4 Wilhelm Müller's Odyssey

KRISTINA MUXFELDT

Born to a master tailor and his wife in the provincial town of Dessau, Johann Ludwig Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827) was the sole one of their seven children to survive infancy. The family occasionally received small financial assistance from Leopold Franz III, the Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, elevated in 1807 to its Duke. The Anglophile peace-loving regent created one of the most progressive and prosperous of the smaller German states. He cultivated educational and social reforms, supported architectural and landscape design and scientific inquiry, and encouraged religious tolerance in a state that was home to congregants of several Christian denominations and a growing Jewish community. The first German-language Jewish newspaper was founded in Dessau in 1806.[1] Müller attended the local Gymnasium, excelling in the study of languages. Following a period of university studies, military service, and scholarly *Wanderjahre*, he eventually settled down as a teacher in the city of his birth.

In the spring of 1812, Müller left his hometown to matriculate at the University of Berlin, a two-year-old Prussian institution founded by the philosopher and linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835). Among the inaugural faculty were renowned – and controversial – thinkers such as theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), historian Karl Savigny (1779–1861), and philologists August Böckh (1785–1867) and Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824). Müller applied himself in ancient philology, history, and modern English literature until the "Wars of Liberation" interrupted his studies.[2] When Prussia's king in February 1813 called for volunteers to confront Napoleon's forces on their retreat from Russia, nearly half the university's six hundred students joined up to free their homeland from French occupation.[3] Müller fought, apparently unharmed, in the battles of Lützen, Bautzen, Haynau, and Kulm, was stationed as a lieutenant in Prague during Leipzig's bloody "Battle of the Nations" (the decisive battle that forced Napoleon's army to retreat to France), and ended his military service in a garrison in Brussels. His enthusiasm waned as the months wore on, especially after the death in battle in May 1813 of his close friend

Ludwig Bornemann. He left his regiment on November 18, 1814 – apparently a deserter.

The messy details surrounding Müller's departure from military service and his return to his studies in Berlin remain obscure. Later personal papers and literary writings speak of almost unbearable anguish and a forbidden affair with an unknown woman (possibly named Therese). The so-called "Brussels sonnets" preserved in a manuscript dated August 8, 1814 (published only in 1902, after both Müller's children had died) depict this harrowing time. Recent scholars view these poems as source material for *Winterreise*.[4] In one sonnet, Müller rails against narrow-minded religiosity. I paraphrase: "The old, white-bearded god, as you drew him in my children's lesson book, who according to your bible, saved but one people . . . to whom you pay sacrifice in heaven and whom you banish from his own earth . . . I deny him . . . So strike me from your lists, as anti-Christ and atheist!" Another describes a man who flees his doubts: "Just as the furies in wild assembly, / Once robbed Orestes of his peace, / Thus must I flee from my doubts."[5] So closes the only sonnet with a title, *Orestes*, which opens with the cry: "My belief dead! Cast out and abandoned, / I must carry my life across this earth, / Can complain of my grief to no one's ear, / Even in death must hold my silence." The sonnet's central lines (5–8) call up but do not make explicit the deed for which the speaker is decried: "I have committed no misdeed, / I only acted from conviction, / Yet now it's seen as criminal / And they've laid an eternal curse upon me." The poem's "lyric-I" seems here to speak as one with Orestes. Those despondent middle lines are partitioned by a period from the alarming confession: "A mother I have slain. / O do not ask me her sweet name, / Let me alone, alone continue onwards!" Orestes, acting in the belief that filial duty demanded Clytemnestra's murder, was pursued by guilt and doubt. Did Müller's fate align somehow with Orestes'? Or is this but a student's exercise in mythic hyperbole? Even this early in his poetic career Müller understood how to capture a reader's attention with an arresting blend of autobiographical suggestion and shielding myth. His early wartime experiences and the long journeys from military post to post no doubt stayed with him.

