INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of “sectioning” the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.
Pennington, Lillian Doris

THE ULTIMATE SILENCE: THE DEATH MOTIF IN THE POETRY OF THEODOR STORM

The Ohio State University  Ph.D.  1983

University Microfilms International  300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Copyright 1983
by
Pennington, Lillian Doris
All Rights Reserved
THE ULTIMATE SILENCE:
THE DEATH MOTIF IN THE POETRY OF THEODOR STORM

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Lillian Doris Pennington, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1983

Reading Committee:
Hugo Bekker
David P. Benseler
Heimtraut Taylor

Approved By
Adviser
Department of German
To my family, with appreciation
for their encouragement and support
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My grateful thanks to Profs. David P. Benseler and Heimtraut Taylor for their help. A very special thanks to Prof. Hugo Bekker for supplying the encouragement and inspiration I needed for selecting this topic and completing the dissertation.
VITA

July 8, 1951 .................. Born—Durbin, West Virginia

1973 ....................... B.A., magna cum laude, German, Hiram College, Hiram, Ohio

1978-79 ..................... University Fellowship, The Ohio State University

1979 ....................... M.A., German, The Ohio State University

1979-82 ..................... Teaching and Administrative Associate, Department of German, The Ohio State University
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

iii

### VITA

iv

### INTRODUCTION

1

### Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Poet and Poetry</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Death: Concept and Expression</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>War: Death Politicized</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Death and Nature: The Metaphor of Resignation</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Death and Love: Memory and Loss</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>Death: The Silent Realm</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

243
INTRODUCTION

A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth.¹

Poetry possesses a mysterious quality that intrigues scholar and general reader alike. Few people have the ability to combine words in the magical manner that compels others to want to read them not once, but again and again. Theodor Storm's poetry reflects such a mastery of this magic and he has long been among the ranks of the "Volksdichter," a part of the German poetic canon known to every schoolchild and educated reader. However, critical studies in recent times have been scarce.² The direct and stylistically uncomplicated poetic techniques associated with Storm's verse have not attracted the interpretative efforts of modern scholars.

Storm's lyricism includes the blending of fluid melodic language and a portrayal of life shaped and restricted by personal experience. The landscape of the North Sea, love, and the intimacy of familial relationships form the thematic framework for much of Storm's poetry. But at the core of Storm's poetic musings is a...
deep sense of melancholy triggered by the poet's acute sensitivity to the transitory nature of life and the presentiment of death. This dissertation will examine the use of the death motif in Storm's lyrics, presenting a detailed discussion of the function and application of the motif.

Elizabeth Frenzel defines motif as: "... eine kleinere stoffliche Einheit, die zwar noch nicht einen ganzen Plot, eine Fabel umfasst, aber doch bereits ein inhaltliches, situationsgemässiges Element darstellt . . . . Für die Lyrik, die keinen eigentlichen Inhalt und daher keinen Stoff in dem hier umrissenen Sinne hat, bedeuten ein oder mehrere Motive die alleinige stoffliche Substanz." Poetry is rarely concerned primarily with the development of a plot, thus a motif such as death may assume various roles, for example, the establishment of an emotional tone or the projection of an evocative reaction. The poet's "internalized" definition becomes an essential aspect of the motif's treatment. Thus, the death motif is reflective of more than a poetic conceptualization; it can represent a feeling or experience generated by a profound contemplation of existence. A poet's use of night or autumn or the sea as a motif is often a matter of poetic technique whereas death, because of its unique personal significance, is not often incorporated into a
poem without a conscious awareness of one's own mortality. In this sense, Körner's broader understanding of motif is appropriate; "[Körner] verstand daher unter Motif die den Künstler beherrschende Vorstellung und Stimmung, die ihn treibende Idee, die zur Versinnlichung im Bilde drängt und den Dichter zum Gestalten bewegt; Körner übersetzte das Wort Motif" also in dem--ausserhalb des "ästhetischen Bereiches gültigen--Sinne von Beweggrund." 4

In examining the secondary literature that discusses Storm's poetry, the treatment of the death motif from a thematic perspective becomes apparent. Death functions as the basic "plot" element or incident causing a response conveyed in poetic form. The concept of death itself is considered a non-variable. Research in this area generally concentrates on the fifteen to twenty poems in which death is the central focus. However, the motif plays a significant role in more than forty of Storm's poems. In this dissertation, I shall provide a complete analysis of the motif. Before discussing the poems, the contextual framework must be established. In the first chapter, I will discuss Storm as a poet. The following chapter will present various considerations in defining death. The poems will then be analyzed from the perspective of Storm's application of the death motif in relation to the motifs or themes of war, nature, love, and silence. This approach
of grouping the poems (as opposed to a chronological one) will reveal the natural development of the motif because Storm's concern with death did not follow a linear progression; instead the poet's use of the motif reflects his conception of death within the specific contextual frameworks I have outlined above.

Storm's earliest attempts at poetry bear the characteristics that were to mark distinctively all his work: a deeply personal and emotional tone. These introspective musings, however, did not find favor with his first writing contemporaries. Storm was convinced that his poetry would be a major contribution to literature: "Ich weiss, dass ich der grösste lebende Lyriker bin; meine Gedichte werden bleiben und immer mehr gelesen werden, auch wenn meine Novellen längst vergessen sind."\(^5\) Theodor and Tycho Mommsen collaborated with Storm on the *Liederbuch dreier Freunde*, but were not above launching critical jabs at his poetic style. When Storm became enamored of the seagull as a poetic symbol, Theodor asked his brother in a letter of April 1849, "Was macht der Poet und wieviel Möwen braucht er täglich?"\(^6\)

Gottschall, one of the most influential literary critics of the time, was particularly harsh, dismissing Storm's efforts as "nur für den Nipptisch" [1871].\(^7\) Although such criticism inflicted emotional wounds, it did
not destroy the poet's belief in his creativity. The emotional tenor of Storm's writing has evoked strong reaction from critics who, depending upon their inclination for the sentimental, wistful, and melancholy, tend to heap elaborate praise or, as Gottschall did, utter scorn. In contrast to Gottschall though, Fontane recognized in Storm a superior poetic ability: "Als Lyriker ist er, das mindeste zu sagen, unter den drei, vier Besten die nach Goethe kommen." Although dismayed by Storm's provincialism, the more sophisticated Fontane readily admitted being moved to tears by the Husum native's poems. This reaction is representative of many contemporaries of Storm who objectively viewed his work as too "inward" and non-progressive and yet responded subjectively with fervent admiration.

Consistency in his writing was Storm's response to critics; firmly convinced that he understood and adhered to the principles of true lyricism (to be discussed in detail in Chapter One), he had little tolerance for anything he considered to be poorly written. He maintained these convictions with a stubborness which exasperated close friends such as Paul Heyse, whose reply to Storm's criticism of C. F. Meyer's lack of musicality ("Den . . . Meyer überschätzen aber Du und Keller als Lyriker; er kommt doch vom 'Gemachten' nicht los; ihm fehlt für die eigentliche Lyrik das echte 'Tirili' der Seele"), reveals
the barrier Storm erected between himself and the literary world around him. Heyse's pleas for a more open-minded approach to lyricism illuminate the extent of Storm's conservatism:

Der Lyrik aber ziehst Du wohl zu enge Grenzen, Liebster, wenn Du sie auf die Naturlaute der Seele beschränken willst. Es ist, als wolltest Du nur die Gewächse zu den Blumen rechnen, die Duft haben, wobei Georginen, Astern, Sonnenblumen, Kamelien und andre Kinder Gottes Übel weggämen ... Wieviel leidenschaftliche Konfessionen starker und tiefer Herzen klingen durch die Welt und rühren an unser innerstes Empfinden, ohne dass man jenes "Tirili" in ihnen zu entdecken vermochte! Der ganze Byron! Und von unsern eignen Grössten so viel Unvergängliches, das wie ein intimes Selbstgespräch zwischen Betrachtung und Gefühl in der Mitte bleibt.  

While Storm gradually developed a devoted readership, critics, for the most part, continued to maintain a reserved attitude, hesitant to laud too loudly his tendencies toward the sentimental. As historical events influenced literary trends with the potent drama of social injustice and political upheaval, the introspective nature of Storm's poetry was viewed as isolationist and self-indulgent, lacking significance because it failed to
reflect the "issues" of the period. Stifter, Keller, and others were accused of similar shortcomings. Wolfgang Preisendanz, in speaking of the reputed decline of quality in nineteenth century German literature, succinctly attacks the sort of analysis perpetuating this perception:

Not until Thomas Mann in the early 1930s did an established, great name in German literature again proclaim Storm to be in the continuum of German master poets, among the few who could capture essence in verse. Of Storm's poetic sensitivity, Mann notes: "... dass nie und nirgends das Menschliche mit durchdringender Einfalt und Reinheit ausgesprochen worden ist als in Gedichten wie dem 'Einer Toten' and that Storm's lyric possessed "eine durchaus vorherrschende Modernität und sprachliche Zeitbewusstheit, eine Kulturlyrik persönlichen und unvergesslichen Klanges, von der wenigstens ein halbes Dutzend Stücke würdig ist, neben dem Höchsten und Reinsten seinen Platz zu nehmen, was Gefühl und Sprache hervorgebracht habe, und vollkommen Unsterblichkeitscharakter besitzt." With the phrase "vorherrschende Modernität," Mann hints at a perception of Storm that does not look exclusively to his roots in the literary past, but exhibits an awareness of the poet as a nineteenth century link between the fading Romantic tendencies and a modern use of poetic language which comes into its own a short time later with Rilke.

Although Georg Lukács echoed Storm's self-designation as "der letzte Lyriker" by seeing in his poetry the climax of bourgeois lyricism, he, too, acknowledged a subtle undertone that presages modernity: "Seine Lyrik macht es noch
augenfälliger, dass Storm ein Letzter ist. Der Vollender einer Entwicklung, ihre Spitze, ihr Endpunkt . . . Aber während er in den Novellen, wenn auch noch so behutsam, den Übergang zu einem dunkel geahnten Neuen sucht, hält er mit der härtesten Strenge an der alten Form fest und lehnt nicht nur jedes Experimentieren, sondern jedes nicht im strengsten Sinne lyrisch wirkende Gedicht entschieden ab. Trotzdem hat er in seinen Versen für sein Lebensgefühl nicht nur einen reineren und stärkeren, sondern auch komplizierteren, nervöseren, vibrierenderen, moderneren Ausdruck gefunden, als jemals in seinen Novellen."\textsuperscript{13}

Fritz Martini, in defining the demise of the "Typus des Stimmungshaften Erlebnis- und Seelengedichts," could have been describing Storm himself: "er ist . . . mehr und mehr verengt, in das nur Persönliche und seine dem Weltganzen sich entfernenden Gefühlssprache zurückgezogen."\textsuperscript{14} Yet he also recognizes the intimations of modernity: "Mann kann seine Lyrik aufnehmen als einen späten, von Heinrich Heine durchtönten Nachhall der eichendorffischen und volksliedfreudigen Romantik und als eine Vorausnahme des nuancierten Sensualismus und des Sprachraffinements der impressionistischen 'Moderne' . . ."\textsuperscript{15}

The reception of Storm's work, particularly his poetry, outside the German-speaking area has been typified by a
disinclination to examine his literary contributions from new perspectives, relegating him instead to the "Seitenloge" along with other sentimentalists. Thus, while he is among the most read of German poets, with countless editions in all major languages, literary scholarship has frequently neglected him as a poet worthy of serious research. Other than Robert Pitrou's study, no major works in French are available. The Italian interest in Storm has grown after an extended period during which "nur eine blasse und allgemeine sogar flach idyllische und sentimentale Vorstellung ... eine unmittelbare und genaue Einordnung in das Literaturbild seiner Zeit unmöglich machte." Nevertheless, the most complete study of his poetry, G. A. Alfero's La lirica di Teodoro Storm, Saggio critico appeared in 1924. Since that time several minor research contributions have been made, but only a handful of monographs have joined Alfero's. The numerous Japanese translations (more than two hundred) and the use of his work in schools attest to Storm's popularity in that country but, again, scholarship has lagged. In the United States, Storm has become synonymous with Immensee to the general readership. Indeed, much of the research focuses on his novellas and in a 1968 summary of available research Walter Silz, almost as an afterthought, adds: "Höchst selten ist bei uns die erlesene Kunst des Lyrikers Storm gewürdigt worden."
The most authoritative recent study by Harro M"uller attempts to provide an overview of Storm's poetry. Although it cannot be seen as a signal of a major renewed interest in Storm, the appearance of M"uller's book in 1975 does indicate a willingness to reconsider Storm's poetry in light of modern literary viewpoints. However, M"uller focuses on the prominent poems with only cursory attention to the majority of Storm's efforts. The portion of his monograph dealing with the death poetry does create some inroads on the attention to the autobiographical aspects that form the usual foundation for any scholarly study of the death poetry.

Although the reading public has remained faithful, Storm had little impact on the writing of other literary figures after his time. While parallels can be found between Tonio Kr"oger and Immensee, and while Thomas Mann acknowledged some influence, no recent author and, most specifically no poet has attributed his development to a study of Storm's style according to Christian Jenssen, who laments in an essay: "Bei der Lyrik, die allerdings zu einem nicht geringen Teil ein Dasein im Verborgenen fristet, von der 'Diktatur der Vorlauten,' wie Ludwig Marcuse sagt, "ubert"ont, ist dergleichen kaum zu bemerken . . . . Der Eigent"umliche Zauber von Storm's Dichtungen ist so recht noch auf kein anderes Werk "ubergesprungen."
How, then, does one delineate the actual significance of Storm's poetic contribution? How does a poetry with a magical, enigmatic quality vaguely bespeaking modernity also receive the label of "coffee table" literature? A study of Storm's poetic principles in Chapter One will provide the foundation for the answers which will be found in the poetry itself.
Notes


2 The Schriften der Theodor Storm Gesellschaft provide the only ongoing critical study of Storm's work. The appearance of a single monograph in 1975 dealing with the poems interrupts a span of over twenty years without the production of a major study of Storm's poetry.


