1 In the beginning was poetry

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In the last third of the eighteenth century Germany blossomed from a marginal participant in European letters to the dynamic center of the movement now called Romanticism – the age that would encompass Kant, Hegel, Schiller, Kleist, Hölderlin, and Goethe. As the story is almost always told, the German art song begins in the next generation – 19 October 1814, to be exact – when Schubert composes the first of his great Goethe settings, *Gretchen am Spinnrade*. The logic of this narrative makes the flowering of German poetry, or even of Goethe himself, solely responsible for the emergence of the Lied. Given that there was a flourishing market in books of songs with keyboard accompaniment for domestic use by greater and lesser-known composers in the mid-eighteenth century, the conclusion does not do justice to the genre's history. Furthermore, the development of the Lied since the eighteenth century does not follow that of German lyric poetry closely: the historical relation between poetry and song is rather more complex.

Hence to begin this volume with a survey of German poetry is not to assert that the development of poetry drives the genre's development – or vice versa. Goethe is profoundly important for the Lied because he was the most original, most influential, and most representative poet of a period in which poetry and song were closely related and expressions of the same cultural concerns. Rather than ask how poetry results in the Lied or what poetry is best suited to musical treatment, it makes more sense to explore what new or changing cultural attitudes are manifest both in German song and in the poems that composers chose to set. In other words, what made this partnership suddenly thrive and become a major musical genre in the nineteenth century? Because poetry operates with language, it is simpler to chart social and cultural change in poetry than in music. In this fashion – and only in this fashion – can German poetry be understood as a "beginning" for the Lied.

This essay describes some cultural developments crucial for German song by tracing their emergence in the German lyric poetry set by Lied composers. I begin by establishing a canon of song texts, and then describe a trajectory based upon it. By tracing the practice of the art song in the eighteenth century and the style shift of the later eighteenth century, we will see how both are tied to the cultural assumptions of the Romantic period – to its new definition of simplicity, to its preoccupation with an internal voice

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and indeed a pre-conscious or sub-conscious self, and to the professional status of the artist. Song turns out to be one of the genres in which these assumptions persist the longest; we shall see how their breakdown changes the genre of art song.

The canon of song texts

Although by no means all-inclusive, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's handbook, *Texte deutscher Lieder*, enables us to formulate useful generalizations about the literary tastes of German composers.[1] The coverage is slightly biased toward twentieth-century composers, since Fischer-Dieskau has sought to foster the modern Lied, but the selection still does not obscure the basic regressive tendency of the repertory. Here are the poets whose texts were set by the largest number of different composers, listed in rank order:

Number of composers	Poet
24	Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832)
12	Heinrich Heine (1797–1856)
11	Joseph von Eichendorff (1788–1857)
9	Nikolaus Lenau (1802–50), Eduard Mörike (1804–75)
6	Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866)
5	Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Ludwig Uhland (1787–1862), Gottfried Keller (1819–90)
4	Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803), Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), Friedrich Hebbel (1813–63), Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825–98), Detlev von Liliencron (1844–1909), Christian Morgenstern (1871–1914)

Of the volume's some 140 poets and some 50 composers, 60 per cent of the composers were born after 1840 and lived into the twentieth century, but only 19 per cent of the poets were: only 2 of the 16 poets most often set were born after 1840. Evidently, song composers look overwhelmingly to the period 1770–1870 for their texts.

Goethe is easily the poet most frequently set by major German composers. He also is the most set in terms of number of texts – sixty-five, twenty more than Wilhelm Müller, author of Schubert's two extended cycles *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. Only Heinrich Heine comes close with about sixty. If we consider which poems were set by the largest number

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of composers, the result is comparable: nine composers set Goethe's "Wanderers Nachtlied II," seven his "Kennst du das Land," six his "Wonne der Wehmut," and five set each of four other of his poems. Only among the nine texts set by four composers is there finally one *not* by Goethe. Of the twenty-nine texts set by three composers, ten are by Goethe. The concentration on these texts is noteworthy because Goethe wrote far more lyric poetry than any other important German author before Rilke. It is evident that composers through the century are setting certain of Goethe's poems not only in response to the texts, but also in response to or even competition with earlier settings, especially by the prolific Schubert, who set far more poems by Goethe than by any other poet.[2]

Apart from his professional engagement with music (as librettist and theater director), his friendships and collaborations with composers (Reichardt and Zelter), and his stated belief that poetry should be sung, there are sociological reasons for Goethe's dominance.[3] His international best-seller, the novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The sorrows of the young Werther; 1774), earned him permanent fame as the great genius of a reviving German literature. While his later works generally evoked less enthusiasm and even some resentment, his reputation remained colossal until the end of his life, and his poems, particularly from the decade in which he wrote *Werther*, also remained popular through the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1870s he was set up as the cultural father figure of Germany by the educational establishment of the Second Empire and widely read in schools. There was remarkable intellectual ferment in the Romantic period, especially in Germany, independent of Goethe, but he represented in many respects the quintessence of his age, and the importance attached to him probably was not undeserved. The art song would doubtless have come into being without him, but it might well have been a less focused genre, and – to judge by the number of Goethe settings from the twentieth century – might not have persisted so long.