Upon resuming his studies in Berlin, Müller joined a "Society for German Language." Its membership cultivated German literary heritage from the Middle Ages to the present, continuing a long-standing debate in German letters about national linguistic norms. Among the personalities he encountered there were the charismatic nationalist Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778–1852), advocate for a free German "fatherland," and the xenophobic – anti-French and anti-Jewish – Christian Friedrich Rühs (1781–1820), whose lectures on medieval history he also attended. (Rühs' monograph *Über die Ansprüche der Juden an das deutsche Bürgerrecht* [Berlin, 1815] touched off heated debates regarding Prussia's official policy of Jewish emancipation. Rühs advocated the gradual elimination of Judaism through conversion and assimilation of the Jewish population into Christendom.) Proponents of ethnic or lingual purism and cosmopolites in German universities at this time frequently argued over their visions for a future German nation, even as wartime patriotism united them. The society brought Müller into frequent contact with such established poets as Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) and Baron de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843).

He also gathered with war veterans his own age, notably the visual artist and poet Wilhelm Hensel (1794–1861), son of a Lutheran pastor, with whom he had served on the front. Hensel later married Fanny Mendelssohn, a grandchild of the Dessau philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. Hensel's sister Luise (1798–1876), a devout religious poet, captured Müller's heart. To his disappointment, she desired solely his friendship, not a romance. The friends gathered often in Berlin's fashionable literary salons, and nearly weekly in the home of Friedrich August von Stägemann (1763–1840), privy councilor to King Friedrich Wilhelm III. Others in this circle worshipped Luise Hensel too – Brentano and the composer Ludwig Berger (1777–1839) vied for her hand – yet she stayed true to her religious calling and eventually took a vow of celibacy; through Brentano she learned about Catholicism, to which confession she quietly converted in 1818. (So, too, did numerous old guard Romantics in a time when Martin Luther's protest against church authority came to symbolize the rebellious nationhood movement.) The poetic cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*, based on a traditional tale about a miller maid's many suitors, had its origin in this social setting.[6]

In 1817, a request to the university to provide a scholarly travel companion for Royal Chamberlain Baron Albert von Sack (1757–1824) ended Müller's student career. On the enthusiastic recommendation of his philology professor Friedrich August Wolf, he was invited to accompany the baron to Greece and Egypt on a mission to decipher and catalogue ancient inscriptions. This extraordinary opportunity put his erudition to practical use and quickly broadened his perspective on the world. During an initial two-month stay in Vienna, Müller met leaders of the Philikí Etairía, a group supporting Greek emancipation from the Ottoman Empire, whose cause he would later champion in celebrated volumes of *Griechenlieder*, published between 1821 and 1824. The War of Independence (1821–30) from which Greece emerged a sovereign nation became a model for aspiring nationhood movements across Europe. Together with the baron and the artist Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

(1794–1872), who joined them in Vienna, Müller traveled to Italy. Carolsfeld went only as far as Florence; Müller and Sack continued on, spending several months in Rome, where Müller gathered impressions for a popular travelogue, *Rom, Römer und Römerinnen*. He parted company with the baron prematurely (for reasons not entirely clear) before they ever reached Greece and, after visiting the ruins of Pompeii, Naples, and Paestum on his own, returned to his native land in December 1818. His homecoming was not easy: the travels abroad had made him painfully conscious of the provincial moralism in the country of his birth.

The following year Müller was appointed teacher of classics in the Gelehrtenschule at Dessau and soon after also head of the ducal library, the first public library in Germany. In 1821, he married Adelheid von Basedow (1800–1883), an accomplished singer and the granddaughter of a prominent educational reformer (whose school in Dessau, the Philanthropinum, educated together children of the wealthy and the poor and renounced corporal punishment).[7] Müller's work duties left him plenty of time to write, edit, and travel, often to the relatively close cultural centers of Berlin, Leipzig, or Dresden where he met publishers and spent time with friends. Notable artist companions during the 1820s included the poet Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) and the composer Carl Maria von Weber (1794–1826), godfather to Müller's son Max (1823–1900) and the "master of German *Gesang*" to whom Müller dedicated the book of poems containing *Die Winterreise*. He remained in these posts in Dessau for the rest of his short life, dying of a heart attack at the end of September 1827, just before his thirty-third birthday.

Genesis of the Song Cycles

Before examining *Die Winterreise* in relation to other projects on the poet's desk, let us recall the contrasting genesis of Müller's earlier *Die schöne Müllerin* poems. Many of these were first crafted for a *Liederspiel* (a play with interpolated songs), which Müller and his friends performed in the Stägemann salon in winter 1816. The players each contributed lines for his or her character, and Ludwig Berger set their poems to music. Unsurprisingly, Müller took the role of the journeyman miller lad. Luise Hensel played a gardener; the Stägemanns' daughter Hedwig the milleress. In 1818, ten (revised) songs by Berger were published as *Gesänge aus einem gesellschaftlichen Liederspiele "Die schöne Müllerin,"* Op. 11.

