and interpretation, *Winterreise* seems to promote a correspondingly high level of identification with its primary persona. Engrossing us, *Winterreise* prompts perception of personal connection with its central character.

To sense how this is so, we may begin by comparing and contrasting increasingly complex Lieder from the two cycles, starting with two songs from *Die schöne Müllerin*. "Ungeduld" – a strophic song representable as **||:A(+A′,A″,A‴):||** – and "Tränenregen"– a semi-strophic song representable as **||:A(+A′,A″):||A‴**. Both begin in A major and present outdoor vignettes sketched by the journeyman miller. In "Ungeduld," the young man's exuberant expression of love is infectious and unyielding, a portrait of bottled impatience. In "Tränenregen," which recounts the rendezvous by the brook, his ardor remains, though more subdued as it is sustained through the first three spans. However, "Tränenregen" takes a surprising turn within its final section, where initially familiar material briefly tonicizes C major (m. 28), quickly returns to A major (m. 32), and closes in A minor (m. 36) to underscore the young man's shattered reverie and his beloved's abrupt departure. Its narrative and musical shifts demand more, and we contribute more while perceiving more.

"Gute Nacht," the first Lied of *Winterreise*, offers an even greater interpretive challenge. Embodying modified strophic form – **||:A(+A′):||A″A‴** – its first three sections all feature tonal flow from D minor, to F major, to B♭ major before D minor returns, underscoring the fluidly shifting moods of the ex-suitor in front of his beloved's house. The third presents changes in the main melody, plus an extension with a more prominent piano part, to portray rising regret as the protagonist prepares to leave. The final section brings a surprising switch to D major to convey rueful acceptance, though

the postlude's minor close bears (and bares!) genuine grief. For engaged listeners, the changes require more, we invest more, and we gain more.

"Der Lindenbaum," from *Winterreise*, presents a design – **AA′A″** – that might be considered either modified strophic or three-part form. Its piano part becomes increasingly energetic and expansive to portray enveloping elements and emotions as the wanderer weighs the tree's offer of rest. The song's contrasting central variant, which starts in minor, moves to major, and concludes with an extension (mm. 45–58), communicates the wanderer's determination to reject the linden tree's comfort and move on, even as cold winds blow off his hat. The final section of "Der Lindenbaum," all in major, captures the diminishing pull of memory dominated by the ex-suitor's desire to get away. The composition's individuality and suggestiveness impel us to seek meaning, infer, recognize, connect, and understand. In turn, we cannot help but resonate with the emotions expressed by the wanderer character.

While the formal diversity and structural complexity of Schubert's song cycles may only be generally compared, it would seem that *Winterreise*'s interpretive demands require considerable conscious concentration from engaged listeners and are apt to elicit substantial background processing of its narrative that may encourage identification with its protagonist. Texture appears to bear similar implications.

Texture and Identification in Schubert's Song Cycles

The textures of *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, like much Western art music, may be characterized using visual terms. More specifically, textural elements within a given span of music may be interpreted as belonging to its foreground, middleground, or background.[4] A Lied's vocal melody, when present, predominates in the foreground. We focus on it like a painting's subject. A bass line in the piano's accompaniment, when conceived as a counterpoint to the vocal melody, belongs to the song's middleground. It complements the more prominent part, enriching the structure while informing interpretation. If the bass is less distinguished, it may recede into the Lied's background. Yet a bass line or an upper accompaniment strand may project into the foreground when the voice is absent or when the bass doubles the voice, or strive for attention within the middleground when interacting with the vocal melody. Harmonic accompaniment elements belong to the background. As this general overview suggests, the components of a song's aural field may change roles rapidly in real time – they're not always static. Texture enhances identification with the primary personae in various ways within *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, usually in conjunction with other elements, and sometimes achieves

Example 9.1 *Die schöne Müllerin*, "Das Wandern," mm. 1–12[5]

remarkable effects through brief and/or inconspicuous details in the middle-ground or even in the background. Let's see how.