4 Frenzel, pp. 28-29.

5 As quoted in Clothilde Piacentini, "Die Poesie im Werk Theodor Storms," Schriften der Theodor Storm Gesellschaft, 17 (1968), p. 83. No specific date is given for this quote; Storm reportedly repeated it often. (This journal will be cited as Schriften in all subsequent references.)


7 As quoted in Harro Müller, Theodor Storms Lyrik,

8 As quoted in Müller, p. 4.


10 Storm-Heyse, Briefwechsel, p. 29.


16 Robert Pitrou, La Vie et l'oeuvre de Theodor Storm (Paris: Bibliotheque de philologie et de litterature modernes, 1920). This one scholar is almost singlehandedly responsible for all major editions and translations in French.

Prinzivalli cites works by Alfero, Giuseppe Gabetti, Italo Malone, and herself. These four constitute the cadre of major Storm scholars active in Italy between 1920 and 1968.


Silz, p. 45. One of the few authoritative studies on aspects of Storm's poetry was done by Elmer Otto Wooley. His Studies in Theodor Storm (Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1943) is recognized for its definitive research in dating the poems. In international circles, the
Schriften remain the most vital research organ.

If poetry is a mystical bridge between the inner soul of a man and the reality of his existence, it can function either as the harmonious linking element or as dramatic evidence of the chasm dividing the two.\(^1\) In either case, the poet writes out of self-imposed necessity because something within demands expression in a unified, structured form. Some poets, however, are haunted by their need to write. They assume a self-conscious awareness of themselves as poets. Theodor Storm was one of these, continually preoccupied not with poetry writing, but with being a writer of poetry. This concern can lead to destructive or constructive tendencies but inevitably, it affects the writer's creative pursuits. I shall first examine Theodor Storm as a writer of poetry, that is, his theoretical understanding of the nature of the genre and of himself as a poet.

Storm believed poetry to be his greatest literary contribution because it alone contained his essential self. Prose and other literary forms assumed lesser functions, but in poetry Storm saw his significance as an author. Literature offered a semblance of eternal life to Storm through its ability to preserve memory. We shall see in
his poems the connection drawn between words, memory, and death. His lyrics were to be an enduring perpetuation of identity: "Wenn ich nicht mehr bin, halten Sie mir meine Lyrik hoch . . . das andere mag vergänglich sein, aber in meiner Lyrik ist ein gutes Stück von meinem Herzblut darin."²

Hermione von Preuschen, an aspiring young poet whom Storm had befriended years earlier, recorded her last conversation with him two years before he died in 1888 at the age of seventy-one:

Es war der Kummer seines Lebens, dass bei aller vielseitigen Anerkennung seiner Novellen seine Lyrik im Volke so gut wie unbekannt geblieben. Und dann sagte er mir genau dasselbe, was er schon zu dessen grenzelosem Erstaunen dem jungen Mädchen gesagt: 'Ich weiss es, ich bin der grösste lebende Lyriker, und meine Gedichte werden bleiben und immer mehr sich Bahn brechen, wenn meine Novellen längst vergessen sind,'--Wie sich die schmächtige Gestalt dabei aufrichtete, wie sein Auge blitzte! Aber der Rausch verflog immer bald, und dann glaubte er selber nicht mehr daran und klagte über sein Verkannstsein so bitter, wie ein Künstler hierüber nur klagen kann . . .'³
Storm's expectations were, in fact, never realized. While only a few of his poems are acknowledged as masterpieces of the German lyric, scholars and the reading public recognize the novellas as his most notable accomplishments.

Although Storm's writing career spanned fifty years, his literary contributions are considered to be moderate. The reasons were partly economic; in no position to support an ever-growing family with the meager income from his writing, he was forced to devote large amounts of time to the bureaucratic demands of his work as lawyer, judge, and administrator. He also experienced several "drought" periods when inspiration failed. In spite of these obstacles, Storm produced a steady, if not abundant, stream of novellas (forty-three in number), a handful of essays, a scattering of short stories, vignettes, fairy tales, and nearly three hundred poems (many consisting of no more than four short lines). As a prolific correspondent, he engaged in lengthy exchanges with family, friends, and, most importantly, other noted authors of the time such as Heyse, Keller, and Mörike. These letters reveal the day-to-day thoughts and preoccupations that created the backdrop for his writing.

Storm repeatedly asserted that he was primarily a poet. Prose was a less adequate form of expression for
him: "Ich bin aber wesentlich Lyriker, und meine ganze
dichterische und menschliche Persönlichkeit, alles, was
von Charakter, Leidenschaft und Humor in mir ist, findet
sich nur in den Gedichten, dort aber ganz und voll; in
meiner Prosa sind die Grenzen wesentlich enger" [1868].
Clearly, in Storm's mind, poetry was not only his greatest
literary contribution, but also the best reflection of
his creative nature.

Of course, Storm's poetic inclinations were in keep­
ing with those of the nineteenth century. The impact of
Goethe and the Classical period had blended with the ele­
ments of Romanticism as Storm was growing up. Even with
Storm's provincial upbringing the effects of these past
literary events had molded educational and social atti­
tudes about literature. As Storm's biographer points out,
the time was ripe for poetic expression. The poets of the
previous generations had provided a foundation of material
and forms for the youth of Storm's time: "Storm ist
zunächst munter in diesem Strom mitgeschwommen, aber was er
als Lyriker geworden ist. das ist er nicht mit ihm und
durch ihn, sondern gegen ihn geworden. Seine echte
Dichternatur hat sich durch alle Verschalungen und
Verkrustungen lyrischer Konventionspoesie hindurchgearbeitet
und allmählich den individuellen Klang und den eigenen
Seelenton gefunden."
In his last notebook, Storm reviews his development as a poet. His observations underscore Stuckert's historical perspective but point further to Storm's own perception of his poetic nature. Essentially, Storm's poetics reflect a leap from conscious to unconscious creation. In a sense, Storm thus intimates a form of religious experience, a giving up of one's will to some other power, in this case, the poetic muse of inspiration. Only with the attainment of this ability did Storm see himself as a true poet:

Nicht der Bekleidung eines Amtes . . . die Ausübung einer Industrie oder eines Handwerks macht den Beruf. Beruf ist nur, wozu man berufen ist; aber nicht etwa vom Staate oder durch äussere Lebensumstände, sondern durch das Bedürfnis unseres Inneren, es zur wesentlichen Aufgabe unseres Lebens zu machen, und so kann man allerdings zu allem Vorgenannten Beruf haben, aber ebensowohl es ohne Beruf treiben. Weshalb sollte der innere Drang zum Schriftstellertum keinen Beruf abgeben, da er mächtiger ist als irgendein anderer und da er die Verkündigung der Schönheit und der Pflicht zum Zweck hat?

Wie ich Schriftsteller, ich muss beschränkend sagen "Poet," wurde, darüber weiss ich nur dies zu

With this unfolding realization came the development of a personal interpretation of lyric theory. The influence of Goethe is especially strong and, while his concept of "Erlebnisdichtung" is little more than a revision of Goethe's thoughts taking into account later Romantic elements, we must give it some consideration because of the central role it played in the mind of Storm the poet.

In the foreword to his anthology, *Hausbuch aus deutschen Dichtern seit Claudius*, Storm defines his limits for lyric poetry. The collection appeared in 1875 when
his own poetry writing had dwindled to a few random pieces a year. The barest essentials of his theory can be summed up as "Ton," "Kürze," "Erlebnis," and "Unmittelbarkeit." Each term embodies one of the four critical factors governing Storm's creative will and capability: musicality, intensity, internalized experience, and directness. Every real poem was supposed to reflect a blend of these factors, stripped of all superfluous intellectual manipulation.

Storm's involvement with music (as a choir director and accomplished amateur vocalist and pianist) was not insignificant in his approach to writing. The sound of words, their ebb and flow, was as important as their meaning and the way they filled the page. For Storm, a poem was intended as a sensual experience of ear, eye, and heart responding together: "Wie ich in der Musik hören und empfinden, den bildenden Künsten schauen und empfinden will, so will ich in der Poesie, wo möglich, alles Drei zugleich." The key word which determines the purpose of all art forms, linking them in common cause, is "empfinden." Poetry, with a capacity to evoke feeling on a visual and auditory level thus becomes the most complete form of artistic expression. Words and content had to mesh together in concise, clear style. Nothing in the form should detract from the reader's ability to "internalize" the
experience of the poem:

Nicht allein, dass die Forderung, den Gehalt in knappe und zutreffende Worte auszuprägen, hier besonders scharf hervortritt, da bei dem geringen Umfange schon ein falscher oder pulsloser Ausdruck die Wirkung des Ganzen zerstören kann; diese Worte müssen auch durch die rhythmische Bewegung und die Klangfarbe des Verses gleichsam ausgelöst sein, aus der sie entsprungen sind; in seiner Wirkung soll das lyrische Gedicht dem Leser—man gestatte den Ausdruck—zugleich eine Offenbarung und Erlösung, oder mindestens eine Genugtuung gewähren, die er sich selbst nicht hätte geben können, sei es nun, dass es unsere Anschauung und Empfindung in ungewöhnlicher Weise erweitert und in die Tiefe führt, oder was halb bewusst in Dunst und Dämmer in uns lag, in überraschender Klarheit erscheinen lässt. 9

Such a transfer of "Offenbarung und Erlösung" from poet to reader has at its core the concept of "Erlebnis." Poetic inspiration requires the involvement of the poet's direct experience, not his inventiveness.

The three factors mentioned thus far (musicality, intensity, internalized experience) involve the poet alone. His creative will determines the choices for the construction
of the work. They are, in a sense, techniques or tools of the trade. The fourth factor differs in that it is the intangible element representing the involvement of the reader. The most finely crafted poem would fall short, in Storm's eyes, if it failed to create an immediate emotional response or identification on the part of the reader: "Von einem Kunstwerk will ich, wie vom Leben, unmittelbar und nicht erst durch die Vermittlung des Denkens berührt werden; am vollendetsten erscheint mir daher das Gedicht, dessen Wirkung zunächst eine sinnliche ist, aus der sich dann der geistige von selbst ergiebt, wie aus der Blüthe die Frucht."¹⁰

Storm's concept of "Unmittelbarkeit" is essentially the principle of evocation, the point of identification between poet and reader. By evoking feeling in both transmitter and receiver, this directness, as Martin Anderle puts it, "ist also ein emotioneller oder geistiger Prozess, der in einer Wortfigur objektiviert werden kann."¹¹ The key to creating evocation lies in the poem (words, rhythm, etc.) as a matter of the author's choice, responsibility, and ability. However, its significance has to do with the relationship thus established between poet and reader. The experience the reader brings to the poem will also play a role in what the evocative effect will be.
This poet-reader relationship most frequently is served by the link of a "poetic persona," a "lyrical I." The introduction of the third character, even as a mythical extension of the poet, creates a triad which complicates and expands the evocative process. The poet and reader have, of course, the possibility for direct communication of feeling, i.e., the reader may respond directly to the image of the poet that has been created in his/her own mind. Similarly, the poet acts to some extent in accordance with what he indirectly perceives as the reader's desires and interests. In other words, he is aware of the potential of evocation. But this transfer of feelings can also occur between poet and reader via a persona. In this case, two separate facets of evocation may take place together or independently. The poet has a specific relationship with the persona. He creates the lyrical "I" for a given purpose and consequently responds to the "personality" he forms. He may also examine the poem's effect on the reader from this third perspective, one step removed from his own. The reader, for his part, will develop a response to the persona which may be totally independent of the image of the poet or may alter the reader's perceptions of the poet.

At the core of these potential, interwoven relationships remain the words of the poem. The effectiveness of these words and the correlation of the way Storm uses the
language to the various evocative moods will be a major focus of study as I examine individual poems in the ensuing chapters.

When the four aspects are in balance the poem achieves a union of what Storm saw as an inner and outer structure. These two levels correspond to the traditional concepts of form and content but the inner structure of content is expanded by Storm to incorporate the spirit of the piece. This intangible spirit determines the true significance of the poem because without it the outer shell becomes hollow and dead, but with it, that same outer shell intrinsically creates itself and is thus an integral part of the inner structure:

Von der lyrischen . . . Poesie kann man sagen, sie soll Naturlaut in künstlerischer Form sein. Ich will hier nur von der Lyrik sprechen und von der Form im einzelnen der Ausführung; daher nichts von der Anlage des Ganzen usw., obgleich dies allerdings auch zur Form gehört. Diese Form . . . ist eine doppelte, eine größere prosodische und eine feinere geistige, die ganz ungereifbar ist. Die erstere besteht in der eigentlichen Korrektheit des Versbaues und allen falls in der Harmonie desselben mit dem Inhalt nach angemessenen Statzbildung, die zweite lässt sich am besten nach ihrer Wirkung beschreiben
gennant.12

Storm eloquently captures his feelings in four lines written in 1884. The presentation underwent several transforma-

tions before he was satisfied that he had adequately defined "Lyrische Form":

Poeta laureatus:

Es sei die Form ein Goldgefäß,
In das man goldnen Inhalt giesst!