The theme continued to occupy Müller as his Berlin student days faded into memory. Several of the poems appeared in literary journals between 1817 and 1818.[8] Over the following years he gradually distilled and expanded the miller's part into a "monodrama" of twenty-three poems, framed by a wry prologue and epilogue in which the figure of The Poet bids "lovely ladies and clever gentlemen" into a performance hall for a "brand new play in the latest sparkling new style." The poet-marketeer of the prologue proclaims that his tale will transport us from a wintry present to springtime and into the freedom of the outdoors (hinting at a political undercurrent). As he paints the scenery – a green floral carpet, moon and star lanterns – he draws attention to the artifice in the "artless" tale and highlights the division between "miller" and "poet." The Poet stands apart, like the narrator in a ballad. And yet: the lyric play has been funneled into a one-man show, a poetry reading requiring a single skilled orator to perform the whole.

In August 1820, Müller read aloud his cycle of poems to Ludwig Tieck, who expressed serious reservations about the tragic ending (the miller's suicide) but evidently encouraged Müller to publish the work.[9] Tieck's concern probably stemmed only partly from the eponym. Happy endings had long been the norm on opera stages, and the modern fashion for tragic endings even in spoken theater was still a novelty, a break from strict convention. *Die schöne Müllerin* appeared at the head of the 1821 solo-authored publication *Sieben und siebzig Gedichte aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten* (Seventy-seven poems from the posthumous papers of a traveling horn player).[10] Franz Schubert discovered the tale there and, in the spring of 1823, set the poems to music; his cycle was issued serially in 1824 in five song-booklets ("Liederhefte"), the standard format at that time for song publications. Schubert omitted Müller's prologue, epilogue, and three internal poems, but retained the remaining sequence of Müller's poems.

The temporality of *Die Winterreise* is far less linear than that of the miller's tale. Portrayed in a series of psychological "landscapes" is the journey, emotional and physical, of a wanderer taking flight from a bitter affair. Müller's propensity to revise poems post-publication and later to gather them into larger works obtained for this collection too. In January 1822, he sent the prestigious firm F. A. Brockhaus in Leipzig twelve poems for publication in the poetic yearbook *Urania. Taschenbuch auf das Jahr 1823*.[11] There the cycle appeared as twelve "wandering songs" under the heading *Wanderlieder von Wilhelm Müller. Die Winterreise. In 12 Liedern.* By all indications, this was a complete work. At its conclusion stood "Einsamkeit," a little poem that elaborates a simile: the wanderer is like an affectless cloud moving through bright skies on a day when the fir tree's crown barely stirs. It pains him that the air should be so still: "When the storms still raged, / I was not so miserable." An oblique meaning emerges if Müller's simile is understood to index political weather: the fir tree was a symbol of the nationhood cause, which had stagnated after the war. (The first student association for German nationhood formed in 1815 at the *Grüne Tanne* [Green Fir], an inn in Jena.)

Ten further poems soon appeared in the Breslau literary daily *Deutsche Blätter für Poesie, Litteratur, Kunst und Theater*, five each in the March 13 and 14, 1823 issues. A footnote indicated that this cluster of poems headed *Die Winterreise. Von Wilhelm Müller* belonged to the same cycle ("Cyklus") as the twelve recently printed in *Urania . . . 1823*. The following year the ten new poems appeared, together with the original twelve and two further ones not previously published, as *Die Winterreise*, a cycle of twenty-four poems, in *Gedichte aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten II*. (Schubert omits the article "Die" from the title, shifting attention away from the narrator.) Not only was the sequence of the poems changed when twelve new poems were interspersed, but Müller kept refining details. The two late additions, "Die Post" and "Täuschung," both address forms of self-deception. In "Die Post," the wanderer questions his heart, conscious that embers of hope still glow. In "Täuschung," he embraces the comfort of a long-accustomed self-deception.