For instance, at the start of *Die schöne Müllerin*, the journeyman's infectious energy may be perceived within the opening vocal phrases in mm. 4–7 and 8–11 of the first Lied, "Das Wandern," which seem a bit rushed at three measures plus a pickup. Example 9.1 offers illustration.

Answered by the piano's brief melodic responses (d′-f′-d′) that emerge from the rolling background in the right-hand part of mm. 7–8 and 11–12, these foreground/middleground textural alternations communicate youthful enthusiasm anyone can sense. The third phrase brings textural contrast through a seemingly more expansive and invigorating voice/bass duet that's sequential in nature, while the last phrase highlights the voice's repetitive and diminishing melody with undulating harmony in the background. Repeated four more times via the song's strophic structure, the music of this song, with its jaunty physicality, visual suggestion, and textural variety, snags us for the rest of the cycle. Yes, there's more than just texture involved here, but the shifts within "Das Wandern" contribute to its engaging and exhilarating impression.

Surely the shifting textures of "Der Neugierige" intimate the journeyman's interiority in ways that inspire identification. Example 9.2 offers its first twelve measures.

Example 9.2 *Die schöne Müllerin*, "Der Neugierige," mm. 1–12[6]

Gradually moving three times in its opening section (mm. 1–22) from a relatively thin, high, and delicate texture to a thicker, lower, and more resonant one, the Lied initially communicates his fluctuating curiosity by textural expansions in the middleground and background. The texture expands, flourishes, and then recedes. With the emergence of triple meter and undulating arpeggios of the second section, ushered in by the void of m. 22 which conveys a shift of focus that heightens tension, we can virtually see and share in the character's contemplation as he queries the brook about his beloved's feelings. And the recitative-like texture of mm. 33–40 seems to come out of nowhere, portraying a dramatic flight of imagination as he asks for a "yes" or "no" whether the miller's daughter loves him, turning the request over and over in his mind as he wonders. Varying and evolving texture tells what's going on inside the young man, which, in turn, encourages our identification with him.

Other textural features within *Die schöne Müllerin* portray interiority. For instance, the delicate, charming, and unexpected echo in the middleground of mm. 16–21 of "Morgengruss" would seem to suggest an ethereal image passing through the journeyman's mind, at least on first hearing. The accompaniment of "Pause" evokes the lute, much of it unfolding so independently of the voice, mostly within the middleground, that the latter gains a distant, lost-in-thought quality indicative of the character's reverie. Yet on three occasions (see mm. 33–35, 53–55, and 63–69), the piano part

of "Pause" defers to the voice by retreating into the background, supporting brief recitative-like spans that suggest clear-minded thought. And while the accompaniment of "Mit dem grünen Lautenbande" also evokes the lute, its closer relationship with the foregrounded vocal line gives the Lied a more retrospective, even archaic quality, as if the young man had imagined himself somewhere in ages past. In contrast, the continuously-reiterated f♯′ of "Die liebe Farbe," a persistent, even obsessive textural detail in the background, contributes to that song's striking immediacy and savage irony. The series of changing and contrasting two-measure textural units within the first third of "Die böse Farbe" surely suggests internal anxiety – through texture we sense restlessness and anger. Finally, the inner-voice motion through most of "Des Baches Wiegenlied" surely portrays the murmuring and gentle flow associable with a lullaby, and because of its melodic independence, seems to reside in the middleground. Yet the compound perfect fifths and perfect octaves, expressed via half notes in mm. 1–15 and 20–25 within the background, are no less important to the closing Lied's effect. Indeed, they produce an ambient spatiality unlike any heard earlier in the cycle, perhaps providing a hint of the journeyman's repose. We sense some of what the fellow would seem to perceive through texture within the middlegrounds and backgrounds of *Die schöne Müllerin*. *Winterreise* exploits texture similarly.