Ein anderer:

Die Form ist nichts als der Kontur,
Der den lebend'gen Leib beschliesst.
(1885)13

The "Poeta" assumes the active role of pouring the con-
tent into a form of the same element (gold) but having an in-
dependent existence. The form must pre-exist in order to
hold what the poet puts into it. Since the two are of
the same material, they will meld together after the task of pouring in (by the poet) is complete. The definition stated by the "anderer" sees no need for an external force. The form is already an integral part of a living content. It gives that content shape and thus, in a sense, controls it but it has no separate existence. Here, the content has pre-existence and assumes independence from the poet's action. The poet's purpose is to express the life-spirit of the content, not to mold a lifeless object.

"Die Stadt" is probably the best known of Storm's lyric poems and rightly so, since it serves as the perfect example of his theoretical beliefs. I include a discussion of it as a basis for comparison with poems incorporating the death motif. This poem, unencumbered by the issue of mortality, is indicative of Storm's ideal lyric poem. As Walter Silz states, "Ihre Form ist dem Gedanken in bewundernswerter Weise angepasst."14 Blending imagery, sound, and a message from the soul, the poem fuses the objective and subjective perspectives of the persona into a complete, harmonious portrait of fifteen lines:

Die Stadt

Am grauen Strand, am grauen Meer
Und seitab liegt die Stadt,
Der Nebel drückt die Dächer schwer,
Und durch die Stille braust das Meer
Eintönig um die Stadt.
Es rauscht kein Wald, esschlägt im Mai
Kein Vogel ohn' Unterlass,
Die Wandergans mit hartem Schrei
Nur fliegt in Herbstesnacht vorbei.
Am Strande weht das Gras.

Doch hängt mein ganzes Herz an dir,
Du graue Stadt am Meer,
Der Jugend Zauber für und für
Ruht lächelnd doch auf dir, auf dir,
Du graue Stadt am Meer.

[1851; Werke, I, p. 112]

The melodic nature of the poem is evident from the first line. Regular meter and the recurrence of words and phrases ("am grauen Strand," "am grauen Meer," "die Stadt," "Du graue Stadt am Meer," "auf dir, auf dir") give a refrain-like structure to the piece. In fact, in this eighty-five word poem, only sixty-two separate words occur, so that one-fourth of the poem is repetition. Less than one-fourth of the words are multi-syllabic. The sound of many words evokes a response much as their meaning does. The harsh calls of the goose come forth in the high vowel tone of "Schrei" and the sharp-edged consonants of "hartem." On the other hand, the deep vowel tones of the verbs "rauscht" and "braust" combined with the sibilants, lend a continuum, a near sense of monotony to the aural scenes they describe. The verb form contributes too, to the perception that these sounds are constant, perhaps eternal.

Each line of the first two strophes adds another brushstroke on the portrait of the city and yet each line
is a self-contained vignette as well. The poem flows with such smoothness that only upon reflection does one realize these separate images cross borders of time and location. The reader is swept along, so involved with absorbing each unfolding fragment of the scene that he momentarily loses the power to intellectualize or analyze. Thus, the poet is able to draw diverse images together, conveying a sense of harmony, while upon analysis, the transitions from line to line can be seen as abrupt and disjointed at times. In the second strophe, the punctuation indicates a single sentence. However, the first two lines form an independent thought. The last three do not present a coherent, clear image logically or grammatically. The reader does not sense this upon reading because the flow of imagery compels him to suspend a desire for logic and analysis. The poem is appreciated as a sensory and emotional experience.

In the first two strophes Storm presents a picture that on the superficial level (the outer structure) is essentially objective because no persona is involved. Yet the effect of the poem is subjective even before the persona enters in the final strophe. Storm accomplishes this with "den richtigen Gebrauch der Assonanz und Alliteration im Verse" (p. 25). The reader has a sense of wariness about the security of the scene: the fog presses
the roofs, the sea is monotonous in its rush, the goose is a solitary creature in the autumn night. But the serenity of the regular, rhythmic meter and the lulling repetition of words balance the bleak outlines of the landscape. Thus, as readers, we are already prepared when the "doch" reveals we actually have been receiving a persona's subjective perception, a distinction between impression and objective observation. The flow of the poem remains undisturbed. The gentling effect of the poet's hand in the first two strophes in soothing the threatening aspects of the imagery is perfectly in keeping with the revelation that it is the person's wistful reminiscences of childhood which endows the city with its magical appeal.

The visual, aural, and emotional facets function with absolute unity of purpose; the poem begs to be spoken aloud, not merely read, to be savored by the ear and the eye even as it appeals to the heart. In presenting its timeless scene without superfluous detail, "Die Stadt" justifies Silz' evaluation of Storm as "ein überlegener Meister künstlerischer Sparsamkeit."15

The ability of any poet to achieve the harmony of form, content, and essence (this being the sum of those undefinable elements of "Unmittelbarkeit" that create emotional response) cannot hope to be consistently maintained. While Storm did seem to sense in himself a greater capacity for such achievement ("Ich bin der größte lebende
Lyriker"), he was blunt in his overall assessment of German lyricism: "Die Lyrik insbesondere anlangend, so ist nach meiner Kenntnis unserer Literatur, die Kunst 'zu sagen, was ich leide,' nur Wenigen, und selbst den Meistern nur in seltenen Augenblicken gegeben."\textsuperscript{16} The importance of Storm's theory though, has to do with the precept behind it, namely, that the components were not simply parameters established by his or anyone else's intellectual analysis but were instead inherent factors in poetry. In other words, Storm offers not so much a theory as a definition of lyricism.

In studying Storm's use of the death motif, two perspectives must be considered and integrated: the meaning the motif conveys and the poetic treatment of that meaning. This chapter has presented an overview of Storm's poetic vision—the nature of his poetic self coupled with his interpretation of ideal poetic form and presentation. The following chapter will examine the problem of conceptualizing and expressing the idea of death. With the background of these two necessary theoretical considerations thus established, later chapters will discuss the resulting effects on the poems.
Notes

1Justus Buchler, The Main of Light: On the Concept of Poetry (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974) devotes much of his book to a discussion of the elusive essence of poetry. The bridge may be tangible, but the poet's construction is based on a perception of the world (or worlds if we distinguish and include the introspective perception of an inner world) that remain/s shrouded in mystery for the reader and sometimes for the poet as well. Buchler examines this inner-outer purpose drawing on such diverse opinions as Hegel and T. S. Eliot before concluding that poetry can be defined only with "reasonable incompleteness" (p. 173).

2As quoted in Harro Müller, Theodor Storms Lyrik, Literatur und Wirklichkeit, 13 (Bonn: Grundmann, 1975), pp. 1-2. This statement was recalled by Ferdinand Tönnies in Gedankblätter, 1917.


4Müller, p. 2, points out that only seven editions of Storm's poetry appeared in his lifetime.

5As quoted in Müller, p. 1.

7. Gertrud Storm, Theodor Storm: Ein Bild seines Lebens (Berlin: Curtius, 1912), I, p. 127. Storm intended no irony with the term "Beruf." His administrative life was an economic necessity; in his heart, poetry was his true "vocation."


12. As quoted in Müller, pp. 24-25.

13. Storm, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Peter Goldammer (Berlin: Aufbau, 1967, I, p. 192. Storm first formulated the idea in 1854 in a discussion of poems by Julius Rodenberg. In June 1884, the version he sent to Keller had no separate personas:

   Die Form war dir ein goldener Kelch,
   In dem man goldnen Inhalt giesst—
   Die Form ist nichts als der Kontur,
   Der einen schönen Leib beschliesst.

   Writing to Erich Schmidt a month later, he approached the idea from a different perspective:

   Es ist die Form kein Goldgefass,
   In das man goldnen Inhalt giesst.
Die Form ist nichts als der Kontur
Der einen schönen Leib beschliesst.

(Subsequent poems discussed will be cited in the body of the text. No single edition of Storm is recognized as the definitive critical edition. Recent scholarship regards this edition as the most complete and thoroughly researched.)


15 Silz, p. 27.

16 Storm, Hausbuch, p. vii.
Of all the themes and motifs available to a poet, death is the most problematic because, being an unknown, death can only be expressed as absence or loss of what is known. We know explicitly what death is not; what death is must remain conjecture. Every person has an individual impression of mortality. How, then, does one convey anything meaningful about the subject? What is the significance of language when attempting to express the incomprehensible nature of death?

The issue is not merely literary, but cultural. In order for us to understand its development in Theodor Storm's poetry we must first determine the possible connotations of the death motif. Thomas Mann succinctly stated one of the problems that will be a focal point of this study: "Wenn der Tod immer dasselbe ist, so bedeutet er doch nicht immer dasselbe, er hat ungleiches metaphysisches Gewicht." Since no definitive parameters can be established, this chapter will offer a series of acceptable, logical suppositions inherent in the concept of death. In subsequent chapters, Storm's death poems will be analyzed with attention to these suppositions.

The semantics of the word "death" (or its substantive translation "der Tod") assume one or more of four
fundamental perspectives: bio-medical, philosophical, religious, psychological. (Because the literal definition of death plays no distinct role in the study of Storm's poetry, the bio-medical aspect is mentioned here only by way of acknowledgment.) These factors are not socially, historically, or culturally dependent. In other words, they are always extant; only the value placed upon each one is variable. When a person thinks or hears the word, or is witness to a scene of death, a twofold reaction occurs. First, the person responds to the immediate context, usually from a subjective point of view but with primary attention to the contextual form death has taken at the moment. A second response takes place on a reflective, objective level. Now, the person takes the instance of death and analyzes it in accordance with a personal understanding of the general conception. Our immediate reaction to the violent death of a friend is one of horror, regret, and sadness, but the secondary response will consider it in light of our interpretation of the religious beliefs, philosophical traditions, and social customs of our environment. (In a non-Christian society, for example, the reflective phase of analysis may incorporate a revenge factor to obtain compensation for the society's loss; e.g., the oft-involved statement from the Old Testament Jewish tradition: "If any harm
shall follow, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye ..." [Ex. 21:23-24].) However, the unity between the individual and his/her social environment will play a critical role in the response to death, in that the intensity of the person's identification with the society determines the extent of influence which societal attitudes will exert. In other words, each member of a society is conditioned to react to death within the predetermined response boundaries of that social environment. Any deviation is a conscious act based upon analysis of the society's definition of death, which is to say, the individual reflects on the concept of death itself rather than on a specific instance.

Speculation about death is an appropriate cornerstone of much of the world's philosophy. The condition of man's existence and thus his impending non-existence is the crux of much metaphysical pondering. To understand life, we must discover some way to rationalize its termination. Because of the fear caused by the unknown element of death, various philosophies have evolved to negate the impact such fear would have on life. Indeed, Socrates, who willingly confronts his own dying, mused, "Is not philosophy the study of death?" Philosophy seeks to examine death by logical and rational thought. In that sense, it depersonalizes the nature of death, choosing
instead to see it only as a necessary cog in the machinery of the universe. While a philosophy may provide a satisfaction of understanding to the individual who adopts it, its purpose is to place death objectively within the framework of a total, logically harmonious metaphysical conception of life.

Schopenhauer opined that fear of death was the beginning of philosophy and the final cause of religion.\textsuperscript{3} But while philosophy attempts to rise above the primal fear reaction, fear remains at the core of much of religion's ritualism. The briefest overview of death in the major world religions would not begin to unravel the various perceptions (from the reincarnation theory of Hinduism to Buddhist nirvana to the martyrdom complex in Islam). Even the western Judeo-Christian religions have complex, conflicting, and, at best, divergent interpretations of death that result in elaborate ritualistic traditions. In the Roman Catholic liturgy, for example, the eternal life of the soul is consigned to one of several realms: heaven, hell, or purgatory. The concept of purgatory allows for post-death expiation of sin which may be aided by the living through prayer and the performance of specific rites. The religious canon of most Protestant faiths does not incorporate the concept of a purgatory, thus creating a different relationship between the dead and the living. Fundamentalist churches adhere to the
literal Biblical delineation of the death and resurrection process of Revelation. Each sect evolves its own death tradition based upon a combination of social need and specific theological foundations. Catholic theology has blended with ancient pagan rites, for example, in areas such as Latin America or the Far East. Religion and social structure are clearly interdependent.

Several generalizations about Christianity (the only real influence on Storm) are noteworthy. The foundation of Christian belief is firmly rooted in death, Christ's death being necessary for the salvation of mankind. Yet intrinsic in the notion of His earthly death is the resurrection and eternal life made possible by faith. Life in this body must cease in order to achieve an eternal spiritual existence. But afterlife holds the possibility of eternal damnation under Satan's domination. How one lives this life determines how one's eternal life will be spent. Death is, therefore, a purely material occurrence; the soul continues on to one destiny or another.

Because that destiny is not revealed before death, an array of rituals and taboos accompany the Christian treatment of death involving prayer, wakes, sanctified burial places, and specific interment procedures. The faithful enactment of these rites may be based on conviction and faith but may also contain an inherent fear that,
if they are not adhered to, the soul's future will be jeopardized. Death is dreaded by those unsure of their salvation or those too attached to their material existence. A major task of Christianity is to provide counsel for the manner of living one's life that will prepare for the soul's spiritual preservation (as opposed to damnation) after physical death. The individual's capacity for belief in this counsel will largely affect how that person faces the moment of death. This process is not one of logic but of the intangibles of faith.