Only the barest hints in the opening poem, "Gute Nacht," suggest a motivation for the wanderer's departure from the town in which he arrived a stranger and leaves again as one. There was a girl, who spoke of love, her mother even of marriage. "Let stray dogs howl / In front of their master's house." The relationship between past, present, or even imagined future blurs in the poem's rumination on the moment of leave-taking. Müller's poem is in four eight-line stanzas. At the ends of stanzas 1 ("Now the world is so gloomy") and 2, present tense indicates a journey already underway: in the shadow of the moon, the wanderer seeks the footprints of wild game in the snow. Stanzas 3 and 4 flash back to the moment he tiptoed out the door and past the gate (by the house where he lodged or perhaps the city's gate) onto which he writes "Good night" – "So that you may see / That I thought of you."[12] "Why should I linger here until I am driven out?" begins stanza 3, alluding to the inevitability of this rupture. The situation fits well that of a soldier or a student quartered in a foreign town: *Fremd*, the cycle's first word, may mean either "strange" or "foreign." In song 2, we learn that the daughter of the house is now a wealthy bride. The scenes between this and the last song's desolate portrait of the old hurdy-gurdy player whose small plate stays ever empty only occasionally coalesce into a temporally ordered sequence. At the end of the cycle stands a sober question, addressed to the old man: "Will you play your organ / To my songs?"

Poetic Models and Tropes

A striking precursor to Müller's *Die Winterreise* is a collection of nine *Wanderlieder*, by the Swabian poet Ludwig Uhland (1787–1862), published in the journal *Deutscher Dichterwald* in 1813 and set to music by the composer Conradin Kreutzer (1780–1849).[13] Müller expressed admiration for these folk-like poems in an 1827 essay, noting that they had left a long trail of imitations. One can hardly open a poetic journal anymore without finding "Wanderlieder," he remarked.[14] Uhland's nine poems trace a narrative arc from farewell ("Lebewohl") to homecoming ("Heimkehr"), telling the story of a man who tries to part from the lover he may have impregnated, only to come rushing back home at the end. In the sixth poem, "Winterreise," the protagonist laments that his passion has been extinguished, his feelings gone cold. In the seventh, "Abreise," he leaves the town. In the penultimate poem, "Einkehr," he finds sweet nourishment and rest under the protective shade of an apple tree, an inn, whose "Schild" (signage) is a golden apple hanging from a long branch. The story of "Einkehr" is relayed in past-tense narration ("Recently I was the guest of a wondrously gentle innkeeper"). When he asks what he owes his host, the apple tree shakes his verdant crown. Golden apples presumably rain down, like Zeus's shower of gold (a symbol of fertility). Uhland relates only the wanderer's profuse thanks. Next, in "Heimkehr," a breathless speaker nearly trips over his poetic feet:

> Oh break not, bridge, / you seem to shake / Don't threaten, ridge, / and, earth, don't quake! / World, do not end now, /Sky do not fall in / before I'm with my love again!
> (O brich nicht, Steg, / du zitterst sehr! / O stürz' nicht Fels, / du dräuest schwer! / Welt, geh' nicht unter, / Himmel, fall' nicht ein, / Eh' ich mag bei der Liebsten seyn.)[15]

Müller singled out this tiny bolt of energy: "The little poem 'Homecoming' has always seemed to me the greatest among the *Wanderlieder*. It is so full of love and longing that it wants to shatter. Every spark of such a rocket could lend warmth to the long-winded efforts of our most beloved rhyme-makers."[16] Earlier, he remarks on the affinity between "wandering songs" and ballads, in which a narrator impersonates several characters, and how easily one converts into the other. The shift in narrative voice from "Einkehr" to "Heimkehr" prepares its exuberant happy end (one tinged with fright for the wanderer's safety). Uhland's wanderer is no social outcast. He leaves to sow his wild oats only to find he wants desperately to return home.