The list of poets set by more than one composer and born before 1840 falls readily into two historical groups, the period of European Romanticism known to German literary history as the Age of Goethe (c. 1750 – c. 1830), and the immediate post-Romantic generation known as Biedermeier (c. 1815–50). Both groups are concerned with the relationship of the self to nature and are distinguished primarily by the different attitudes they take toward it – Romantics look for some form of mediation or reconciliation, Biedermeier poets tend to see an insuperable gap. To the first group belong the poets born before 1790, Goethe, Eichendorff, Hölderlin, Herder, Uhland, Klopstock and Schiller; to the second, those born later – Heine, Lenau, Mörike, Rückert, Keller, Hebbel and Meyer. The only anomalous figures here are Eichendorff (usually labeled Romantic) and Rückert (usually considered Biedermeier), both born in 1788 but aligned with different

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literary generations by attitude and style, and Hebbel and Meyer, who sometimes are labeled "realist" rather than "Biedermeier," a distinction that rests on no significant difference in style or tone for our purposes. The even division between the two periods (apart from the two more modern poets, Liliencron and Morgenstern) is striking and is found already in Schubert.[4] Since the poets of the Age of Goethe are by and large the more famous ones, this pattern often looks like a mix of famous and ephemeral poets, or of classic poets and then the composers' friends. The further we proceed through the nineteenth century, the more backward-looking such a mix becomes. In order to understand the significance of German poetry for the Lied it is therefore necessary to focus primarily on the two or three great poetic generations from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and to consider what distinguishes them from earlier and later generations.

Enlightenment poetry and the Lied

German poems set before about 1770 rarely figure in the later history of song; the ways in which they differ from later poetry thus are telling for what characterizes the Lied in the nineteenth century. The best-known poets of the early songs comprise the group still anthologized under the rubric Anacreontics. These sociable poems, named for the Greek poet Anacreon, celebrated wine and love and had been cultivated throughout Europe since the Renaissance. In eighteenth-century Germany, these poets – Friedrich von Hagedorn, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim, Johann Peter Uz, and Karl Wilhelm Ramler – North Germans all, are among the most important figures in a period generally considered to lack major poets. German songs of the mid-eighteenth century, set in quantity by well-known composers such as Georg Philipp Telemann, C. P. E. Bach, Christian Gottfried Krause, and many lesser-known figures as well, were published in books of songs that often resulted from the collaboration of poet and composer. Of this group, only Gleim and Gellert are represented in Fischer-Dieskau's handbook, through their settings by Haydn (who also set many English poems) and Beethoven. Perhaps more of these poets might have remained in the canon longer had they been set by composers of a later period. For the style shifts in music and in literature are parallel: what comes before Haydn and Mozart seems as distant today as the poetry that precedes Goethe. While composers at the end of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century constantly turned to texts written before, say, 1870 for their songs, few composers in the early nineteenth century set poems written before 1770. Expectations about poetry had clearly changed.

The expectations from before 1770 are crystallized in the leading handbook on poetry of the time in Germany, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*

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(Critical essay on the art of poetry), by Johann Christoph Gottsched, professor of rhetoric at the University of Leipzig. First published in 1730, the work was reissued in its fourth and final revised version in 1751. A late neo-classical compendium which occasionally takes issue with but mostly accumulates the ideas of predecessors going back to Horace's *Ars poetica* (first century BC) and Aristotle's *Poetics* (fourth century BC), the book represents well what educated people of the age thought about poetry.

Gottsched discusses the genre closest to song in the sense in which it is understood today as the first (because it is the oldest) of his twenty-five literary categories under the title "Von Oden oder Liedern" (on odes or songs). Typically for the period, song and ode are conflated; our modern distinction is part of the style shift at the end of the eighteenth century. The Anacreontic songs or odes Gottsched had in mind tend to be short, relatively simple, and often playful rhymed poems about wine or love, while other odes tend to be (often) long, stylistically more complex, serious poems on mythological or philosophical themes. Odes in the specifically Pindaric or Greek style were in a verse form that matched none of the standard European forms of the period and by the end of the century they would be rendered in unrhymed free verse or rhythmic prose. The two forms are connected for Gottsched and his contemporaries by their appeal to antiquity and the fact that they require musical accompaniment. It was common knowledge that Greek lyric poetry, whether serious or love poetry, was recited with musical accompaniment, usually the lyre. Echoing an argument that harks back to ancient Greece, Gottsched asserts that poetry originated in music, according, perhaps, to scenarios like the following. In a moment of excitement, even slight drunkenness, a lively wit begins to sing for joy at a feast; needing a topic for the words that accompany his spontaneous song, he praises wine in all its aspects. Or a bored shepherd, suddenly excited by the sight of a shepherdess, decides to imitate the birds, and what better topic for his words than the beauty of the shepherdess?[5] Song thus precedes poetry, and the "original" poetry is Anacreontic song.

A song thus articulates an emotion, usually pleasurable, that arises from a social situation, and melody takes precedence over words. Originally, songs, like arias in *opera seria*, expressed a single emotion; eventually they expanded to express ideas as well. In general, however, Gottsched recommends loyalty to the classical topics of praise of heroes, love, and wine.[6] His position represents a distillation of the most pragmatic tendencies of the neo-classical tradition, which followed Horace in its focus on the social context and function of poetry. The poet is a prophet and a teacher (like Orpheus and the other mythic poets with whom Gottsched begins his tradition); he is not a possessed madman but a wise and reasonable individual who embodies the highest civility and culture.[7]

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This is a theory of poetry for an emerging urban middle class. Songbooks were marketed as edifying home entertainment for a bourgeoisie now prosperous and ambitious enough to want to imitate the sophisticated leisure of the upper classes. Hence the Lied emerges in North Germany in the eighteenth century, for only in an old independent trading city like Hamburg, not at the court centers further south, did such a culture flourish. Wine, love, and praise do not mean, in Gottsched or in any of the Anacreontic poets, drunkenness or sex; it is the love of middle-class urbanites playing at being shepherds and shepherdesses, and the drinking of solid citizens who appreciate the good cheer of no more than one glass too many. All of these poets came from similar backgrounds and were employed in the typical occupations of university-trained members of their class: they were secretaries to diplomats, princes, or cathedral chapters; teachers of rhetoric and morals; or, occasionally, judges. They wrote poetry as a gentlemanly avocation, as did virtually all other belletrists in Germany during this period. It was part and parcel of their classicism for them to be, essentially, dilettantes.