The most intimate conception of death rests within the psychology of the individual. Here, the logic of philosophy and the faith of religion are relativized by the human personality with its complex genetic, behavioral, and instinctual facets. In The Psychology of Death, the authors outline six propositions inherent in the psychological perception of death: 1) on a developmental level, the concept of death is always relative; 2) the concept of death is very complex ("we find it does not invariably hold together as a unified, internally consistent structure"); 3) death concepts change (with factors of age, health, etc.); 4) the "goal" of death concepts is "obscure, ambiguous, or still being changed;" 5) situational contexts influence death concepts; (6 death concepts are related to behavior. This last word is really the key distinction between the psychological
conception of death and the philosophical or religious. It is concerned not with logic or faith based on feeling, but with the distinct mental developmental patterns of each individual which affect behavioral responses. A human being with no opportunity to evolve philosophical or religious concepts (possible only if unexposed to a social structure possessing some form of these) will still develop a definition of death that will dictate personal behavior when confronted with a situation involving death. As soon as that human being joins in social contact with others, a communal form of response will begin to form and common features will dominate each individual. Thus, in organized society the psychological perspective of death can most accurately be defined as the internalized, singular adaptation of existing social traditions (philosophical, religious, or some combination of the two) by a unique personality having numerous undetermined facets independent of social existence and function.

Another factor of the dilemma that death is not always death concerns whose death is in question. An individual has three possible perspectives from which to "experience" the emotions related to dying: one may witness impersonal death (as in wars or other mass tragedies), one may suffer the death of loved ones, and one must face the inevitability of death of self. Each situation engenders
a different intensity of the response options we have been discussing. A further variable is the balance of the subjective-objective perspective which is determined by the contextual death occurrence. Hence, one may assume a clinically objective stance when viewing the destruction of war in contrast to immanent self-death that, by its intimate nature, demands "dass ein Mensch sein eigenes Sterben unmöglich denkend objectivieren kann. Dass die anderen Lebewesen alle sterben, das ist klar, aber dass man selbst sterbe, das ist tatsächlich eine unvollziehbare Vorstellung . . . ."5 In the case of a loved one's passing, death may be significant to the survivor in terms of the loss suffered, concern for the well-being of the departed one's soul, or the fear-anticipation dichotomy of prospective reunion in afterlife.

If the philosophical or religious understanding of death is deeply ingrained in the individual's thinking pattern, death-of-other and death-of-self will be viewed with that understanding; in other words, a Christian will view his/her own death with the identical religious conceptions employed for death-of-others. In the psychological realm, however, the mind is not always capable of pure logic or pure faith, particularly when faced with a fear-evoking condition (death remains an unknown in spite of all philosophizing and theologizing and an unknown is the
most prevalent fear inducer). The fear variable functions differently for death-of-self and death-of-others, as can clearly be seen in a chart devised by Kastenbaum and Aisenberg:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fear</th>
<th>My Death</th>
<th>Death of Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dying</td>
<td>Personal suffering</td>
<td>Vicarious suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal indignity</td>
<td>Vicarious disintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterlife</td>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>Retaliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Loss of relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extinction</td>
<td>Basic death fears</td>
<td>Abandonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attached fears</td>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Certainly, the dominance of a positive philosophical or religious death conception will neutralize some or all of these fears. Thus the degree of socialization plays an influential role since we have determined that the more an individual identifies with the supporting society, the nearer will his idea of death reflect the general, existing norm. But the internal nature of the individual (his personality, if you will) ultimately determines the image of death.

In coming to grips with the semantics of the word, we must heed also the distinction between dying and death. Death cannot be truly understood or defined because it is beyond the realm of experience and knowledge. However, dying can be observed, even experienced because, as Ninian
Smart notes, "dying is a process rather than an event." The two are not synonyms. Dying always precedes death; death does not always follow dying. (A man bleeding profusely is dying, but a transfusion and surgery can prevent his death.) We are now approaching the sphere of language which determines, in large part, our ability to conceptualize and order the various factors discussed up to this point. Smart illustrates the issue with his observations of "to die," an active verb: "... it implies that somehow the source of dying is in the person rather than outside him... Built into the language, then, is a distinction between what lies "within" a person and what lies "outside" him, and dying is predicated of the person himself as though it is a process, as it were, originating in him." 

In a culture that has developed traditions regarding death as a negative, frightening, or undesirable force, people seek ways to alleviate the uneasiness accompanying the mention of the topic. A language code system is developed to enable this suppression of the direct vocabulary because of an inexplicable belief that "death" couched in metaphor or euphemism is in some way more tolerable. The inability of language to convey the actual nature of death is partly responsible: "die Menschen sprechen vom Tode anders, als sie von ihm wissen oder wissen können."
Primarily though, it is a culturally ingrained response to a desire for avoidance of the cold finality the specific term has come to imply: "Im ganzen hat die Menschheit nicht so trübe über das Leben gedacht. Sonst wäre es nicht zu begreifen, dass man es in allen Sprachen liebt, den Tod nicht beim Namen zu nennen, sondern Euphemismen anzuwenden, die das Schaurige in ein freundliches Gewand kleiden. Allerdings bewirkt gerade dieses Bemühen vielfach das Gegenteil von dem, was es bezweckt."¹⁰

The metaphorical circumvention of the word "death" can be divided into two basic categories. These parallel the symbolic interpretations of death that essentially see it as a positive or a negative force. In fact, several subcategories can be determined for both if one studies the religious and philosophical thinking as depicted in speech and literature of the Western European Christian tradition. In Das Problem des Todes, Friedrich Feigel characterizes the following death concepts: death as enemy, friend, educator, restorer, a pathway of new steps to personal development, and as a return of the individual to the unity of the living ALL.¹¹ The first four of these are personifications of death, creating the image of a conscious being with a purpose or function. The last two see death as a type of journey or progression from one point (albeit metaphysical rather than geographical) to a more positive destination.
Other delineations are possible, resulting in varied metaphoric depictions. Using a study of language in death notices and obituaries, Werner Fuchs outlined the following groupings (I include several of his examples for each): death as sleep ("entschlief" with accompanying adjectives such as "sanft," "ruhig," etc.; "schloss die Augen für immer"); death as departure ("verschied," "ist von uns gegangen," "hat uns verlassen"); death as return ("ist heimgegangen"); death as loss or having someone taken away ("wurde uns genommen," "wurde uns entrissen," "wir verloren"); death as a release from travail ("wurde von Leiden erlöst"); death as a call from God ("wurde durch Gott abberufen," "hat Gott heimgerufen"). Thus, the conceptualization of death here is based on the result rather than on the real nature of death as an event. But the Fuchs categories also show a dichotomy of interpretation; in the first three the dead person has an active participation, indeed initiates or consummates the process and in the latter three the dead person is acted upon by an outside force or being (usually understood to be God).

The studies cited make clear that modern popular cultural values encourage or prefer a positive death concept. Literary tradition, however, presents a multitude of metaphoric representations conveying the broad range of conceptual interpretations that evolved always as the result
of social influences. While the common man is only troubled by the image of death in moments of immanent crisis, the goal of the writer is portrayal and insight into the essence of life, and thus, the nebulous specter of death is a constant companion in the writer's work. Compelled by his professional needs to ponder tragedy, fate, and the ironies of ideas such as eternity and mortality, the writer is beset, as Thomas Mann puts it, by "Dichterängste." This tension between personal fears, beliefs, etc. and the need or desire to create, within the bounds of a literary framework, an expression of death having a specific narrative or symbolic function generates an intensified perception of the meaning of existence: ". . . dass der Mensch, wenn er vom Tode spricht und es ihm ernst ist, sein Innerstes gibt, dass er dem Tod gegenüber zunächst im geistigen, nicht im leiblichen Sinne sein wahres und tiefes Wesen erweist; dass also die Dichtung, wo sie vom Tode redet, am tiefsten in das Geheimnis des Menschen hineinsehen lässt, dass man hier in allem und jedem in den Mittelpunkt kommt und den Menschen ganz zu erfassen lernt." 

The occurrence of the death motif is a haunting, constant refrain throughout literature and an attempt to document its appearance constitutes a major undertaking beyond the focus of this investigation. Walter Rehm provides a
masterful, detailed study of death in German literature to
the nineteenth century. I will offer only a random samp-
ling of the death motif in pre-Storm poetry for the purpose
of perspective. While I do not profess to demonstrate a
specific pattern of development with this sampling, it will
provide some points of departure in understanding potential
poetic applications of the motif used by Storm.

The medieval conception of death was largely de-
termined by the Catholic traditions. As a recurring motif
in crusade poetry and "Minnesang," death is regarded as
a physical ending of life that allows for the more important
spiritual afterlife of the soul. Friedrich von Hausen's
crusade poem, "Sie waenent dem tode entrunnen sin" makes
clear that proper action in life is a prerequisite for ad-
mission to God's kingdom: "Swer das křuze nam und niender
vert, / dem wirt doch zu jungeste schin / swanne im diu
port ist vor verspert, / die er tuot ūf den liuten sin."\(^{15}\)
Death is described in terms of what will occur after life.
Albrecht von Johansdorf uses a similar death metaphor in
"Mich mac der tot von ir minnen wol scheiden." The persona
is unconcerned with the fact of death, focusing instead on
what its effect will be: "die selen vro, / so si ze
himele keren mit schallen."\(^{16}\)

A similar concentration on the afterlife surfaced in
the Romantic period but it was modified and given a new
potency with the sensual tone of rapture expressed by a persona in anticipation of death, or more appropriately of the new existence after death. Novalis rushes eagerly toward death in "Hinüber wall ich": "Ich fühle des Todes / Verjüngende Flut." Dying brings rebirth and rejuvenation to the persona and, hence, new hope. Kleist also embraces the moment of death as an entry into the realm of immortality ("Nun, o Unsterblichkeit, bist du ganz mein! / . . . / So geht mir dümmmernd alles Leben unter: / Jetzt unterscheid ich Farben noch und Formen, / Und jetzt liegt Nebel alles unter mir" [DD, p. 182]). Both of these poets attempt to envision the process of dying from a first-person perspective. The choice of this perspective emphasizes the anticipatory, almost joyful attitude about death characteristic of many Romantic poets.

Death is most frequently expressed as awareness of transiency in Baroque poetry. The period is replete with the motif portrayed as a passage of things or conditions that we perceive as belonging in the realm of life. In other words, death symbolizes the loss of things that are characteristic of our physical, sensual existence. Gryphius speaks of the moment of passing: "Was ist der hohe Ruhm, und Jugend, Ehr and Kunst? / Wenn diese Stunde kommt, wird alles Rauch und Dunst, / Und eine Not muss uns mit allem Vorsatz töten" (DD, p. 52). However, he also sees that
passage (into death) as one from the sorrows of life: "Steig aus, du müder Geist, steig aus! Wir sind am Lande. / Was graut dir für dem Port? Itzt wirst du aller Bande / Und Angst und herbe Pein und schwerer Schmerzen los" (DD, p. 52). The persona speaks as if he has knowledge of the post-death condition, that it is more positive than life. While this portrayal offers a gleam of hope, Opitz emphasized death as finality in "Lebenslust":

Unterdessen lauft der Bach
Unsers Lebens, das wir führen,
Ehe wir es inne Werden,
Auf sein letztes Ende hin;
Dann Kommt ohne Geist und Sinn
Dieses alle in die Erden. (DD, p. 39)

A century later, Klopstock assumed a different stance—that of the person left behind, addressing the departed spirits. Death is symbolized by the monuments erected in memory of the dead: "Ihr Edleren, ach, es bewächst / Eure Male schon ernstes Moos!" (DD, p. 68).

The age of German lyricism began, for Storm, with Mathias Claudius. This is the point at which one can begin to speak of influence on Storm's own work. In his anthology, Storm included only those poets who fulfilled his expectations of lyricism and he pays homage to Claudius' brand of poetic genius in the foreword: "Die Sammlung [Hausbuch aus deutschen Dichtern seit Claudius] beginnt mit Claudius, der in einer Zeit wo sowohl die poetische als die musikalische Lyrik in Deutschland sich in
conventionelle Thee- und Kaffeeliedchen verloren hatte, zuerst den unmittelbaren Ausdruck der Empfindung, namentlich, und bis jetzt kaum übertroffen, der Natur-Empfindung wiederfand . . ."  

The death motif is present in many of Claudius' poems, but the image of death presented is chameleon-like. He draws together the concepts of transiency or passing and loss in "Der Saemmann." The early part of the poem laments the loss suffered by the living ("Und sie entschlummerte dir!"). The latter portion endows the act of dying with grandeur and nobility in the guise of an eagle: "Der Adler besucht die Erde, / Doch sät nicht, schüttelt vom Flügel den Staub und / Kehret zur Sonne zurück" (DD, p. 72) The underlying implication of choice and will establishes a tension in the poem with the persona's grief at his loss.  

"Der Tod und das Mädchen" has structural parallels to a verbal confrontation between death and a human being occurring in a much older text--Der Ackermann und der Tod. In that work the dialog was a forensic exercise in rhetoric, with each party presenting a multifaceted argument about the given situation of the death of the ploughman's wife. Here, the tone is purely emotional with a young girl pleading for her own life. She perceives death as a raging entity and in the traditional image of the skeleton, the last remnant of a dead person's physical being ("Geh, wilder Knochenmann!" [DD, p. 71]). Death, on the other hand,
attempts to pacify its prospective victim by offering the opposite portrayal of his role and its impact. He is the friend, indeed, the lover in whose arms she can find sweet repose: "Bin Freund und komme nicht zu strafen . . . / Ich bin nich wild, / Sollst sanft in meinen Armen schlafen.") Such a dialog confronts the living with a dilemma. Is death using a ruse to placate us or is our image of him wrong? Does such a view of death offer us hope or merely magnify the awareness that resignation to death's ultimate victory is, in fact, the only choice available?