However, the middlegrounds conveyed by the piano within Schubert's second song cycle may seem even more teeming and individuated than those of *Die schöne Müllerin*. Their contents may change frequently and unpredictably, interacting with their foregrounds while maintaining considerable independence. Indeed, at times the middlegrounds of *Winterreise* even seem to provide competition with and distraction from the voice. Curiously, this seems to increase our focus on the Lied's texted content and its nuances in the foreground. Engaged by the compelling narrative, the rich content, and Schubert's intriguing style, we lean in. Remarkably, this seems to enhance our engagement and intensify our identification with the wanderer. Let's examine evidence with illustrations.

Consider Example 9.3, a selective excerpt drawn from "Gute Nacht," the first Lied of *Winterreise*, that presents essential foreground and middleground elements from an early span.

As this suggests, separate accompanimental strands, each with its own melodic integrity, compete with the voice for our attention. The contrapuntal web they create with the foregrounded vocal melody places demands on the listener similar to that of fugue. Here, the aural portrait would seem to reflect the soon-to-be wanderer's internal debate and

Example 9.3 *Winterreise*, "Gute Nacht," mm. 15–26 (selective excerpt)[7]

anxiety as he prepares to leave. Our aural filtering here provides an analogous experience.

In Example 9.4, a full-content excerpt drawn from "Irrlicht," the ninth Lied of *Winterreise*, the piano's music certainly defers to the voice, yet is so individuated, as well as interactive with its more prominent partner, that their sum seems to represent concurrent dialogue.

Here, the registrally shifting, distinctively articulated, texturally fluctuating, and orchestrally conceived piano part – much of which sounds higher than the tenor voice – attracts so much attention to itself in the middleground, that we must apply considerable concentration just to follow the quickly unfolding and densely expressive text. In this passage, which presents the second stanza of Müller's poem, we're able to share the wanderer's perception of the darting will-o'-the-wisp as well as his recognition of its correspondence to the randomness of Fate. Our aural experience offers a hint of the journeyman's visual experience.

In "Letzte Hoffnung," the first vocal phrases almost seem to unfold in a separate channel, enveloped by metrically ambiguous activity in the middleground. Example 9.5 illustrates this.

A listener's ear is attracted from register to register in this span as the voice's largely conjunct line holds sway. Capturing the wanderer's visual observations and internal musings about the fate of leaves whipped by the wind and about to fall from their trees, which strike

Example 9.4 *Winterreise*, "Irrlicht," mm. 17–28[8]

Example 9.5 *Winterreise*, "Letzte Hoffnung," mm. 4–15[9]

him as parallel to his own, this music demonstrates Schubert's pro-
found understanding of human psychology as well as any other in
Winterreise.

Contrary to what one might imagine, increased textural complexity in Schubert's Lieder seems to engage and intrigue more than it deters or fatigues, and this may have something to do with the composer's personal style, which seems endlessly innovative and intrinsically evocative. However, his music also elicits expectations whose fulfillment is less immediate and more cumulative. Let's look closer.

Contextual Processes and Identification in Schubert's Song Cycles

Contextual processes – structural sequences that generate anticipation in advance of a climactic fulfilling event – appear more commonly in Schubert's music than one might imagine.[10] Within *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, contextual processes enhance identification in intriguing and idiosyncratic ways as they contribute to perceptions of momentum and unity.[11] Let's observe several.