Two stanzas from Hagedorn's "Der Morgen," set by C. P. E. Bach (among many others) in his *Oden mit Melodien* (Odes with melodies, 1762) offer a good example.[8]

Uns lockt die Morgenröthe	The morning's red lures us
In Busch und Wald,	into shrubbery and copse,
Wo schon der Hirten Flöte	where the shepherd's pipe early
Ins Land erschallt.	resounds through the land.
Die Lerche steigt und schwirret,	The lark ascends and trills,
Von Lust erregt;	in joyous rapture;
Die Taube lacht und girret,	the dove laughs and coos,
Die Wachtel schlägt.	the quail calls.
Die Hügel und die Weyde	Hills and meadow
Stehn aufgehellt,	stand in new light,
Und Fruchtbarkeit und Freude	and fruitfulness and joy
Beblümt das Feld.	strew flowers on the field.
Der Schmelz der grünen Flächen	The enamel of the green surfaces
Glänzt voller Pracht;	shines full of splendor,
Und von den klaren Bächen	and from the clear brooks
Entweicht die Nacht.	the night departs.

Hagedorn celebrates nature on a spring morning. But his nature is decidedly domesticated: it consists of shrubbery and thicket, meadows and fields. Moreover, it is evoked not through its qualities, but through the objects and beings that typically inhabit such a landscape. The words "Schmelz" and "Flächen" in the second stanza come from painting, and the third stanza

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bids the listener "see" a shepherd arriving. This is typically what "imitation," the fundamental quality of all literature for neo-classicism, means in poetry of this period: the listener / reader is called upon to see a series of familiar objects and scenes; poetry is, in a famous cliché, the sister art of painting. Gottsched did not permit poems to have a plot, and nothing happens here. The poem simply calls to mind a picture, which in turn conveys a single emotion, happiness, through the happiness of all the figures it describes. In the last stanza, the speaker invites his Phyllis to join him in a quiet nook of this idealized landscape – model behavior for innocent lovers in a model world.

Such a poetry of literal vision and ready accessibility is often labeled simple, but the term needs to be specified. First, verse of this kind requires a community that shares a conventional language, so that the shorthand list of images can in fact speak. Hagedorn assumes his audience knows what larks, doves, and quails sound like, and that it recognizes Phyllis as a code name for a shepherdess. More important, this verse depends on clarity: word-play, complex imagery, dense language all would interfere with the reader's ability to construct the picture in the mind's eye as its parts are enumerated. The poem proceeds in unvarying strophes built from parallel two-line units, each its own clause. To the end nothing disrupts the pattern; instead, the poem maintains a uniform surface. Homogeneous precision is the essence of neo-classical simplicity, which was deemed a virtue for all critics in this tradition from Horace to Gottsched, and was the eighteenth century's battle cry in music as well as literature. Partisans of Zeno's and Metastasio's reformed *opera seria* called for noble simplicity to replace the convolutions of Baroque opera plots, while some thirty years later Gluck and Calzabigi called for the same noble simplicity to counter the excesses of Metastasian singer's opera.[9] Song was another area of special simplicity, as even composers like C. P. E. Bach and Haydn wrote the simplest of melodies and accompaniments for this new form of music for home performance.[10] Such highly domesticated clarity and simplicity constituted the dignity of even a song like Hagedorn's "Der Morgen" and thereby justified the classical designation "ode."

The style-shift of the later eighteenth century

By the early 1770s the poetic landscape in Germany had changed dramatically. A new generation of writers in their twenties inspired by Goethe and Johann Gottfried Herder – the Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) – was rebelling against the neo-classicism of their elders. Herder, a prolific writer on literary, philosophical and historical topics, was the most important mediator and most original synthesizer of the various currents then changing

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European thought: the new social philosophy associated with the name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the new Idealist philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and the new discipline of classical philology emerging at German universities. Herder invented the concept of folk song, was largely responsible for the enthusiasm for Shakespeare that swept Germany in the last quarter of the century, and was a major contributor to the emergence of historical method in scholarship. He met Goethe in 1770 and is widely recognized as his decisive mentor. At Goethe's behest, he settled in Weimar and spent the rest of his life supervising religious and educational life in the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar. Oriented toward England rather than toward France, the Sturm und Drang created a new poetry from the century's growing interests in the primitive, folk poetry, the depths of history (both classical and non-classical), and the cultivation of emotion or "Sensibility." The new generation's idols included Rousseau, Shakespeare, Samuel Richardson, Laurence Sterne, and the German poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock. Goethe was immediately recognized as the great poet of this movement with his Shakespearean drama *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), his sentimental novel *Werther*, and his poems both in folk tone and in the elevated free verse of Pindaric ode. Herder was the movement's theorist, and we can gain the clearest idea of how it differed from Gottsched's Enlightenment poetics by considering aspects of his influential essays *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Excerpt from a correspondence on Ossian and the songs of primitive peoples, 1772) and *Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker* (Treatise on the origin of language, 1773).

The first of the two essays says more about the origins of poetry and its relation to music than the title would suggest. Herder attacks here two prevalent theories of the origins of language: the first, that it was God-given and the second, that it derived from imitation of animal sounds. Instead, in a specifically Romantic gesture, he locates the origin of language in the uniquely human capacity to reflect. However, Herder does allow a certain kind of sub-rational language that humans have in common with animals: unreflecting cries of pain, of passion, or of pleasure. He elaborates these parallels in the essay's first section by using imagery that evokes music. Repeatedly he writes of the sounding strings of our being, of feelings expressing themselves in tones, and tones as the language of feeling.[11] The less natural written human language of reason has largely displaced this more primitive form of expression, but its traces still can be found in the innate musicality of ancient languages and especially in their oldest poetry. Even in our current languages hearing is the most important sense for the reflective process that constitutes humanity's superior rational powers. Similarly, Herder's Ossian essay centers on the premise that the heroic poems supposedly translated but, as it later transpired, actually written by James Macpherson were not epic (narrative), but really song. The essence of ancient