A contrasting personification of death is used in the four-line poem "Der Tod" (DD, p. 71). There is no consolation, no illusion of warmth or comfort as every image contributes to the bleak scene. But the common ground with the first poem is the implication that resignation is the only possible response to death's inevitability. He strikes at the chosen hour:

Ach, es ist so dunkel in des Todes Kammer, Tönt so traurig, wenn er sich bewegt Und nun aufhebt seinen, schweren Hammer Und die Stunde schlägt.

Brentano's personification of death has the overtones of the Romantic fascination with the fairy-tale and the fantastic. Death is a metaphorical giant stalking across the earth, and to man he is "Der Feind" (DD, p. 196):
Wehl! sein Haupt steht in der Mitternacht,
Sein Fuss in dem Staub;
Vor ihm weht das Laub
Zur dunkein Erde hernieder.

Tod, so heisst er,
Und die Geister
Beben vor ihm, dem schrecklichen Held.

The contemplation of self-death by Novalis and Kleist focuses on the afterlife. In the post-Romantic period, other poets speculated about their own deaths with the theme once again being resignation. But this new resignation is formed in wistful, melancholy imagery rather than tones of despair. Mörike, in "Denk es o Seele," contrasts the lovely little vignettes of insignificant, everyday imagery with their roles in death, emphasizing the unknown element of the time when death will befall a person. He looks at the plants ("Sie sind erlesen schon, . . ./ Auf deinem Grab zu wurzeln") and the black horses ("Sie werden schrittweis gehn / Mit deiner Leiche") and acknowledges his impending death (for death is always waiting, an acceptance cloaked in irony (DD, p. 253).

The master of irony in the nineteenth century was, of course, Heine. He was to influence Storm's poetry in many ways although Storm never possessed Heine's ability for the ironical twist nor did he have the nature for it. In Heine's later poetry, after he was beset by illness and related misfortunes, death was a common motif, captured
by descriptive and varied metaphors. In "Sie erlischt," the tone is a blend of pragmatism and despondency, a self-deprecating type of "That's all there is, folks!" attitude (DD, p. 219):

Der Vorhang fällt, das Stück ist aus,
Und alles riecht nach ranzgem Öle.
Die letzte Lampe ächzt und zischt
Verzweiflungsvoll, und sie erlischt.
Das arme Licht war meine Seele.

Perhaps the starkest portrait of death reflects absolute finality. With no concern for what may come after and indifference to fear or revulsion of the process itself, such a view simply defines death as a final release, as the end of life.

Leben

Leben; wohl dem, dem es spendet
Freunde, Kinder, täglich Brot;
Doch das Beste, was es sendet,
Ist das Wissen, das es endet,
Ist der Ausgang, ist der Tod.

Theodor Fontane's bleak appraisal of death as life's greatest gift is less an indication of his feelings about death than it is revealing of his resigned attitude toward life. Indeed, it exemplifies one trend that developed in the nineteenth century: a tired despairing view of life and a prevailing cognizance of death's omnipresence.
The political failures of the era and the restructuring of the social strata as the century progressed toward industrialization were responsible for much of this negative thinking but other factors contributed as well. The post-Kantian era resulted in a splintering of philosophic trends. The role of science began to change people's understanding of nature and progress with Darwin's revelations of evolution. All of these ideological shifts affected the psychological tenor of the people. They were forced to confront and/or develop new self-images that could adjust to and compensate for the uncertainty of their own place in this altered socio-political order. This mentality has been summarized as four basic, recurring motifs dominating the philosophical, artistic, and historical expressions of the century: "the capacity to dream-withdrawal both as a waking dream and a turning toward the 'heaven of the night,' both as yearning hope and as nightmare;" the inclination to constitute "the world from spirit . . . thinking of the whole and attempting to comprehend the whole, behind the flight of appearance;" the juxtaposition of "green to gray, hope to despair, affirmation of life to infathomability;" the "role of observing . . . To describe the transitory and thereby oneself 'going over' as if nothing had happened"--in other words, the resignation in life that leads to an indifference to the significance of one's own death.
All of the motifs reveal, upon closer investigation, their intrinsic relationship with the problem of death. The remnants of the Romantic period are evident in the first. The delineation of the "waking dream"—death in living—parallels the Romantic notions of life as an obstacle to the harmony and happiness possible in the eternity after death. The search for conciliation of world and spirit is essentially the desire to transcend the separation of the two that is implicit in death. The third motif symbolizes the life-death conflict in the mind of every human being struggling to balance fear of the unknown with the instinctive need for "affirmation of life." The final motif allows objectivity but, in the context of the period, objectivity offered no better solution. Instead, it compels passive acceptance or, as Glaser calls it, "dispassionate resignation." Thus, what he describes is a society that broods on its ever present awareness of death and wallows in passivity, generating no vitality from which to draw strength. This stagnation must inevitably lead to either self-destruction or some form of spiritual rebirth, for these are man's only paths of liberation from prolonged despair.

Philosophically, these two divergent responses (as they relate specifically to death) are embodied by Feuerbach and Schopenhauer. Feuerbach's spiritual rejuvenation elevated the essence of man (characterized by reason,
will, and heart) to a new "theology." Schopenhauer's pessimistic view of life acknowledged the inevitable victory of death in spite of man's defiant will to live. But will and reason are in conflict in Schopenhauer's philosophy. Will promotes evil in the world and reason exists in opposition to evil. The individual triumph of intellect over will can be accomplished through suicide because self-inflicted death is the utmost suppression of the will.

While Schopenhauer proposes a denial of life and a reduction of the sensual elements in it, Feuerbach expounds a life-affirming attitude. Death is not a solution to life but rather, living is the conqueror of the idea of death, an idea that the human must rationally overcome:

Only humans experience death before it takes place; the completion of my death and its outcome are experienced by other living people. Thus the major crisis in a human life is not the point of death itself but the realization by the living human that one will really die. The choice of what to do about death, then, is the choice about what life to live. One can make death the constant theme of one's life by hoping for life only after this life--Feuerbach calls this living as if one were dead--or one can
decide to live now, to live with the intensity that allows the self to be consumed. For Feuerbach, the second choice is to conquer death within life.22

This overview illuminates some of the difficulties involved with a study of death on any level. The philosophical and socio-historical aspects are obviously more complex than the generalizations outlined in this chapter. They are sufficient, though, to provide the framework for a thorough examination of Theodor Storm's poetic use of the death motif. His poetry evolves within these parameters, yet independent of major external (i.e., religious, philosophical, or literary) influences. For instance, although we shall see that many of Storm's thoughts have parallels to Feuerbach's, no evidence can be found that Storm studied his philosophy. In his extensive correspondence and essays, Storm does not make reference to the philosophers of his time. Thus, in spite of the probability that Storm was familiar with their writings, we must assume that no significant direct influence affected his poetry. Subsequent chapters will examine the death motif poems with consideration for their relationship to the general issues discussed in this chapter and how they are inter-related within the groupings I have selected and within the context of Storm's poetic work.
Notes

1 Thomas Mann, Schriften and Reden zur Literatur, Kunst und Philosophie (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1968), II, p. 32.


4 Kastenbaum & Aisenberg, pp. 5-6.

5 Friedrich Feigel, Das Problem des Todes (München: Reinhardt, 1953), p. 27. The placement of suicide in this schema is obviously a difficult problem. Suicide defies the general tenets of social, philosophical, and religious perspectives of death. Storm does not treat the issue in his poetry; indeed, his poetic conception of death precludes any possibility for the contemplation of suicide as will be seen in ensuing chapters.

6 Kastenbaum & Aisenberg, p. 45.


8 Smart, p. 27.

10 Feigel, p. 32.

11 Feigel, table of contents.

12 Fuchs, pp. 86-91.

13 Mann, p. 32.


16 Moser & Tervooren, p. 181.

17 Deutsche Dichtung der Neuzeit, ed. Ernst Bender (Karlsruhe: Braun, 1971), p. 186. Subsequently in text as DD.


21 Glaser, p. 5.

Storm's poetry is often divided into three phases: the early poems from 1843 to 1847 (primarily those appearing in Liederbuch dreier Freunde), the poetry of his mature years (1848 to 1864, considered to be the productive phase), and the poems of old age (1865 to Storm's death in 1888). The strong autobiographical undertones in Storm's writing make a chronological approach advisable in order to achieve the appropriate perspective for analyzing the impact of events in the poet's life on his writing. Similarly, chronology is a major consideration in studying the development of a motif. However, a straight-line progression from first to last appearance does not necessarily reveal the inter-connection of the motif to other elements in the poet's writing, nor does it allow a clear understanding of the internal subgroupings of the motif.

Within the framework of Storm's productive phase, he wrote several political poems that were inspired by the Dano-Prussian conflict of 1850. Two of these employ the death motif extensively and were written within one month of each other. Thirteen years later, Storm returned to the political issues and produced another poem using the death motif. These three pieces form a particular, coherent
portrayal of death distinct from and yet having influence on Storm's use of the motif as a whole. The motif functions in this case within a framework of expectations far removed from Storm's predictable "Erlebnisdichtung."
Therefore, I have extracted them from the chronological context of Storm's writing in order to preserve the internal subgrouping and because this interpretation of death is at once the most abstract and the most inclusive that Storm presents.

The conflict between Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark escalated in 1848 after Prussian and German troops routed the Danes from the area. However, Denmark reoccupied Schleswig in 1851. These poems reflect Storm's anti-Danish position and the first poem exudes the poet's patriotic stance:

Im Herbst 1850

Und schauen auch von Turm und Tore
Der Feinde Wappen jetzt herab,
Und rissen sie die Trikolore
Mit wüster Faust von Kreuz und Grab;

Und mussten wir nach diesen Tagen
Von Herd und Heimat bettelnd gehn--
Wir wollen's nicht zu laut beklagen;
Mag, was da muss, mit uns geschehn!

Und wenn wir hülfelos verderben,
Wo keiner unsre Schmerzen kennt,
Wir lassen unsern spätsten Erben
Ein treu besieget Testament;
Denn kommen wird das frische Werde,
Das auch bei uns die Nacht besiegt,
Der Tag, wo diese deutsche Erde
Im Ring des grossen Reiches liegt.

Ein Wehe nur und eine Schande
Wird bleiben, wenn die Nacht verschwand:
Dass in dem eignen Heimatlande
Der Feind die Bundeshelfer fand;

Dass uns von unsern eignen Brüdern
Der bitter Stoss zum Herzen drang,
Die einst mit deutschen Wiegenliedern
Die Mutter in den Schlummer sang;

Die einst von deutscher Frauen Munde
Der Liebe holden Laut getauscht,
Die in des Vaters Sterbestunde
Mit Schmerz auf deutsches Wort gelauscht.

Nicht viele sind's und leicht zu kennen—
O haltet ein! Ihr dürft sie nicht
In Mitleid noch im Zorne nennen,
Nicht in Geschichte noch Gedicht.

Lass sie, wenn frei die Herzen klopfen,
Vergessen und verschollen sein,
Und mischet nicht die Wermutstropfen
In den bekranzten deutschen Wein!

(1850, Werke, I, 157-58)

The death of two divergent collective groups is addressed in this poem. Storm establishes in the first verse the existence of an adversary conflict. The enemy has already won, the vanquished dead are buried. However, the real aggression of the enemy has to do with the desecration of the graves ("Und rissen sie die Trikolore / Mit wüster Faust von Kreuz und Grab"). This act is a twofold violation in the persona's eyes of moral behavior because it not only denigrates the memory of the dead, but at the
same time removes precisely that for which they died—their identification with a homeland represented by the flags. Storm's attention is fixed on the graves, not on the deceased within them. Their resting place had been the remaining standard bearer for the colors of their struggle, and the burial ground, too, is now destroyed by the enemy.

In the second and third strophes, the persona ponders a hypothetical destiny awaiting the survivors. Again, the imagery is plural ("müsstten wir bettelnd gehn," "wir . . . verderben," "wir lassen"). Death is a non-personal (non-individual) concept conveyed by the subjunctive "wenn" phrasing, the generalized "wir," and the indirect references to death. Storm's use of "verderben" would seem to focus on the process of destruction (the languishing far from the homeland—"wo keiner unsre Schmerzen kennt"). The finality of "verderben," however, becomes clear with the second two lines of the strophe that speak of heirs and testaments; but again, the aspect of death is distant and alien because the children will be there to fulfill the positive vision of the future expressed in the fourth strophe. Thus, Storm is placing the death of "wir" in a dual contrasting context: on the one hand, their death is portrayed as a lonely and bitter outcome of the political defeat; on the other, their death is the precursor to a
brighter hope for the future as the heirs build on the foundation created by the dead.

Death, then, in this poem is a matter of collective importance. The persona establishes a pluralistic viewpoint and a unified function for the motif. Even the phrase "des Vaters Sterbestunde" has a generalized, pluralized intention. Death is seen in the context of the political process, not as a phenomenon affecting individuals. That people die is not an issue (as it will be in many of Storm's poems), instead the question is in what circumstance they die: defending their country (with the graves as a memorial to that country, not to the individual); dying outside the realm of the compassionate homeland; or the fathers' death as the representation of a heritage denied by the betrayers. In each image the connotation is symbolic-ritualistic rather than death-specific. The cross, grave, heirs, testament, hour of death, as well as the verb "verderben" are metaphoric circumventions that deny, or at least ignore, the reality of specific deaths caused by the political conflict. This abstract portrayal heightens the realization that, in such a conflict, the fate of the individuals is frequently one of anonymity and insignificance. In this poem, the persona places supreme importance on the survival of the homeland with its accompanying traditions, etc. In other words, a concept (homeland) supercedes the question of any given person's life and death.
The persona's perspective shifts on several levels in "Gräber an der Küste." The plural, generalized identification with the living is maintained through the use of "wir." However, the dead are no longer the non-entities which were passed over in "Im Herbste 1850." Their condition is, in fact, the central issue of the poem.