Students of *Die Winterreise* have long noted small correspondences between Müller's poems and the images or poetic meter in Uhland's

Wanderlieder.[17] Indirect evidence of Müller's meditation on the narrative arc of this collection exists in a group of six *Wanderlieder* published in *Waldhornisten II*. The mini-ballad "Der Apfelbaum" reads like a trope on Uhland's tale, now given a bitter end.[18] The structure of Müller's poem encourages readers to try out the verses set in quotation marks from various perspectives. A wanderer departing before dawn through the city gate makes it safely across the bridge, and past the lake. When the tree's branches make a rustling ("rauschen") sound, he becomes strangely woeful ("so wunderweh"). "Who shakes the branches? There is no wind," someone asks. A heavy splash comes from the water. "My dearest, it must be from the tree that I planted in your garden. / The lovely apples, so red, so round, / now they lie down upon the cold ground." (What grisly thing has just happened? It all depends on what you take the apples to mean.)

The years separating the publication of the two volumes of *Waldhornisten* poems were some of the most productive in Müller's career. In addition to composing many collections of poems, he reviewed the works of contemporary poets, edited three volumes of seventeenth-century German poetry, and wrote critical essays, translations, and prose works on a remarkable range of subjects. Two significant prose projects that overlapped with his work on *Die Winterreise* subtly illuminate the song cycle's themes. The first involves an intensive engagement with the life and semi-autobiographical poetry of the English Romantic poet George Gordon Byron (1788–1824); the second is Müller's monograph on the transmission of Homeric myth.

Müller's Byron

Lord Byron was for Müller one of the most important poets of the modern age and a kindred spirit for his support of the Greek War of Independence. He first introduced Byron to a German literary public in an essay printed in *Urania. Taschenbuch auf das Jahr 1822*. The same issue of this yearbook contained three small collections of Müller's own poems (including a cluster of four *Wanderlieder*). His Byron article in *Urania* was largely an abridged translation of an essay by an anonymous English critic in the January 1821 issue of the *London Magazine*, which to Müller's dismay the publisher failed to acknowledge. Müller had left standing the critic's reproaches against Byron's personal life and character: he painstakingly distanced himself in his later writings from the moral judgement. Political references in the essay – depicting Napoleon as a friend of freedom, not its enemy – led to a ban of *Urania . . . 1822* within the Austrian Empire, and required over a year of negotiations before the prohibition was lifted.[19] Translations of Byron's poetry and shorter critical essays followed, and, in 1825, the year after the poet's death (from a fever) in Missolonghi, Müller completed the fullest biography of Byron in any language, titled simply *Lord Byron*. Parallels with his own oeuvre leap out from many pages of this engaging and personal study.

A persistent strand in Müller's Byron biography is the relationship between life and work. He delights in finding elements of Byron's picaresque life mirrored in the four cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–18) and notes traces of Byron's youthful love for Mary Chaworth in the poem "The Dream" (1816). Byron's passionate relationships with both men and women, and then an affair with his half-sister Augusta, sparked such public furor in England that he feared for his life. He fled into exile in Italy and Greece. Müller alludes to these matters as common knowledge, drawing on his rhetorical skill to weld life and work into myth: "The ordinary poet is distinguished only by following in the footsteps of the ruling favorite of the day. The true poet tries exactly the opposite. He plunges into the tide of public opinion, even when its current weighs most strongly against him." That oceanic metaphor surges into a simile: Byron is like the heroic Julius Caesar.[20] Müller felt that Byron's personality was too large to suppress and that his characters were often masks: "His Manfred is like Childe Harold, like the Corsair, like Lara, and like almost all his heroes, a mysterious creature in whose deep soul a tremendous abomination, a horrible act, a terrible fate lies buried."[21] About Byron's arrival in Greece, he rhapsodizes: "Thereupon the lord crisscrossed many provinces of the old Hellas, probably not yet suspecting that he would one day die for the freedom of this land . . . [H]ow his heart must have leapt even then at the great idea of freedom for the motherland of all freedom***."[22] Perhaps worried that his characterization of Byron's sentiment might ring untrue, Müller inserted asterisks to direct us to Canto 2, verse 15, in *Childe Harold*, where Byron's impressions seem to speak through his character:

> Cold is the heart, fair Greece, that looks on thee,
> Nor feels as lovers o'er the dust they loved;
> Dull is the eye that will not weep to see
> Thy walls defaced, thy mouldering shrines removed
> By British hands, which it had best behoved
> To guard those relics ne'er to be restored.
> Curst be the hour when from their isle they roved,
> And once again thy hapless bosom gored,
> And snatched thy shrinking gods to northern climes abhorred!