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folk poetry, regardless of the culture of origin, is its affinity with music. In these two influential essays, Herder thus associates poetry with music and with the pre-rational aspects of the soul. This is both the oldest part of our mental being and the part that in each of us comes before reflective mental activity. Music and song do not simply express emotion, as they do for Gottsched and his generation; instead, they are the voice of the spontaneous self underlying all linguistic expression. Herder lays the groundwork here for expressing the widespread sense in late eighteenth-century Europe that our real selves, buried deep within, are scarcely accessible to rational analysis and that the true inner voice finds expression only in dreams, music, and poetry.[12]

Because this secret voice of the self is so deeply rooted in the past, it is open to time in a way that the more rational speaking voice of earlier German poetry is not. Compare Hagedorn's morning poem above to Goethe's most frequently set poem, the evening poem "Wanderers Nachtlied":

Über allen Gipfeln	O'er all the summits
Ist Ruh,	is rest,
In allen Wipfeln	in all the treetops
Spürest du	you sense
Kaum einen Hauch;	scarcely a breath;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.	the birds fall still in the wood,
Warte nur, balde	just wait, soon
Ruhest du auch.	you too shall rest.

At first glance, Goethe seems to follow Hagedorn in evoking the time of day in apparently simple language and in a catalog of parallel descriptors – birds and woods and hills – but that soon stops. Indeed, the poem is strikingly short. It swiftly closes off both breath ("Kaum einen Hauch") and utterance ("Die Vögelein schweigen"), transforming repose into the peace of death. Instead of Hagedorn's static visualization and deliberate simplicity, Goethe fuses the human and the natural by combining the breeze and the breath of life in the one word "Hauch." Moreover, the peace and beauty of the evening landscape can barely conceal the onset of fear in the last two lines: emotion is no longer homogeneous. If Hagedorn's poem never gets beyond the same moment of the day, Goethe's extends to the end of life. Thus while C. P. E. Bach's strophic setting corresponds admirably to the placidity of Hagedorn's text, the temporalized emotions of the later poem lead to shifting swells of emotion and rhythmic pattern in Schubert's setting and extended declamation in Liszt's. The depths of the inner voice are also the abyss of time.[13]

This immediate yet mysteriously interiorized voice opens poetry to a kind of drama previously unthinkable. Hagedorn's poem is dramatic in the

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simple sense that a particular speaker can be characterized who addresses a community of like-minded people in the first person plural. The drama in Goethe's poem is more complex. Neither the speaker nor the community addressed is readily identifiable. At one level, this poem with its direct address to the reader is an epitaph, like a verse inscribed on a tomb to be read by passing wanderers (of which there are many in the prose and verse of the period) – in fact, Goethe first wrote it on the window frame of a hunting lodge. Here, the voice in the poem would seem to be that of nature itself. Yet unlike a classical inscription, the statement is not a general reflection, but is tied to a particular moment of experience. Furthermore, the "du" addressed in the poem senses the motionlessness of the air and, ultimately, the approach of death: "you" is not a passive listener, but actively experiences what the speaker describes. But there is only one "you" with whom any speaker could be so intimate as to know what it senses, and that is, of course, the self. Goethe's speaker is not just personified nature addressing the wanderer; the title identifies the poem as the wanderer's song, and the wanderer addresses himself.[14] There is, therefore, no context of sociability. Furthermore, this self divides into an implied "I" who speaks and a described "you," into a subject and an object. This is the reflectiveness that grounds Herder's definition of language; here it generates a self that expands to fill and simultaneously engulf the world. To the extent that we still identify the speaker with nature itself, nature and the self have merged.

Now every poem becomes an implicit drama staged within the mind, a development crucial for nineteenth-century song. Consider how many of the songs most central to the repertory derive from dramas or from narratives in which they are embedded – the songs of the harper and of Mignon from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, "Gretchen am Spinnrade," the "König in Thule," and the flea song from *Faust*. Other poems stage multiple voices, like "Der Tod und das Mädchen" or "Erlkönig" – virtually all ballads fall into this category. In many other poems, the speaker addresses some absent or inanimate interlocutor – a place, nature, the dead, or someone absent (friend, relative, beloved), the past, an ideal – often suggested by the piano accompaniment. Others are declamatory, like "Ganymed."[15] It is hard to think of poems written between about 1770 and 1870 that do not open up an interior stage and thus transform song into a domesticated opera that can be performed in the privacy of the home, or in the sanctuary of the self.

The parallel with opera is significant, for song in this period becomes increasingly professionalized. Although still marketed and consumed as domestic music through the nineteenth century and by no means so difficult as most operatic music, nineteenth-century song is more demanding technically than that of the eighteenth century; the crucial difference, reflected in the new designation "art song," is that song from the age of Schubert on

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is no longer primarily for musical amateurs. The songs of C. P. E. Bach and even of Haydn are notably simpler than their other music. By the 1820s, the pattern had already changed. Goethe regularly held musicales in his home; performances might include settings of Goethe's own poems, often by composers connected to local circles like Zelter and Reichardt. These songs were accessible to amateur performers, but in Goethe's home they were sung by professionals from the local theater company and accompanied by the composer himself, and, occasionally, critiqued by the poet.[16] Schubert's own musicales held to the same professional level – Schubert at the piano accompanied the noted tenor Johann Michael Vogl. It is normal in English novels for the young lady of the house to entertain company by singing and playing in the drawing room after dinner; Jane Austen, writing at the turn of the nineteenth century, makes clear that the abilities of such performers could be quite variable and thus suggests that amateur performance already left something to be desired. In the novels of Theodor Fontane in the 1890s, home musical performance is either semi-professional or by a visiting virtuoso;[17] since several ballads written by Fontane had been set by Carl Loewe, who made a celebrity career of performing his own songs, Fontane is likely to have been accurate. As performance practice shifts, the material becomes more difficult. If most of Schubert and much of Schumann can be sung by untrained voices, both require considerable keyboard training; Brahms already poses challenges to voice as well as accompanist, while Wolf and, say, Mahler are only occasionally accessible to the non-professional performer.[18] By the end of the nineteenth century, art song has become a genre for the concert hall rather than for the home.