Gräber an der Küste

Mit Kränzen haben wir das Grab geschmückt,
Die stille Wiege unsrer jungen Toten;
Den grünstesten Efeu haben wir gepflückt,
Die spätesten Astern die das Jahr geboten.

Hier ruhn sie waffenlos in ihrer Gruft,
Die man hinaustrug aus dem Pulverdampfe;
Vom Strand herüber weht der Meeresduft,
Die Schläfer kührend nach dem heissen Kampfe.

Es steigt die Flut; vom Ring des Deiches her
Im Abendschein entbrennt der Wasserspiegel;
Ihr schlafet schön! Das heimatliche Meer
Wirft seinen Glanz auf euren dunklen Hügel.

Und rissen sie die Farben auch herab,
Für die so jung ihr ginget zu den Bleichen,
Oh, schlafet ruhig! Denn von Grab zu Grab
Wehn um euch her der Feinde Wappenzeichen.

Nicht euch zum Ruhme sind sie aufgesteckt;
Doch künden sie, dass eure Kugeln trafen,
Dass, als ihr euch zur ew'gen Ruh gestreckt,
Den Feind ihr zwanget, neben euch zu schlafen.

Ihr aber, denen ohne Trommelschlag
Durch Feindeshand bereitet ward der Rasen,
Hört dieses Lied! und harret auf den Tag,
Dass unsre Reiter hier Reveille blasen!—

Doch sollte dieser heisse Lebensstreit
Verlorengehn wie euer Blut im Sande
Und nur im Reiche der Vergangenheit
Der Name leben dieser schönen Lande:
In diesem Grabe, wenn das Schwert zerbricht,  
Liegde deutsche Ehre fleckenlos gebettet!  
Beschützen konntet ihr die Heimat nicht,  
Doch habt ihr sterbend sie vor Schmach gerettet.

Nun ruht ihr, wie im Mutterschoss das Kind,  
Und schlafet aus auf heimatlichen Kissen;  
Wir andern aber, die wir übrig sind,  
Wo werden wir im Elend sterben müssen!

Schon hatten wir zu festlichem Empfang  
Mit Kränzen in der Hand das Haus verlassen;  
Wir standen harrend ganze Nächte lang,  
Doch nur die Toten zogen durch die Gassen.—

So nehmet denn, ihr Schläfer dieser Gruft,  
Die spätesten Blumen, die das Jahr geboten!  
Schon fällt das Laub im letzten Sonnenduft—  
Auch dieses Sommers Kranz gehört den Toten.  
(1850; Werke, I, 158-60)²

Storm begins with a first person description of the dead as "unserer jungen Toten." In the third strophe, the persona crosses the conceptual barrier of the dead being "other-worldly" and addresses them directly in the familiar terms, "Ihr schlafet schön!" He maintains this direct discourse until the final line when they revert once again to being, simply, "Toten." Within a descriptive framework, then, the persona's message is for the dead or, as Stuckert puts it: "Es ist ein Wort des Trostes und der Zuversicht, nicht ein Aufruf an die Lebendigen. Sollte aber diese Zuversicht trügen, so bleibt nur die herrliche Gewissheit der erfüllten Aufgabe."³

One facet of Storm's description of the dead is consistent with the traditional association of peaceful death
with sleep. The grave is the "stille Wiege." The dead are "die Schläfer" and then "ihr Schläfer dieser Gruft." The recurrence of the verb "schlafen" is an incantation of measured and steady tones:

\[
\text{Ihr schlafet schon ...} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{Oh, schlafet ruhig! ...} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{... neben euch zu schlafen.} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{Und schlafet aus auf heimatlichen Kissen ...}
\]

This positive description of death is further supported by the additional image of "Ruhe" in "zur ew'gen Ruh gestreckt" and "Nun ruht ihr, wie im Mutterschoss das Kind." The binding elements of the "stille Wiege" and the "Mutterschoss" reiterate the youthful age of the dead ("für die so jung") but also underscore the concept of death as a condition of security and tranquility. Müller calls this presentation a "verklärende Ideologisierung des Todes." However, this does not acknowledge the other side of death that balances the first portrait. They are, after all, war dead and lie in "euren dunklen Hügel." They have passed into a realm inhabited by the other-worldly specters, a bleak counterpart to the youth they had enjoyed: "ihr ginget zu den Bleichen." The impotence of the dead increases the significance of their loss. They rest "waffenlos," and the persona laments, "Beschützen konntet"
The "Trost" that Stuckert speaks of is at best bittersweet. Indeed, the despair caused by the military-political failure is evident in the stark contrast of the lines in stanza nine: while the dead sleep peacefully, "Wir andern aber, die wir übrig sind, / Wo werden wir im Elend sterben müssen!"

The resignation that this military defeat generates can be seen in the transition from the tenth to the final strophe. The anticipated joyous homecoming becomes only a parade of dead—"Doch nur die Toten zogen durch die Gassen." The dash at the end of this strophe is as eloquent as a verbal sigh before the persona resumes his task of honoring them, "So nehmet denn . . . ." The final line of the poem closes the frame begun in the first line ("Mit Kränzen haben wir das Grab geschmückt"—"Auch dieses Sommers Kranz gehört den Toten") and a sense of hopelessness overshadows any "herrliche Gewissheit der erfüllten Aufgabe."

This poem offers no positive vision for the future. Storm emphasizes the youth of the war dead. Further, the autumn setting and the reference to the last flowers of the year contribute to the bleak image. All signs of vitality and hope disappear with the impersonal finality of the closing phrase, "den Toten."

Storm employs some of the same images in the last of the three war poems. However, the frustrations of the
living in contrast to the passivity of the dead pervades

"Gräber in Schleswig":

Gräber in Schleswig

Nicht Kranz noch Kreuz; das Unkraut wuchert tief;
Denn die der Tod bei Idstedt einst entboten,
Hier schlafen sie, und deutsche Ehre schlief
Hier dreizehn Jahre lang bei diesen Toten.

Und dreizehn Jahre litten jung und alt,
Was leben blieb, des kleinen Feindes Tückchen,
Und konnten nichts als, stumm die Faust geballt,
Den Schrei des Zorns in ihrer Brust ersticken.

Die Schmach ist aus; der ehrne Würfel fällt!
Jetzt oder nie! Erfüllt sind die Zeiten,
Des Dänenkönigs Totenglocke gellt;
Mir klinget es wie Osterglockenläuten!

Die Erde dröhnt; von Deutschland weht es her,
Mir ist, ich hör ein Lied im Winde klingen,
Es Kommt heran schon wie ein brausend Meer,
Um endlich alle Schande zu verschlingen!—

Törichter Traum!—Es klingt kein deutsches Lied,
Kein Vorwärts schallt von deutschen Bataillonen;
Wohl dröhnt der Grund, wohl naht es Glied an Glied;
Doch sind's die Reiter dänischer Schwadronen.

Sie kommen nicht. Das Londoner Papier,
Es wiegt zu schwer, sie wagen's nicht zu heben.
Die Stunde drängt. So helft, ihr Toten hier!
Ich rufe euch und hoffe nichts vom Leben.

Wacht auf, ihr Reiter! Schüttelt ab den Sand,
Besteigt noch einmal die gestürzten Renner!
Blast, blast, ihr Jäger! Für das Vaterland
Noch einen Strauss! Wir brauchen Männer, Männer!

Tambour, hervor aus deinem schwarzen Schrein!
Noch einmal gilt's, das Trommelfell zu schlagen;
Soll euer Grab in deutscher Erde sein,
So müsst ihr noch ein zweites Leben wagen!—

Ich ruf umsonst! ihr ruht auf ewig aus;
Ihr würdet eine duldsame Gemeinde,
Ich aber schrei es in die Welt hinaus:
Die deutschen Gräber sind ein Spott der Feinde!
(1863; Werke, I, 182-83)
The persona's voice has now separated from its previous identification with the masses. He is no longer functioning as spokesman, but asserts an individual perspective. The graves are once again a symbol ("ein Spott der Feinde"). However, the persona's attitude toward the dead carries an urgency and a tone of desperation. The dead still sleep ("Hier schlafen sie," "ihr ruht auf ewig aus"), but the persona would not have them remain in their eternal rest. The shift from narrative to direct address possesses none of the lulling monotone that the previous poem intoned (see pp. 68-69). Instead, the personna demands action, demands that the dead resume the roles they played before in life: "So helft, ihr Toten hier!" "Wacht auf, ihr Reiter!" "Blast, blast, ihr Jäger!" "Tambour, hervor aus deinem schwarzen Schrein!" That they gave their lives once is no longer enough; they must "noch ein zweites Leben wagen!" The sixth, seventh, and eighth strophes contain an irrational tone which is meant to underscore the absurdity of the "Törichter Traum!" in the third and fourth stanzas. No army is going to restore Schleswig's dignity and the futile call to the dead soldiers is tinged with an understanding of the harsh irony. The persona is caught between two equally hopeless situations--success will not be achieved through the dead any more than with the non-existent "deustsche Bataillonen"
called upon—"Ich rufe euch und hoffe nichts vom Leben."

The final strophe is a political realization based on an acknowledgement of the finality of death. The dead have eternally escaped (having already once borne) the responsibility to fight. With nothing to anticipate, they no longer have an interest in the problems of the living. The concept of time, so important to the persona ("Die Schmach ist aus; der ehrne Würfel fällt! / Jetzt oder nie! Erfüllt sind die Zeiten") no longer has meaning for the dead who sleep eternally, "eine duldsame Gemeinde." So the persona is left to act on his own and does so in the way in which he is most capable. He cries out to the world with the words of a poet. The message, though, is colored with irony because it comes via the dead as they fulfill the only role they can continue to play in this struggle—a symbol in the face of the opposition. Thus, even in that moment when the persona apparently takes up the banner himself, his "action" relies upon the symbolism of the graves.

Structurally, the three poems follow a basic pattern typical of much of Storm's poetry. The meter and rhyme schemes of the four line stanzas have a regularity characteristic of the folksong. Nouns predominate and particular words may recur in refrain-like fashion ("schlafen" in "Gräber an der Küste," for example, or "schrei" and "Lied" in "Gräber in Schleswig"). The vocabulary is mostly
mono- or duosyllabic, which again contributes to the musical form. One marked change is evident, however. The sparse and regular punctuation of the earliest poem is replaced by an increasing number and variety, not only at the end of lines but, in the third poem, with profusion in the text of the lines. Stuckert recognizes the change, but does not comment on a possible cause: "Die Verse, die sonst weich und schmiegsam dahinfließen, gewinnen plötzlich Härte, Wucht und rhythmische Stosskraft. Akzent wird scharf neben Akzent gesetzt, die klingenden Reime werden seltener oder werden von der vorwärtsstrebenden Bewegung verschluckt, atemlos jagt ein Satz den andern..."  

In fact, as the poet (via his persona) has drawn closer to the reality of the war dead—from "wir" to "ich," from "die Toten" to "ihr Toten"—and to the realization of his own inability to act (other than a cry of indignation), his poetry becomes less cohesive, less uniform in tone and appearance. Despair and frustration ("ich ruf umsonst!" ["Gäber in Schleswig"]) replace the initial feelings of hope ("Denn kommen wird das frische Werde" [Im Herbst 1859]).

But with all of these bleak emotions, the notion of death plays a secondary role. In other words, death is not the source of the depression or resignation; the
political situation is. (In fact, his personal feelings about the political conflict drove Storm into exile from 1853 until Husum's liberation from the Danish in 1865.)

The poet's concern is with the consequences the living must face due to the homeland's occupation. The dead no longer have anything to fear or to contribute to the conflict. Thus, their function is reduced to symbolism. What purpose, then, does the motif have in the political poetry? Using "Gräber an der Kuste" as the primary example, two very different conclusions can be drawn. Alt sees the poem as a personalizing of the experience of war:

In "Graves on the Coast," the 'timeless' experience of the violation of one's humanity by the invaders takes precedence over the original issue of the Dano-Prussian war. The illumination of the condition interests Storm, for whom the historical event is merely a catalyst. Moreover, to Storm, it is the eternal value of inviolate feeling which gives meaning to life beyond the ravishes of time and death. Such a meaning he could find only in the individual experience. But not in a vision of a total philosophical concept . . . .

His political . . . poetry has two recurring motifs as its core: the carpe diem motif and the motif of personal integrity and loyalty in the face
of great adversity. What is therefore, more nearly the expression of personal suffering appears in the guise of an objective norm, the fact of man's duty to moral behavior, to an affirmation of life, although there may be no meaning to life after death.  

Alt bases this analysis on the premise of Storm's generalization of the war experience by the removal of specific references to a particular conflict. Müller's view of the poem is less idealistic: "Asthetisierte Verniedlichung des Todes, Leerformeln, Irrationalisierung des Krieges, dichotomische Freund-Feind-Verfestigung, das sind Stichworte zu einem Storm-gedicht, in dem er die 'Verletzung des Heimatgefühls' darbieten wollte. Diese Tendenzen widersprechen jenem Aufhebungsanspruch, den Storm selbst artikuliert hat: Das 'rein Menschliche' trägt stark in humane Züge, wofern wesentlich vom semantischen Substrat des Gedichtes ausgegangen wird."  