A few pages later comes an impassioned account of the English poet's rejection of "pseudo-patriotism," the uncritical embrace of everything originating from one's own country. Byron is of greater mind and more just towards the world, driven by a conception of what his native land could and should be, and for this reason the sharpest critic of the homeland he loved.[23] This meditation elaborates a clumsy footnote that Müller had inserted into the *Urania . . . 1822* article on the very page that caught the censor's eye. Müller's Byron became a mirror for his own evolving ideas about love of country, national chauvinism, and the claims of a wider world. (The socio-political spectrum itself comes under scrutiny in Müller's novella *Debora* [1826], in which a medical student, who keeps *Childe Harold* at his bedside, travels through Italy with an old aristocrat. Irreconcilable worldviews drive them apart.)

We may sense something yet more personal in Müller's account of a feud between Lord Byron and the poet Robert Southey (1774–1843), who equated Byron's work with that of the "atheists" he accused of inciting the French Revolution. Byron defended the French philosophers from this charge and then described the revolution as a necessary consequence of the rulers' actions. During his Italian exile, Byron's frequent companion was the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), "a man decried in his fatherland for political and religious free-thinking." That reputation had pursued Shelley ever since the publication of his pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* while he was a student at Oxford.[24] Müller was plainly moved by Byron's devotion to a fellow poet who had "made his entire life unsettled and unpleasant" by airing in public the "errant eccentricities" of his youth. Talk of atheism made Müller uneasy not because Shelley's mind had strayed from commonly accepted beliefs but because he had endured such harsh consequences for expressing his views.[25]

A poet's work in large measure is his life. Things encountered on the written page blend with lived experience. *Die Winterreise*'s wanderer, like Byron and Shelley, like Childe Harold in Italy, like Orestes, is an outcast and a stranger. Müller was attracted often to this narrative archetype. In one electrifying moment in the cycle, the fourth wall threatens to shatter. Pummeled by winter weather and under cover of "madness," the wanderer bellows out an uncensored blasphemy: "If there's no God upon the earth, / Then we ourselves are Gods!" (Will kein Gott auf Erden sein, / Sind wir selber Götter!) For the first time in the cycle, a plural is invoked. Who is this "we"? The wanderer's eruption in "Mut!" (Courage) comes out of nowhere. In Schubert's unforgettable setting, unhinged cadences magnify Müller's provocative rhyming of "Wetter" and "Götter" (weather and gods). Echoed in the unexpected poetic pairing, upon reflection, is the whistling weathervane from song 2, a swiveling cross that sits atop the beloved's house: "And I thought in my delusion, / That it [she] mocked the poor fugitive [Sie pfiff' den armen Flüchtling aus]. // He should have noticed sooner / The symbol displayed on the house [Des Hauses aufgestecktes Schild], so he wouldn't ever have expected / To find a faithful woman within."

Müller's Homer

In 1824, the same year in which *Die Winterreise* appeared, Müller completed a study that he judged to be his greatest critical achievement yet. Widely admired by his contemporaries, his *Homerische Vorschule*[26] offers tantalizing glimpses into his scholarly engagement with creative process. The book is not included in the bicentennial edition of Müller's oeuvre (Gatza, 1994), presumably because it was deemed too derivative to belong among his independent literary products. He did indeed borrow liberally from his teacher Friedrich August Wolf's foundational work on the transmission of Homeric myth.

"Classical scholars have written few classics, but F. A. Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer* is certainly one of them," begins an invitingly readable commentary and English translation of Wolf's 1795 (Latin) book. The editors continue: "Its literary impiety enraged traditionalists. Its vision of a primitive Homer captivated poets. Its elegant, fine-spun arguments convinced everyone that grammatical technicalities could be interesting. It thrust classical studies to the center of the German intellectual stage."[27] Wolf's work on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* overturned ingrained beliefs about Homer as "author" of the famed epics, and inspired later scholars to examine the transmitted texts for signs of the shift from oral performance to written literary culture. He understood that the epics were first written down centuries after they were composed.