The professionalization of song runs counter not only to the conditions that created the Lied, but also to the close alliance of art song with folk song.[19] In its willed simplicity and singability, eighteenth-century song had an implicit connection to folk song that became explicit in the style shift in the last third of the century. Herder, who invented both the term and the concept of folk song, collected and published the first such compilation in German, *Volkslieder* (1778, revised and republished 1807 as *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*), collected by himself and others (including Goethe) and based on the model of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). He inspired further collections, such as the great Romantic anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (Arnim and Brentano, 1805), and also poetry in the style of folk song, such as Goethe's "Heidenröslein," adapted from a song the poet himself had collected. The term was widely attached, especially in the nineteenth century, to the interest in unique national cultures and styles (such as Rückert's orientalizing poetry or the Chinese poems set by Mahler), but it always implied that the primitive, original aspects of humanity comprised its most essential and best qualities. The directness of popular style became a sine qua non for great Romantic poetry: Wordsworth in 1800

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famously prefaced the second edition of his revolutionary collection of poetry, *Lyrical Ballads,* with an attack on poetic diction (further elaborated in the Appendix of 1802) and an explanation of his efforts to bring his language "near to the real language of men."[20] It is one of the ironies of European cultural development that in rediscovering the historical significance of folk poetry the Romantics raised it to the status of high art and that late Romantic settings of folk poems (e.g. Mahler's) engage the full resources of the modern orchestra. Those texts of the period that have become folk songs in their own right – Goethe's "Heidenröslein" or Wilhelm Müller's "Am Brunnen vor dem Tore" – are sung by German children not to Schubert's melodies, but to the much simpler ones by Werner and Silcher, two of the many nineteenth-century composers who wrote songs for use in schools and social organizations, while Wolf's, Mahler's and most of Brahms's settings of genuine folk texts are considered art song.[21] It is important to be aware that all folk song – verse and music – in the nineteenth century can only be historical reconstruction and its simplicity can only be willed.

A final aspect of the style change is the concept of simplicity itself. Despite the value placed on spontaneity, both it and simplicity are already clearly willed in the songs of the mid-eighteenth century; simplicity was, as we have seen, a slogan of reformers in vocal music. But it took on new resonance after Johann Joachim Winckelmann, in his essay "Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst" (Thoughts on the imitation of Greek works in painting and sculpture, 1755) popularized the formula "edle Einfalt und stille Größe" (noble simplicity and calm grandeur). "Noble simplicity" evokes neo-classical beauty with its homogeneous clarity. Calm grandeur, however, evokes the parallel category of sublimity. Sublimity was generally considered not exactly a contrast, but an alternative to beauty in the nascent discourse of aesthetics, where, especially after the 1750s, it was increasingly associated with awe, terror, pathos, heightened emotion, and obscurity.[22] Winckelmann's tentative linkage of simplicity and sublimity was accentuated in the 1770s as simplicity became bound to Herder's concept of the folk. The kind of simplicity associated with sublime grandeur increasingly abandons the simplicity of clarity and accessibility so essential to neo-classicism. It becomes instead the simplicity of folk song with meaningless refrains, fragmentary narrative, and supernatural themes like Goethe's "Erlkönig" or "Heidenröslein." By the 1770s sublimity was associated with the silence of awe, and thus with the feelings that persist beyond speech. This version of sublimity thus connects to the issues of feeling and speech in Herder's essay on the origins of language and in a poem like "Wanderers Nachtlied," which deals with falling into silence. Often sublime obscurity appears in the imagery of a poem. In "Erlkönig" father and son disagree about what they see in the foggy landscape; the third stanza of Mignon's song "Kennst du das Land" leads over high mountain

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passes wreathed in fog past dangerous dragon-filled caves to Italy, a land simultaneously associated with flourishing nature and frozen art, comparable to the doubleness of peace and death in "Wanderers Nachtlied." Shadows in these texts are often more important than the objects that cast them. But one cannot simply speak of a shift from simplicity to complexity, for the word simplicity continues to be used to describe this very phenomenon of the shadow, of the ordinary that is extraordinary.[23] It is when simplicity becomes complex that folk song becomes professional.

Biedermeier and the historicism of the nineteenth century

The issues that preoccupied the Romantics determined the course of German poetry until the advent of modernism in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Romantic models were so pervasive that German writers suffered from the feeling that everything had already been said and written – that they had been born too late. The quandary is addressed explicitly in Karl Immermann's novel *Die Epigonen* (1836). For most of the century, the only alternatives were either the Biedermeier style or an eclectic historicism already begun by the Romantics that involved revivals of various earlier styles. Biedermeier refers in the narrow sense to the generation in German culture that came of age after the Restoration in 1815 – Schubert's generation. Heine, Lenau, Rückert, Mörike are the lyric poets who first come to mind; German literary history sometimes uses overlapping rubrics like "poetic realism" or "realism," but the basic style known as Biedermeier dominates German poetry into the 1870s. Biedermeier culture focused on domesticity, but the important issue in poetry was a heightening of the contrasting aspects of Romanticism, often characterized by pathos. Both periods worried about the dichotomy of subject and object and addressed it dialectically, but they felt differently about it. When writers take pleasure in imaginary or paradoxical resolutions of oppositions, we tend to call them Romantic (in the German context); those who suffer from their inability to make these resolutions real we call Biedermeier. Other differences follow: the Romantic view is expansive, cosmopolitan, and optimistic, while the Biedermeier attitude tends toward pessimism, fear of disorder, and withdrawal into a cultivated domesticity that can sometimes seem smug.[24] These broad generalities lead to some very specific differences for the student of the Lied.