For instance, certain contextual processes feature a gradually ascending vocal ceiling.[12] In "Wohin?," the second Lied of *Die schöne Müllerin*, the initially highest vocal pitch, notated as d″ in m. 3, soon is exceeded by the notated e″ in m. 13, which later is surpassed by the notated f♯″ in m. 33.[13] But the then-expected g″ that would complete this rising perfect fourth and resolve the leading tone in the voice of m. 33 waits until m. 71, just ten from the end. During this span, sensitive listeners experience their own subliminal expectation that parallels the uncertainty being conveyed by the character of the journeyman, portrayed by the singer, who describes being led along by a babbling brook, unsure where he is going, only to realize near the Lied's conclusion that the water may be guiding him to another mill. Complemented by other musical factors, of course, this rising registral ceiling adds to the Lied's dramatic momentum while encouraging listeners to identify with the character's anticipation.[14]

In the next Lied, "Halt!," an ascent from a notated e″ in m. 12 to an f″ in m. 16 would seem to have stalled by m. 35 with a repetition of that f″. However, the pitch g″, reached in m. 40 and reiterated in m. 44, enables a coincidence of the vocal line's apex with the word "Himmel" (sky). There within the text's narrative, a shining sun seems to confirm that the millhouse where the still-searching young man has stopped is where he was meant to be. As listeners, we experience an arrival effect contributed in part by this rising vocal ceiling.

And in the seventh Lied of *Die schöne Müllerin*, "Ungeduld," an even more anxious and agitated stepwise rise in the vocal ceiling from a notated

c♯″ (m. 9) to d″ (m. 11) to e″ (m. 13) to f♯″ (m. 14) to g♮″ (m. 15) and – after a bit of a delay – finally to a″ (mm. 21, 23), conveys the fellow's waves of impatience that unfold over the four verses. In these songs from *Die schöne Müllerin*, rising vocal ceilings elicit subtle effects of anticipation and arrival, portraying the persona's interiority via expectations whose fulfillment we may share.

Contextual processes founded on rising vocal ceilings communicate interiority within *Winterreise* too. For instance, in "Letzte Hoffnung," a gradual ascent involving the notated pitches c♭″, c″, d″, (e♭″'s skipped!), f″, g♭″, and g″ communicates the height of anguish as the wanderer speaks (via the singer!) of weeping on the grave of his hopes as he waits to see if a leaf will fall. And in "Der Wegweiser," a determined rise over a longer span involving the sequence g′-a′-b♭′-c″-d″-e″-g♭″(=f♯″)-g″ reaches its height in m. 52 as the character speaks of wandering on relentlessly and restlessly, seeking yet not finding rest. There the final pitch sounds over a climactic cadential six-four, never to be stabilized through harmonization by the tonic triad within the space of the song. We, as listeners, can identify with the wanderer's anxiety through our own unfulfilled expectations, since the resolution of the song's expansive ascent only may be imagined over a later instance of the tonic triad.

Certain other rising vocal ceilings, including those in "Die Wetterfahne" and "Gefror'ne Tränen," fade without ever reaching climactic arrivals at anticipated tonic triad tones in the voice. Similarly, all four sections of "Die Post" seem to suggest that the voice eventually will achieve the notated pitch g″ – the third of the E♭ major tonic triad – yet the goal remains tantalizingly out of reach. Frustrating expectations to communicate impressions of inadequacy, these ascents underscore the cycle's narrative as they reflect the wanderer's dejection. It would seem that, following *Die schöne Müllerin*, Schubert continued to explore the expectation-engendering potential of rising registral ceilings in *Winterreise*, creating ever more subtle instances that communicate frustration felt by the wanderer by not providing anticipated arrivals within the music. Along with the matters of form and texture, it seems clear that much remains to be discovered regarding Schubert's rising registral ceilings, as well as his incorporation of contextual processes more generally.

A master of manipulating his listener's responses, Franz Schubert employs subtle musical means in his song cycles to enable us to sense emotions and reactions similar to those portrayed by his characters. If we're engaged, we identify with them even more through what we perceive as shared experience. In turn, our immersion within his narratives is all the more vivid.[15]

Afterthoughts

Perhaps the most admirable achievements of *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* are their persuasive prompts to sympathize and empathize with their central characters. Each encourages us to descend deeper into our own imaginations and reflect upon our own responses to their stories. In turn, these masterpieces may be interpreted as entreaties to become more sympathetic and empathetic human beings. Within today's turbulent world and dimming future, such sensitivity seems in short supply. Indeed, the pleas for compassion within *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* may be among the greatest legacies of Franz Schubert's Romanticism.