Neither perspective accurately defines the role of the death motif in these politically oriented poems, nor does either point out the dramatic divergence from the norm in Storm's attitude toward death as reflected in these poems. The constants in this portrayal are that death is anonymous, political, and abstract. We, the readers, are not asked to have sympathy for the dead or
empathize with the living who have lost loved ones. The fact of the war dead is an issue only in its political effect on the living. For a poet who was allegedly apolitical, this presentation of death is all the more remarkable. It demonstrates a complete philosophical and psychological identification on Storm's part, with the German socio-political order. He seems to support the premise that "People die in time of war because human life becomes a low priority item in the prevailing value system." The "Verniedlichung des Todes" would appear to be a compensation for this inevitable fact: the dead, at least, sleep peacefully. Indeed, Storm, whose sensitivity to death at the personal level will be so evident in his other poetry, glorifies the enemy deaths at the hands of the German soldiers. In society, the values change for soldiers who represent a cause and are given a uniform to signify it: "Psychologically, it symbolizes the abrogation of the normal tabu on killing fellow human beings; it replaces this tabu by a duty to kill them." Thus, killing is an acceptable activity for a human being once society gives the sanction to kill by designating him as a soldier with a political cause to defend. Again, Storm's socialization on the point is evident.

Storm's lack of attention to (or compassion for) the dead and his exclusive concern with their death as symbolism can be understood as a complete submission to the
tradition of defending one's country at all costs. The inhumanity Müller recognizes is certainly inherent in such a viewpoint, but the "duty to moral behavior" is also there, if one accepts that society redefines morality in times of war. Storm's adoption of this other morality of "political" expediency must be reexamined after we have studied the nature of his personal morality reflected in subsequent uses of the death motif.
Notes

1Alt, Stuckert, and Müller have all used this three-phase division to some degree in their studies.

2Tilo Alt, Theodor Storm (New York: Twayne, 1973), p. 37, points to numerous revisions of this poem "to expurgate any specific historical references in order to achieve universality," including the omission of the original stanza six from the final version:

Unwillig muss die wilde Dannbrog
An eurer Gruft das Ehrenmast verwalten:
Ihr zwangt den Feind, der euch hinunterzog,
Sein Banner bei den Todten zu entfalten.


4Harro Müller, Theodor Storms Lyrik, Literatur und Wirklichkeit, 13 (Bonn: Grundmann, 1975), p. 120.


6Alt, pp. 37-38.

7Müller, p. 122.


In the preceding chapter, we saw political conflict as a reflection of disunion, a destroyer of man's harmony with his place in the social order of life (the right to live and die in one's homeland). The imposition of an artificial order by alienating forces that would deny any man this right justifies, indeed, demands resistance at any price. War is an instinctive and condonable resort if undertaken for a cause which is morally defensible (from a societal point of view). The horror of war lies in the possibility of defeat and the ensuing consequences for the living; but war is, in Storm's portrayal, an understandable, logical reaction when one's identity is threatened, or as Müller states, "der Krieg ist z.B. wie die Liebe ein Lebensphänomen." Further, Storm portrays death as a natural part and conclusion of such war. However, death remains throughout an abstract concept reduced to symbolic function. The dead's anonymity does not concern the poet in these poems. Death in war is nothing more than an unavoidable potential outcome. The individual is subordinate to the larger concept of the cause and his death is, likewise, conveyed solely within the framework of a social plurality (i.e., he remains undistinguished from the many others who die).
If death is, for Storm, acceptable on the socio-political level of experience, what role does it assume in his philosophical understanding of life? We have already determined that humans do not perceive death from a constant and predictable perspective. However, we also established that societal forces are instrumental in shaping death-related attitudes. But Storm's focus is primarily on the smaller social units of family and individual, and the "everyday" life. An integral part of that life is man's interaction with nature, be it a single leaf ("Ein grünes Blatt") or the grandeur of a forest ("Waldweg"). Storm's poems are filled with images of nature that, when isolated, possess a buoyant, life-affirming vitality. Storm, though, frequently places these images in a context that is charged with melancholy or pensiveness. What place, then, does death have in Storm's conception of the natural order?

In *Metaphor and Meaning*, Weller Embler regards man's approach to language as similar to an artist and his work: "Our environment is inevitably a projection in design of what we believe about life." He means that words attempt to bridge the gap between man's inner sense of reality and the outer world as discussed in the first chapter above. We express only those elements of the outer world to which we can attach meaning. Thus, what
we say about the world beyond ourselves (our conception of it) actually reveals the inner self. He sees this to be particularly true of our perception of nature: "Design is inspired from within. When we look at nature—sand dunes or mountain lakes, woods, the sea, desert or prairie or upland pasture—we see only those details and make only that arrangement of the parts which will form a hieroglyph of our inner life." This observation is compatible with Storm's definition of poetry as "Erlebnisdichtung," based on a principle of directness ("Unmittelbarkeit").

Stuckert outlines Storm's use of nature as a transition from a "Wirkungsraum der Liebe" that is more 'Staffage als Gegenstand' to a "Welt, die von grossen Kräften durchwaltet wird." These forces of nature had a two fold effect on Storm's poetic representation of death. In this chapter, I shall first examine Storm's view of nature and his linking of nature's daemonic characteristics with death. I shall then discuss how these same forces of nature are presented in a group of poems expressing Storm's philosophical conception of life and death.

Storm's daughter recalls in a biography about her father, that he was fascinated with the idea of a spirit world, a trait apparently shared with many of his countrymen: "Gar zu gern hätte er selbst eine wirkliche
Spukgeschichte erlebt (er war ja ein Sonntagskind), aber das Reich der Geister blieb ihm lebenslang verschlossen. Es herrschte derzeit in Husum, wie überall im Norden, noch mancher Aberglaube, besonders vom zweiten Gesicht wusste man viel zu erzählen.  

The influence of the "other-worldly" is most evident in the poems that portray man's interaction with nature. Two of Storm's longer pieces, "Waldweg" (1851) and Gartenspuk" (1859) exemplify the poet's unfulfilled search for unity with the natural forces. While the poetic persona has a central presence in each work, the focus is not on him. He is an observer, within the framework of the scene, yet apart from it: "Daher kommt es ihm, selbst wo er sein Ich in Beziehung zur Natur oder es in ihr Dasein hineinverflochten sieht, vor allen auf die Spiegelung ihres selbsteigenen Lebens an . . . . Ein Stück Natur stellt sich vielmehr in seinem Leben selber dar, in Gestalt, in Bewegung und Ton vollzieht es sich unabhängig von dem weiterschreitenden Beobachter. Aber in seiner Ganzheit ist es doch wieder dauernd auf ihn bezogen, als eine Kraft des Seins, die ihn umfängt und auf ihn einwirkt."  

In "Waldweg," the persona's venture into the forest is a form of pilgrimage. Nature is given religious (but not pantheistic) overtones ("kirchenstill," "gleich Säulen der Kapelle," "wie an Kirchenschwelle"). These metaphoric
references elevate nature to an omnipotent concept that at once awes and subdues the mortal who would enter into hallowed territory. However, this is balanced by the persona's feelings of uneasiness and tension ("Denn nicht allein war ich um solche Zeit / Gegangen zum entlegenen Waldesgrund; / Mir graute vor der Mittagseinsamkeit.-"). Thus, although the portrait of nature is presented as absolutely serene and not threatening ("Sonnenstrahl," "alle Winde schliefen," "Sonnenduft"), the persona does not exhibit a sense of harmony with the scene but an acute awareness of isolation.

"Gartenspuk" contains the same tension between man and nature as it blends the pure realism of "Waldweg" with elements of the supernatural. Whereas the persona is cognizant of his mortality (lost youth), the "Gartenspuk" is as timeless as the nature it symbolizes. Stuckert refers to Storm's creation of the mystical nature-child character as a "künstliche Dämonisierung." This implies, however, that Storm is injecting a perception not inherent in the garden scene and Stuckert's term is thus misleading. Storm could not see nature in any other manner. He is, more accurately, imposing upon a personal and intimate experience the same type of mythologizing that folk tradition developed in the notions of water nixes, sprites, and other spirit forms which he saw as integral to one's vision of nature. These images serve as counterpoints to human life, reminders
of the many uncertainties of one's sojourn on earth.

The tenuous position of the individual confronted with the overpowering forces of nature is eloquently revealed in "Meeresstrand." By depicting nature via its sensory impact on an individual observer, Storm reveals that one can perceive aspects of nature while their meaning remains unfathomable:

Meeresstrand

Ans Haff nun fliegt die Möwe,  
Und Dämmerung bricht herein;  
Über die feuchten Watten  
Spiegelt der Abendschein.

Graues Geflügel huschet  
Neben dem Wasser her;  
Wie Träume liegen die Inseln  
Im Nebel auf dem Meer.

Ich höre des gärenenden Schlammes  
Geheimnisvollen Ton,  
Einsames Vogelrufen—  
So war es immer schon.

Noch einmal schauert leise  
Und schweigt dann der Wind;  
Vernehmlich werden die Stimmen,  
Die über die Tiefe sind.

(1855; Werke, I, 112-13)

Stuckert calls this work "ein Ausschnitt aus der Unendlichkeit." One brief moment is portrayed from a multiplicity of perspectives that eventually dissipate to leave only the inexplicable essence of the scene. Storm systematically strips away the sensual images, first the visual, followed by the auditory. As he does, a transition
occurs from "outer world" significance to "inner world" meaning. Each image originates as an objective, "real" substance and becomes a subjective perception.

The first stanza establishes location and time of day. A single gull is returning to land before nightfall. The sense of perspective (the flight of the gull in contrast to the low-lying shoals) merges with the reflection of the fading light. The shoals are by definition moist, but in using the modifier "feucht" the poet creates a stronger tactile impression. The impact of the first stanza remains primarily visual. In the second strophe visual aspects are still present, but the emphasis is beginning to move to the auditory plane. The images are no longer concise. The gull has become "graues Geflügel" and the sound of the wings "huschet") is reflected in the dominant sibilant of the verb. The shoals now are floating islands. This scene of a bird and islands in the fog is a gray not conveying bleakness, but misty uncertainty. The imagery is softened as the fog turns the islands into dream-like visions and the bird is not an everyday scavenger but now a rush of wings. The words allow us still to see the landscape and yet the visual clarity of the first stanza is gone.

With the opening of the third stanza, the visual imagery has disappeared. The scene is perceived via the
sounds it makes. The loss of sight removes the possibility for precise objective description. The "inner meaning" begins to assume preeminence; "Der innere Sinn der Landschaft, der hier erschlossen wird, ist das allmähliche Anwachsen des Unheimlichen, Jenseitigen, die Verdrängung des Handgreiflichen in der Stunde der Dämmerung." The bubbling of the mud is mysterious and secretive. The solitary cry of the bird represents the timeless quality of the moment ("So war es immer schon"). In the fourth strophe, even the auditory reference points disappear as the wind "schweigt." What remains is another sound, one that has been present all along and is just now perceivable after the objective sense imagery is no longer able to depict the scene. The daemonic side of nature is all that remains and it creates questions of uncertainty. What kind of voices are these and from whom do they come? Why could they not be heard before? Are they the voices of spirits, people, birds, nature itself? They are not merely sounds, but "Stimmen." The inner meaning of the landscape is present but the individual cannot comprehend its language. The observer has penetrated as far as possible and can go no further. Nature does not reveal its secrets to mortal man.

The poem is a masterful example of Storm's lyric principles. Form and content blend in complete harmony.
The increasing preponderance of the sibilant tones enhances the mysterious nature of the landscape: in the first stanza only two sibilants occur in "spiegelt" and "Abendschein;" the next strophe includes "graues," "huschet," "Wasser," "Inseln;" the following strophe marks the domination of the sound in important words such as "Schlammes," "Geheimnissvollen," "Einsames," "schon;" the final strophe revolves as well around the sound--"schauert," "leise," "schweigt," "Stimmen," and "sind." Because the sibilant is an open tone, it lends a quality of endlessness and repetition.

The infinite repetition implicit in the poem's scene has two levels of interpretation. Objectively, this flow of eternity inspires a sense of awe. On the subjective level, the tenuous position of man in such a landscape possesses crucial significance. Bernd, however, in his analysis of the placement of "ich," overemphasizes nature's potential destructive force:

Pinpointed precisely in the middle of this song of confrontation between life and death, imprisoned smack in its center, is an element of extreme personal involvement: the ich. Occurring, significantly, as the first word of the third stanza, this lone first person is caught at the intersection of the poem's visual and accoustic halves; it is, moreover,
deeply anchored at this point by virtue of its being in the poem's heaviest line (nine syllables). The ich is irretrievably entrapped, therefore, within the gruesome sights and sounds of transience, forever bound to their collage of decay, no less subject to the inevitable process of change than is the shore to the perpetual motion of the tides.\textsuperscript{10}

Bernd's focus on the annihilation of self as the central theme of the poem overlooks the actual meaning of nature. The essence of the poem lies in the contrast between nature as a whole and individual life. The presence of "ich" has a twofold function: the persona is a subjective conveyor of the scene (a lyric intermediary between the elements of nature described and the reader); the persona's sense of mortality arises from the awareness that nature, with its constant regeneration, is an eternal force. Both functions are divisive; emphasizing the rift between the mortal limitations of man and a nature that has no need of man's presence for its perpetuation.

Storm portrays nature as possessing outer and inner meanings. The former can be analyzed, and decoded, if one will, via sensory observation. The latter reveal their existence but human beings are incapable of comprehending their message. Silman goes so far as to perceive a modernistic undertone in this dualistic structuring: "Solche
zurückhaltende, sparsame, nicht explizierte Gestaltungsweise scheint gewisse Tendenzen in der Entwicklung der Literatur des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts mit seiner Hinwendung zum 'Subtext' vorwegzunehmen. Storm, however, was not experimenting with progressive poetics in writing "Meeresstrand." He was, instead, attempting to capture and to convey in words the evocative power of the landscape.