A look at two brief examples by the best and most set poets of the period, Heinrich Heine and Eduard Mörike, will make these differences clear. Here is the opening poem of Schumann's *Dichterliebe,* based on poems from Heine's *Buch der Lieder* (1827).

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Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,	In the lovely month of May,
Als alle Knospen sprangen,	as the buds all burst open,
Da ist in meinem Herzen	then in my heart
Die Liebe aufgegangen.	love arose.
Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,	In the lovely month of May,
Als alle Vögel sangen,	as all the birds sang,
Da hab' ich ihr gestanden	I confessed to her
Mein Sehnen und Verlangen.	my yearning and desire.

Heine works with the same motifs as Hagedorn and Goethe, but through repetition he exposes their conventionality and irrelevance. The real issue is not May or buds or birds, but the poet's desire – evidently unsatisfied, since it still is being talked about. Both stanzas move from nature in the first line to the poet's own self in the third: thus the self prevails over nature, subject over object. In this respect, Heine's poem resembles Hagedorn's, which focuses on the poet's joy in nature, more than Goethe's where the central issue is the balance achieved between self and nature. Yet the poem is inconceivable without Goethe's, for this landscape is subject to time. If Hagedorn catalogs everything in the present, Heine situates his poem in a landscape of memory, what Wordsworth called "emotion recollected in tranquillity."[25] The rest of *Dichterliebe* traces not only the growth and development of the emotion but, even more, the growth and development of the speaker's reaction to his remembered emotions. This drama takes place entirely within the self; unable to escape his pain, the protagonist can overcome it only by burying the poems themselves in an absurdly oversized coffin in the last song, "Die alten bösen Lieder" (The bad old songs). One need only compare the version of death at the end of this cycle with the delicate ambiguity of repose and death in "Wanderers Nachtlied" to comprehend the difference between Biedermeier and Romantic.

But not all Biedermeier poets were satirists. Mörike's "In der Frühe" (Early in the morning), set by Wolf, offers a more subtle version of the Biedermeier aesthetic:

Kein Schlaf noch kühlt das Auge mir.	No sleep yet cools my eyes.
Dort gehet schon der Tag herfür	There comes the day already
An meinem Kammerfenster.	at my chamber window.
Es wühlet mein verstörter Sinn	My shattered senses still roil
Noch zwischen Zweifeln her und hin	back and forth among doubts
Und schaffet Nachtgespenster.	and create nightmares.
Ängste, quäle	Worry, torment
Dich nicht länger, meine Seele!	Yourself no longer, my soul!
Freu dich! schon sind da und dorten	Rejoice! Here and there already
Morgenglocken wach geworden.	morning bells have wakened.

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This poem too deals with a self in relation to nature at a particular moment, in this case daybreak. This self longs to be at one with the world, to rejoice with the morning bells and thereby erase the disharmony, the "shattered senses" that did not sleep when nature did and that suffered from nightmares when the rest of the world already was waking up. Even more than in Heine's poem, the self here is completely foregrounded: the poem is an unabashed address to an inner self to which the world is not lost, but distinctly secondary. At the same time, things would be better without this imbalance. As in Goethe and in Heine, this self has a strong sense of personal time and emotional change. It also depends on voice and music: Goethe's poem centers on the reduction of sound to silence; Heine's gives voice to his love; Mörike's leads to the morning bells. Not all poems of the period are quite so explicit, but Biedermeier texts, like those of the Romantic era, do share the fundamental commitment to articulation. Thus the underlying values in Heine's and Mörike's texts are the same as in Goethe's; but neither Heine nor Mörike can still believe in Goethe's metaphorical equation of poem and feeling.

Although I have been calling the style shift of the late eighteenth century Romantic, it would now be useful to refine my terminology. European Romanticism comprises a development that extends from Rousseau through the 1830s. In Germany, however, the term is traditionally reserved for two particular schools of poetry centered in Jena in the late 1790s and in Heidelberg beginning around 1805. Romanticism in German usage specifically excludes the writers of the period currently best known outside of Germany – the mature Goethe (after the early 1780s), Schiller, Hölderlin and Kleist – who are called "Classicists." The lyric poets of the 1770s and 1780s are identified with the term "Empfindsamkeit" (equivalent to the British Age of Sensibility). Germans sometimes refer to the entire assemblage, which is defined by Goethe's life-span of 1749–1832, as the "Age of Goethe."

The Biedermeier generation readily adopted Heine's generally pejorative term for the period of German Classicism/Romanticism – *Kunstperiode*, or era of art. Except for Schiller's plays and Goethe's idyll *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797), which was understood as a patriotic celebration of German domesticity, the Biedermeier had limited sympathy for Goethe's major novels and plays, including *Faust,* and for most of German Romanticism – Tieck, Novalis, the Schlegel brothers Friedrich and August Wilhelm, Arnim and Brentano. Instead, it anthologized and took its models from the Age of Sensibility – from Goethe's works of the 1770s, or from poets such as Matthisson, Hölty, and Claudius – all familiar figures to students of Lied. The same pattern prevails in the choice of poems set by German composers. Schubert set very few poems by the poets of high Romanticism, but almost equal numbers of poems from the Age of Sensibility and by

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poets of his own generation. Furthermore, most of the many Goethe poems set by Schubert were written before 1790, and there is a steady decline in the number of Goethe texts set by him in successive decades of the poet's oeuvre.[26] In this respect Schubert was typical. Of the major Romantic lyric poets listed above, Novalis and the Schlegel brothers are not represented in Fischer-Dieskau's collection at all. Even though Schubert set a few texts by all three, they are not frequently performed. The other three, Tieck, Arnim and Brentano, were not set until late in the century (Tieck and Brentano by Brahms) or in the twentieth century (Arnim by Strauss), when a revival of German Romanticism was underway. The same is true for Hölderlin, for whom critical terminology wavers between Romantic and Classical: he was forgotten for much of the nineteenth century and first set by Brahms, then by five composers in the twentieth century. When Schubert set two poems from Goethe's late work *West-östlicher Divan* (West-eastern anthology) of 1819, he selected the two written not by Goethe but by a friend's wife, Marianne von Willemer (not identified in early printings). Schumann also set a few poems from this collection, but it was not until Brahms and Wolf that significant numbers of these and other of Goethe's later poems were set. There was thus a striking delay in the uptake of poems into the Lied repertory from the *Kunstperiode*: the sensibility of the Lied tradition is closely allied to that of the Biedermeier.