Müller, who had attended Wolf's German-language lectures while a student in Berlin, felt that his teacher's stimulating ideas deserved a wider audience. He now taught Homer regularly in secondary schools in Dessau. Combining his university lecture notes and aural recollection with a free retelling in German of Wolf's *Prolegomena*, Müller created his own pre-study to reading Homer. While the scholarly foundation of the *Homerische Vorschule* is mainly his teacher's, his speculations and explanations grow from his own interests, illustrated by passages he has either discovered himself or carefully retraced. Wolf, indeed, encouraged students to make ideas their own in this way. We do not know what he thought of his former pupil's work; he passed away in Rome weeks after the book appeared in print.

Müller believed that ancient oral rhapsodies cohered even before acts of writing by editors (*diaskeuasts* is his word) imposed an order on them. In the *Odyssey* more than in the *Iliad*, he noted, certain episodes form self-contained wholes – "The Travels of Telemachus" or "The Return of Odysseus," for example.[28] He saw in the profusion of epithets that recur unvaried, "not wishing in the least to become interesting through change," telltale signs of extemporary practice. Many descriptions of battles, evening meals, the rising and setting of the sun, and so on, are nearly interchangeable. Müller speculated that this allowed later rhapsodes and diaskeuasts to weave together nearly seamless episodes from genuine Homeric material.[29]

Müller was keen to distinguish forms of poetic coherence that are "made" (gemacht) from those gradually "accrued" (entstanden). The "made" features reminded him of Spanish medieval epics such as the *Cantar del Mio Cid*. Yet whereas the "very small lieder" of the medieval romances were composed from the start in linear trajectory, with marked beginnings and ends, the so-called "cyclic poets" who wrote down and ordered the Homeric narratives had first to dismantle the outlines of an inherited corpus and rearrange its poems to create a linear narrative.[30] The significance of one (quite detailed) discussion of this process for a study of Müller's own poetic oeuvre will not be lost on students of *Winterreise*. The passage begins: "A no less eye-catching trace of a later uniting of two *Gesänge*, each of which had originally formed a self-contained whole, and as such had its own beginning and end, emerges from a comparison of the first one hundred lines of part one of the *Odyssey* with the beginning of part five."[31]

Müller's *Homerische Vorschule* refracts Wolf's ideas through the eyeglasses of a modern poet. Both writers were interested in the creative processes that produced these great epic poems. The poet, however, lingers over problems that occupy him in his day-to-day work. How have the verses comprising an epic been ordered and arranged? Does the story have a clear beginning and end or does it start some place in the middle? What is its timescale? Can poetic segments be unconnected or reconnected to make cohesive new tales? Does an epic poem tell of a single person or event or of several? What was conceived for oral performance, what for the written page? How does individual authorship interact with tradition?

Müller's scholarly meditations invite analogous questions about *Die Winterreise*. Why were select poems interwoven with Müller's original twelve, and other "wandering songs" using the same images not? What makes these poems belong to one "Cyklus"? Do the *Müllerin* songs constitute another episode in the same life's odyssey? Questions such as these and further forays into the poet's wider oeuvre will clear new paths to understanding how nineteenth-century authors distilled and memorialized lived experience in poetry.