Notes

1. After apprenticing to a master miller for seven years, one became a *journeyman* – a laborer employed by another master. The protagonist of *Die schöne Müllerin* initially could have been an apprentice, though more likely a journeyman, since he was able to take leave of his master.
2. For more on narrative, see: Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Matthew Garrett (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
3. In the system of form representation here, subsequent verses featuring new text conveyed by repeated accompaniment are symbolized using parentheses enclosed by repeat signs, and bolded letters with primes indicate textual variation. Unenclosed bolded letters with one or more primes communicate more substantial variation. Repeated letters identify corresponding content, while different letters identify contrasting content. Subordinate spans within individual Lieder, like introductions, links, transitions, and codettas, are not represented by these patterns so as to enable the highlighting of broad similarities.
4. Heinrich Schenker used the terms *foreground*, *middleground*, and *background* in reference to tonal voice-leading structure, but here these terms characterize more immediate perceptions. My own approach derives from the discussion in Samuel Adler, *The Study of Orchestration*, 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 2016), 126–32.
5. Franz Schubert: *Die schöne Müllerin* op. 25 (High Voice), ed. Walther Dürr, BA 9117 (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle GmbH & Co. KG, 2010), 1. Cordial thanks are extended to Katharina Malecki of Bärenreiter for her kind help with these musical examples.
6. Ibid., 15.
7. Franz Schubert: *Winterreise* op. 89 (High Voice), ed. Walther Dürr, BA 9118 (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle GmbH & Co. KG, 2009), 2. This excerpt is termed "selective" because some inner elements of the accompaniment are omitted to highlight the contrapuntal strands.
8. Ibid., 30–31.
9. Ibid, 48.
10. Edward T. Cone's essay, "Schubert's Promissory Note: An Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics," *19th-Century Music* 5/3 (1982): 233–41, offered the first description of a contextual process within the music of Franz Schubert, though it did not use that term to describe the composer's systematic delay of a prominent and persistent chromatic pitch's resolution in his *Moment musical* in A♭ major (D780). Richard Kurth described a contextual process involving meter in his "On the Subject of Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony: Was bedeutet die Bewegung?," *19th-Century Music* 23/1 (1999): 3–32.
11. I have discussed a variety of contextual processes in Schubert's music; see: " Tonal Implication and the Gestural Dialectic in Schubert's A Minor Quartet," in Brian Newbould (ed.), *Schubert the Progressive: History, Performance Practice, Analysis* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 53–79; " The 'Problem' of Schubert's String Quintet," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 2/1 (2005), 57–92;

"Schubert's Self-Elegies," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 5/2 (2008), 71–105; "Conversations Within and Between Two Early Lieder of Schubert," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 13/1 (2016), 83–102; "The Dramatic Strategy in Two of Schubert's Serenades," in *DMFS*, 133–50.

12. I have observed similar instances of rising registral ceilings in Schubert's choral music; see my chapter, "Contextual Processes in Schubert's Late Sacred Music," in *RS*, 295–332, especially 297–99.

13. References to the voice's pitches are qualified here by the term "notated" pitches (e.g., "notated as d‴") since a tenor's voice actually sounds an octave lower than written. Of course, *Die schöne Müllerin* has been performed by sopranos at the notated pitch.

14. The high g″ in m. 71 of "Wohin?" isn't supported by the tonic harmony, sounds only briefly, and appears off the beat, so its arrival remains somewhat tentative.

15. *Winterreise* also holds other kinds of contextual processes. Readers may wish to examine Arnold Feil's analysis of Schubert's "Im Dorfe," which illuminates an intriguing contextual process involving metric conflict whose resolution seems imminent in mm. 37–40, yet requires a second attempt in mm. 42–46. See *FSSMW*, 29–38.