The mature Goethe and the German Romantics appealed so little to the Biedermeier and to composers of the nineteenth century most probably because of their strategies for combating the dangers inherent in the Romantic position. In "Wanderers Nachtlied," the poet's voice and the voice of nature are identical; at the same time the speaker splits into two voices: one that speaks for a concrete objective world and one that senses things beyond the words of the poem – like the approach of death. Because Goethe's poem is so perfectly balanced, the dangers it has successfully escaped are not immediately obvious. But if the self and nature speak with the same voice, what saves the self from being swallowed up by nature and dissolving? Alternatively, what keeps the self from overpowering the voice of nature and substituting for it some construct of its own imagining? Goethe knew of these dangers: *Werther* deals with the second problem, his poem "Ganymed" (set by Schubert) with the first. Eichendorff's "Die zwei Gesellen," set by Schumann, confronts each of its protagonists with one of these complementary problems. The first of Eichendorff's two wandering youths marries and spends the rest of his life cut off from nature, which he henceforth sees only through the window of his snug Biedermeier room. The second immerses himself in nature – he succumbs to the sirens – and returns tired and old, with nothing to show for his life. Like Mörike, Eichendorff was extremely popular with composers, especially Schumann and Wolf. Although he generally is

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considered a Romantic in Germany, he published his poetry mostly in the 1820s and thereafter, and is really one of the great Biedermeier poets. German Classicism and Romanticism focus on the function of the imagination, of fiction, and of the ideal in bridging the gap between self and Nature, while the Biedermeier focuses on the dangers of what it considers an unbridgeable abyss.

The Romantics had four readily distinguishable techniques for mediating between subject and object that were not accepted by the Biedermeier. The first involves the supernatural: the German Romantics raised the fairy-tale to a high art that found solutions to the disorder of the world (Goethe, Novalis, Hoffmann) or worked out the complexities of the sub-conscious emotional life (Tieck, Hoffmann) in elaborate fantasies. The Biedermeier, best represented in this context by the Brothers Grimm (born 1785 and 1786), was interested in what it considered real fairy-tales: tales collected from "the folk." It liked ghosts and witches, but not extended fantasies. The second is irony: German Romanticism is famous for its special form of irony that preserves the fantastic elements of its creations by breaking the illusion before it can be attacked by reason and logic. Such irony involves irreverent humor quite unlike the Biedermeier's genre-humor, which never undermines respect for reason and social institutions. The Romantics – and the mature Goethe – sometimes playfully, sometimes grimly – questioned all limits, whether social or epistemological. The Biedermeier preferred clear distinctions between serious and comic, and responded with greater enthusiasm to pathos than to irreverence (except Heine, whose irreverence was often self-destructive and pathetic, and thus suited to the melancholy and madness that pervaded the middle third of the nineteenth century). Schumann had a fine sense for Heine's irony, and a strong taste for pathos. Brahms is so famous for his pathos that his lighter moments receive little attention. Only in Wolf does a sense for the playful emerge, although not, it should be noted, in the Eichendorff settings, which focus exclusively on his Biedermeier pathos. The third aspect is that Romanticism everywhere in Europe, including Germany (especially German Classicism), also engaged in a major Greek revival. Poets wrote on classical topics and engaged in translation, but also, particularly Goethe and Hölderlin, wrote seriously in classical meters – dactylic hexameter, elegiac couplets, Latin ode forms, Pindaric verse hymns – with a fluency rarely matched elsewhere in European poetry. While Schubert set magnificent models early on for Goethe's Pindaric verse hymns (among them "Prometheus" and "Ganymed"), they do not make for easy domestic performance. And no one ever developed a musical idiom for the other classical meters.[27] Indeed – and this is the fourth point – there is a strong element of formalism among the German Romantics. They are fascinated with arabesques, with elaborate verse forms of all sorts but especially the Baroque forms of the Latin countries (sonnet,

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for example), with synaesthesia, complex word play and elaborate sound effects (multiple rhymes, internal rhyme, and assonance). The Age of Sensibility and the nineteenth century – allowing for occasional exceptions like Rückert – prefer simple stanzaic forms with straightforward rhyme schemes.[28] The threat of subterranean forces lurking beneath even simple language is so great that complex language seems too much for the Biedermeier. Nineteenth-century prose can run to great syntactic complexity, and some of the verse does as well – Annette von Droste-Hülshoff in Germany, Robert Browning in England are good examples – but such language is associated with the greater challenge of making sense of the world. All four of these elements lead away from song. By avoiding them Biedermeier poets and Lied composers avoided the Romantic tendencies that might undermine authentic voice.

On the basis of these reflections we can now appreciate Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel's astute and compact assessment of the relation of poetry to music, first set forth in his lectures on aesthetics in the 1820s:

> Fusion with melodies in the strict sense is really only achieved in the case of romantic [i.e. post-classical], and, above all, modern lyrics; this is what we find especially in those songs where the mood and the heart preponderate, and music has then to struggle and develop this inner note of the soul into melody. Folk-song, for example, loves and calls for a musical accompaniment. On the other hand, canzonets, elegies, epistles, etc., and even sonnets will nowadays not easily find a composer. Where ideas and reflections and even feelings are completely expounded in the poetry and thereby more and more liberated from being wholly concentrated within the mind and from the sensuous element in art, the lyric, as a communication in language, wins greater independence and does not lend itself so readily to close association with music. On the other hand, the less explicit is the inner life which seeks expression, the more it needs the help of melody.[29]

Hegel saw with remarkable clarity the special affinity of the poetry of the period for music and the tensions between the Romantic taste for complex form and the expression of inarticulable emotional content.