Notes

1. *Sulamith, eine Zeitschrift zur Beförderung der Kultur und Humanität unter der jüdischen Nation* (Dessau and Leipzig, 1806).
2. Erika von Borries, *Wilhelm Müller, der Dichter der "Winterreise": Eine Biographie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2007), 33.
3. Cecilia C. Baumann, *Wilhelm Müller, the Poet of the Schubert Song Cycles: His Life and Works* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981), 3.
4. The nine Brussels sonnets are printed in Wilhelm Müller, *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, ed. Maria-Verena Leistner (Berlin: Gatza, 1994), vol. 2, 271–75. See also Borries, *Wilhelm Müller*, 37–44.
5. Orestes: "Mein Glaube tot! Verstoßen und verlassen, / Muß ich mein Leben durch die Erde tragen, / Kann meine Schmerzen keinem Ohre klagen, / Im Tode selbst muß stumm ich einst verblassen. / Ich habe keine Missetat begangen, / Mit Überzeugung nur hab ich gehandelt, / Und zum Verbrechen hat man's umgewandelt / Und hat mit ew'gem Fluche mich behangen. / Ich habe eine Mutter hingemordet, / O fragt mich nicht nach ihrem süßen Namen, / Laßt mich nur einsam, einsam weiter ziehen! / Wie einst die Furien sich wild gehordet, / Und dem Orestes seinen Frieden nahmen, / So muß auch ich vor meinen Zweifeln fliehen."
6. On the Stägemann gatherings, see Susan Youens, "Behind the Scenes: *Die Schöne Müllerin* Before Schubert," *19th-Century Music* 15/2 (1991): 3–22.
7. On philanthropinism, see Chapter 3 of this volume.
8. For details, see Müller, *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, vol. 1, 287.
9. Baumann, *Wilhelm Müller, the Poet of the Schubert Song Cycles*, 63.
10. Müller may have taken the fiction of the "posthumous papers" from a collection of *Studentenlieder* subtitled "Aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines unglücklichen Philosophen Florido genannt, gesammelt und verbessert von C. W. K. [Christian Wilhelm Kindleben]," first published in 1781. Müller, *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, vol. 1, 282.
11. For more on the poems' publication history, see Chapter 5 of this volume.
12. For a probing study of timescale in *Winterreise*, see the chapter "Mountains and Song Cycles" in Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 116–236.
13. Conradin Kreutzer and Ludwig Uhland, *Conradin Kreutzer's* Frühlingslieder *and* Wanderlieder, trans. Luise Eitel Peake, facsim. ed. (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1989). Kreutzer's *Neun Wanderlieder von Uhland*, Op. 34 was first published in 1818.
14. "Ueber die neueste lyrische Poesie der Deutschen. Ludwig Uhland und Justinus Kerner," *Hermes, oder Kritisches Jahrbuch der Literatur,* 28 (1827): 94–129. Müller's essay is included in Rudolf Brandmeyer's digital edition of historical texts in poetic theory. www.uni-due.de/lyriktheorie/texte/1827_mueller.html#edition.
15. I quote Luise Eitel Peake's metric translation. *Conradin Kreutzer's* Frühlingslieder *and* Wanderlieder, xxvi.
16. "Ueber die neueste lyrische Poesie der Deutschen." Note 14 gives a digital link.
17. On Wanderlieder, see Chapter 3 of this volume, and Barbara Turchin, "The Nineteenth-Century *Wanderlieder* Cycle," *Journal of Musicology* 5/4 (1987): 498–525. See also *RWJ* for comparisons of Schubert's and Conradin Kreutzer's musical settings.
18. Wilhelm Müller, *Gedichte aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten*, vol. 2 (Christian Georg Ackermann: Dessau, 1824), 144.
19. A reference to Marie Louise of Austria, daughter of Emperor Franz II and wife of Napoleon, may have prompted the ban of the volume, but that phrase in Müller's English source ("Proud Austria's mournful flower") is absent in the copy of *Urania . . . 1822* held in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek's digital archive: Compare *Urania . . . 1822*, 236 with "Living Authors – Lord Byron" in *London Magazine* 3 (January 1821), 59. The quoted words are from Byron's 1814 poetic cycle "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte." Müller's letter of October 1, 1821 to Brockhaus leaves unclear whether he knew this. Müller, *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, vol. 5, 190–91.
20. Müller, *Werke, Tagebücher, Briefe*, vol. 4, 162–288 (194).
21. Ibid., 215.
22. Ibid., 185.
23. Ibid., 189.
24. Ibid., 239ff; 214.
25. Ibid., 247.

26. Wilhelm Müller, *Homerische Vorschule: Eine Einleitung in das Studium der Ilias und Odyssee* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1824).
27. Friedrich August Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer*, trans. and ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and James E. G. Zetzel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), ix. For a lucid early nineteenth-century American review article of Wolf's *Prolegomena*, see "Origin of the Homeric Poems," *American Quarterly Review* 4 (Philadelphia: Corey Lea & Corey, 1827), 307–37.
28. Müller, *Homerische Vorschule*, 117–18. Anyone who has heard Richard Dyer-Bennet perform these episodes from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* will know what Müller means. This twentieth-century bard's working method is documented in a thirty-minute film. Richard Dyer-Bennet, Susan Fanshel, Jill Godmilow, Jeri Sopanen, and Homer, *The Odyssey Tapes* ([New York]: Museum of Modern Art, 1980). Fascination with oral epics endures, as evident in the many editions of Albert B. Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).
29. Müller, *Homerische Vorschule*, 109–10.
30. Ibid., 110–11.
31. Ibid., 108.