Post-Romantic poetry and the Lied

It is Romantic formalism, identified by Hegel as incompatible with song, that ultimately undermined the special congruence of poetic and musical voice that characterizes the nineteenth-century Lied. For this aspect of Romantic poetics attracted the interest of the early modernists and thus determined the direction European poetry was to take. Indeed, modern poetry has been characterized in a seminal book by Hugo Friedrich as "de-romanticized Romanticism,"[30] a phrase that explains why so little

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modern poetry has been set by Lied composers and why the genre seems no longer to be flourishing. A quick survey of the sub-headings in Friedrich's chapter on Baudelaire, first of the great modern poets, defines the relation of modern poetry to both Romantic poetry and the poetry of the eighteenth century. Many address formal categories – arabesque (of great interest to the Romantics), incantatory language (related to the Romantic fascination with sound effects), the deformation of traditional forms and language, and the general sense for poetry as mathematical calculation (derived from German Romantic theory). In effect, Baudelaire exaggerates Romantic formalism to deprive language of meaning. At the same time that fantasy (in the Romantic fairy-tale) is set completely free, the ideal toward which Romantic poetry tends to strive is declared empty. The Romantic poet might have starved in a garret, become melancholy or gone mad, but the modern poet is even more divorced from society: his poetry must cultivate ugliness, offend its audience, aspire to the satanic. Once again, the Romantic revolt against neo-classicism's social norms is pushed to the extreme and art attacks itself.

These concerns converge in Friedrich's most important category, depersonalization. Poetry no longer speaks in a personal voice, but achieves its validity in its generality, its non-individuality. Thus modernism attempts to undo the fundamental Romantic discovery that the object can never be known without taking account of the subject. Rainer Maria Rilke, the most famous German modernist poet, cultivated what he called "Dinggedichte" (thing poems), poems that attempt to focus on objects without subjects. Very occasional examples of such object-focused poetry can be found in the nineteenth century: Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's poem "Der römische Brunnen" is often discussed as a *Dinggedicht*, and there has been controversy as to whether Mörike's "Auf eine Lampe" should be considered one: neither resulted in a setting included in Fischer-Dieskau's handbook. But modernist composers have set Rilke and the other great German modernist, Stefan George. The first of George's fifteen poems from *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, set by Schoenberg, is a good example of *Dinggedichte*. In the work the poet assembles a mosaic-like landscape from a list of small objects that exist in no narrative relationship to one another and, more importantly, in no relationship to a particular seeing eye or subject. A conventional love relationship emerges in the succeeding poems, but any emotions other than physical desire consistently dissolve in the cloud of detail and simile. Rilke's *Das Marienleben*, famously set by Hindemith, condenses its narrative into the moments in the life of the Virgin traditionally represented in painting and speculates consistently on the emptying of Mary's individuality and subjectivity into being itself. It is typical that the first poem begins "O was muß es die Engel gekostet haben" (Oh what must it have cost the angels). The cycle furthermore speculates about the feelings of angels, not of humans,

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and whenever humans enter into consideration, it has to do with grasping the ungraspable inhumanity of existence. As in the poems of Hölderlin, who also was not set until the twentieth century (except for one choral setting by Brahms), the emotional energy of these poems is attached to highly abstract philosophical concerns more than to expression of an individual subject. The poetry of Bertolt Brecht represents a different kind of impersonality; he speaks for classes, not for individuals. His famous alienation effect in drama was intended to make the audience think about the characters rather than identify with them. For him – as for the modernists in general – voice was a seduction to be avoided.

The change is crucial for song, which by its nature literalizes the presence of the voice. To be sure, Romantic composers like Mendelssohn composed songs without words, but their titles in fact call attention to their Romantic idealism and to the impossibility of their attempts. Modernism denies voice – the very quality that distinguishes Romantic (in the most general sense) poetry from its predecessors and the very quality that makes song possible. The connection between song and voice – not just making human sounds, but the dramatic voice of an individual persona or of the sub-conscious of an individual person – is fundamental to the existence of the Lied as it developed from Schubert through Mahler and Strauss. Composers tended to avoid those Romantic poets who most engage in playful formalism; and the song tradition continues to look back to those poets who write, however belatedly, in the Romantic/Biedermeier style with an individual poetic voice.

Conclusion

In a certain sense, then, it is reasonable to regard the history of German song as the history of three successive genres with different cultural presuppositions. In the eighteenth century we have a deliberately simplified music to accompany poetry that speaks in a language of static pictures and images and which, while perhaps not truly universal, is at least felt to be so among those who understand its conventions. Both poem and song are conceived as universally accessible; hence they are clear, simple, and take a moral stance. Romantic poetry and song, which encompasses the entire sweep of what we generally think of as the German Lied from Beethoven to Strauss, constitutes a different tradition rooted in the "songfulness" of poetry. Romantic poetry expresses an individual, personal self – a subject – that exists in time and knows of its existence only in relation to its difference from a non-self (object or its own past). Such poems depend above all on the balance between the silent voice of this inner self and the music of nature, between heard and unheard melodies. Sometime in the later nineteenth

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century, European culture loses confidence – or perhaps just loses interest – in this synthesis and returns to a form of poetry focused again in part on the visual world, in part on the abstractions of a philosophy that tries to account for the world apart from the self. The secrets of the inner self are objectified and given voice by the science of psychoanalysis; nature embodied in singing birds gives way to the harsher realities of technology and the city. Music itself becomes more technological. At the same time, song is no longer specifically human and the voice loses authority. Where once we collected folk songs, now we document the songs of nature. European music has had a love affair dating at least back to the Renaissance with the song of birds, but only in the twentieth century could George Crumb write *Vox balaenae* (Voice of the Whale). In such an age, both poetry and song are a different kettle of fish.

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