These three poems ("Waldweg," "Gartenspuk," and "Meeresstrand") are indicative of Storm's perception of nature as a realm through which the individual passes as an observer unable to achieve a true sense of spiritual unity with the elements around him. Nature's power of rejuvenation is visible in the cyclical processes of life (night giving way to dawn, the seasonal changes, the annual return of animals to their habitat and regrowth of plants). These same cycles convey to humans the brevity of their time on earth and, thus, the patterns become metaphors for man's transient existence. In the midst of all the observable signs of nature lie the "Stimmen" that could unlock the meaning of life if one could understand these voices. Because we cannot, the individual faces a lonely odyssey through nature, at the mercy of the unfathomable forces. We fear most what we do not understand and nature harbors elements that are beyond human comprehension. In this sense, the inclination to associate the
daemonic aspects of nature with potential death is a logical outgrowth of the fears that nature engenders in our minds. In order to express the visions and intimations of daemonic nature (to relate them to something within the capacity of human experience) social and cultural traditions evolved mythologies to "explain" natural phenomena. Literature nurtures these images in fairy tales, sagas, and ballads. Storm wrote two ballads associating death with nature's elements. Both focus on the power of water (the sea) to kill. "Lockenköpfchen" entwines this motif with the potential destructive threat of love:

Lockenköpfchen

"Komm zu mir, mein Lockenköpfchen,
Setz auf meinen Schoss dich nieder,
Hörst ja gerne, wenn ich singe,
Hörst ja gern die alten Lieder!"

Freundlich lächelnd spricht die Kleine:
"Wart, ich will die Zither bringen;
Denn da Klingt's noch mal so lustig!"
Und ich fange an zu singen:

Am grünen Teich
Der Knabe so bleich
Sang einsam seine Lieder.
Im Grunde so tief
Die Nixe schlief.
Da weckten die Klänge sie wieder.

Hinab, hinauf!
Im Strudellauf
Zerteilen sich die Wogen;
Bei Mondeslicht
Ein bleich Gesicht
Kommt still heraufgezogen."
"Lieb Knabe traut, 
Es ruft die Braut!"
Leis hat die Nixe gesungen.
Ein Arm so weiss,
So kalt wie Eis,
Hat bald den Knaben umschlungen.

"Wie wohl, wie warm 
In deinem Arm!
Lieb Knabe, lass uns scherzen!"
Die Nixe sang,
Dem Knaben drang
Der kalte Tod zum Herzen.

"Nun, was sagt mein kleines Liebchen?—
Doch du schweigst ja ganz erschrocken.
Graut dich so vor alten Märchen,
Dass dir Zung' und Pulse stocken?"

Und mit ihren zarten Armen
Hält sie ängstlich mich umschlungen:
"Wie so böse Lieder singst du!
Wie so traurig hat's geklungen"

"Du, du bist der bleiche Knabe,
Und du singst die hellen Lieder.
Hüte dich, die böse Nixe
Zieht dich in die Fluten nieder!—"

"Bleib, o bleib! Was willst du unten
In dem kalten dunkeln Meere . . ."
Und mit tränenfeuchten Blicken
Starrt sie in des Zimmers Leere.

Doch ich küss die Purpurlippen,
Nehm die Zither heimlich leise,
Greife tandelnd in die Saiten
Und beginn die frohe Weise:

"Lockenköpfchen ist die Nixe,
Und sie hat mich fest umschlungen,
Dass dem armen bleichen Knaben
Fast das Herze ist zersprungen."

(1837; Werke, I, 238-40)

This poem exhibits the typical aspects of Storm's earliest work, drawing on traditional sources for its theme.

We discover that the song within the poem is actually an
old fairy tale, but the emotional impact on its listener seems real. The song of the young boy's demise immediately establishes a melancholy tone; he is "bleich" and "einsam." The nix is awakened by his song, creating a parallel narrative: persona sings for "Lockenköpfchen" and "Knabe" sings for nix. The girl reacts as the nix does (both hold the boys "umschlungen"), although her motivation is fear, not conquest. The persona attempts to soothe the girl by beginning another song that identifies the nix as "Lockenköpfchen." The persona's response makes clear his affection for "die Kleine." The poem would appear to be of no more significance than many of Storm's early pieces, "Gedichte ohne Gehalt." Yet several interesting observations must be made.

The death-associated imagery is traditional, with emphasis on the absence of colors ("bleich" and "weiss") and the contrast of coldness to a warm, living being ("so kalt wie Eis," der kalte Tod" juxtaposed to "wie warm / In deinem Arm!"). Thus, even though the mention of death does not occur until the final line, the listener-reader has no doubt about the nix as a member of the non-living and the fact that the boy will join her. The nix appears stealthily like a predator stalking unsuspecting prey. The initial image of the boy singing by the pond does not intimate that the threat will come from the water, from that element of nature. But the pond is inhabited by a
deadly spirit who entraps the youth and lures him to his death. This daemonic side of nature is couched in the framework of standard fairy tale figures that allow for the maintenance of an objective distance from the event. The song begins at a pond ("Teich") that quickly assumes a threatening aspect ("Im Strudellauf zerteilen sich die Wogen"). When "Lockenköpfchen" interprets the song, the "Wogen" become more intensified ("die Fluten") and the "Teich" changes into the "kalten dunkeln Meere." She associates the threat of the nix with the unpredictable expanses of the sea in contrast to the image of a small, seemingly harmless and familiar pond. The child thus exhibits a much stronger sense of the potential danger than the persona.

More intriguing than this broad transformation of the setting are the divergent attitudes about the content of the song and, hence, about the concept of death. "Lockenköpfchen" responds to the song with fear and a loathing for the death-bringing sprite. She has a normal response indicative of an understanding of the horrible nature of death (reflected in "böse," "traurig," "In den kalten dunkeln Meere") and its power to separate people. She identifies the youth with the persona and fears losing him to the nix, a symbol of death and love. The persona reflects a complete alienation from the negative, frightening aspects of the nix (and related potential death) by
injecting the erotic undertones in the final two strophes in particular. This casual linking of love-death imagery is starkly contrasted to the anxiety of "Lockenköpfchen." The poem concludes with the persona's new song and one can only guess at the possible reaction of the young girl. If read with special attention to the death motif, the reader is left with an uneasy awareness of morbidity in the identification of nix-"Lockenköpfchen" to which the persona seems purposely oblivious in order to generate the amorous aura of the poem as the dominating evocative factor.

Ten years after writing "Lockenköpfchen," a poem dedicated to his childhood love, Bertha von Buchan, Storm applies the same image of the water spirit and again puts it in the frame of a fairy tale. This time, the character of the spirit is revealed within the poem; she is given a name and identification with the mysterious, exotic orient:

Morgane

An regentrüben Sommertagen,
Wenn Luft und Flut zusammenragen
Und ohne Regung schläf die See,
Dann steht an unserm grauen Strande
Das Wunder aus dem Morgenlande,
Morgane, die berufne Fee.

Arglistig halb und halb von Sinne,
Verschmachtend nach dem Kelch der Minne,
Der stets an ihrem Mund versiegt,
Umgaukelt sie des Wandlers Pfade
Und lockt ihn an ein Scheingestade,
Das in des Todes Reichen liegt.
Von ihrem Zauberspiel geblendet,
Ruht maches Haupt in Nacht gewendet,
Begraben in der Wüste Schlucht;
Denn ihre Liebe ist Verderben,
Ihr Hauch ist Gift, ihr Kuss ist Sterben,
Die schönen Augen sind verflucht.

So steht sie jetzt im hohen Norden
An unsres Meeres dunklen Borden,
So schreibt sie fingernd in den Dunst;
Und quellend aus den luft'gen Spuren
Erstehn in dämmernenden Konturen
Die Bilder ihrer argen Kunst.

Doch hebt sich nicht wie dort im Süden
Auf rosigen Karyatiden
Ein Wundermärchenschloss ins Blau;
Nur einer Hauberg graues Bildnis
Schwimmt einsam in der Nebelwildnis,
Und keinen lockt der Hexenbau.

Bald wechselt sie die dunkle Küste
Mit Libyens sonnengebräuter Wüste
Und mit der Tropenwälder Duft;
Dann bläst sie lachend durch die Hände,
Dann schwankt das Haus, und Fach und Wände
Verrinnen quirlend in die Luft
(1847; Werke, I,154-55)

The narrative obscures the persona other than in two brief allusions to locale ("an unserm grauen Strande" and "An unsres Meeres dunklen Borden"). Rather than a storyline, he presents a descriptive portrayal of "Morgane." The center of the portrait, in strophe three, characterizes her effect on man which, again, is a composite of love and death imagery. Her erotic power is the cause of death. The reader understands clearly that the death spoken about is real, not metaphoric ("in des Todes Reichen"). However, the nature of that death assumes a more ambiguous quality in the third strophe that enhances the erotic implications.
while preserving the frightening aspects of dying. The death metaphors, "in Nacht gewendet" and "Begraben in der Wüste Schlucht," are followed by several love-death image pairs: "Liebe-Verderben," "Hauch-Gift," "Kuss-Sterben," and "schönen Augen-verflucht." Yet unlike the nix, "Morgane" (in reality equally destructive and threatening) presents a more positive illusion. Indeed, one marvels at her capriciousness and ability to deceive (for example, the "Wundermärchenschloss"). And since she has no power in the northern realm—and this is the key to the whole portrayal—and retreats to her southern habitat, her threat of danger is relativized even while death remains an integral function of her image.

The nix and Morgane are both woman-like spirits of the water, timeless beings, much as the element in which they dwell. They are the mythical superstructure imposed upon the elemental forces of nature. Their raison d'être is to lure men to their death with the enticement of love. The longing of the young men for union with these spirits is a metaphoric parallel to the desire for harmony with nature. But Storm makes clear that such unity is impossible, indeed, striving for it results in death. Again, man's mortality in contrast to the eternal forces is evident.

Storm's portrait of nature, then, reminds the readers that the existence we lead is separate and temporary. The
earliest of these poems conveys the idea in a simple, traditional nature metaphor:

*Käuzlein*

Da sitzt der Kauz im Ulmenbaum
Und heult und heult im Ulmenbaum.
Die Welt hat für uns beide Raum!
Was heult der Kauz im Ulmenbaum
Von Sterben und von Sterben?

Und übern Weg die Nachtigall,
Genüber pfeift die Nachtigall,
O weh, die Lieb ist gangen all!
Was pfeift so süß die Nachtigall
Von Liebe und von Liebe?

Zur Rechten hell ein Liebeslied,
Zur Linken grell ein Sterbelied!
Ach, bleibt denn nichts wenn Liebe schied,
Denn Nichts als nur ein Sterbelied
Kaum wegbreit noch hinüber?
(1843; Werke, I, 207)

Like most of Storm's early poems, this one concentrates on musicality. The repetitious rhyme and regular meter with masculine line endings dramatize the presence of the fifth lines that break the cadence, having only three feet and feminine endings. This discordant line, as if the metronome measuring the regular beats of each stanza pauses momentarily before righting itself, echoes the theme of the poem.

The work depicts on a symbolic level the love-death conflict. Rather than speak directly of these two factors in life, Storm uses the songs of two birds: the owl as a messenger of death; the nightingale as a messenger of
love. The placement of the persona's perspective on a path between the opposing possibilities is a simplistic representation of Storm's perception of living. As long as the nightingale sings, love, the equalizer, provides a balance. The initial assessment is that "Die Welt hat für uns beide Raum!" Love, however, is transitory leaving the finality of death to triumph in song as in reality. The unstable nature of love is emphasized by the lamenting references, "O weh, die Lieb ist gangen all!" and "Ach, bleibt denn nichts, wenn Liebe schied." The poem closes with the uneasy recognition of the proximity of death "Kaum wegbreit noch hinüber?" It is phrased in question form, emphasizing further the futility of hoping that death can somehow be overcome. Thus, while love distracts one's attention from the wailing songs of death sung, it is but a temporary aspect of life. Its departure or loss is inevitable, leaving nothing but the owl's song as a portent of death.

Once again, Storm mythologizes the relationship of death and nature. He approaches death via the metaphor of specific sounds associated with it by tradition. The foundation of this premise is an understanding of the cultural, folk heritage significance of owls versus nightingales. The reader familiar with this has a contextual frame for the event described in the poem. Storm uses the
daemonic attributes of nature imposed by societal/cultural influence, but increases the evocative impact with the dramatic contrast expressed in the cheerful form of the folksong. So Storm adapts pre-existing notions of nature's elemental forces instead of attaching new, creative meanings. He appeals to the readers from a common ground, seeking their recognition and understanding of basic feelings elicited by the mutually known imagery.

These cultural traditions were not merely poetic elements for Storm. They infused his daily life and were completely integrated with his thought processes, as evidenced in one of his last letters to Heyse in 1888: "Frau Nachtigall sang freilich am 1 Mai den ganzen Tag in meinen Tannen, u. dann noch zweimal später; aber es waren nur Höflichkeitsvisiten; und gestern Abend schrie der Waldkauz aus den Tannen, der nur dem einen Gedanken nachgeht, all meine Künstler aufzufressen; bei Tage u. auch wohl später schleicht ein schwarzer Kater hier herum; so steht der Tod an allen Freuden, und wir dürfen ihn nicht ausser Rechnung lassen" (1888).^{13}

In the same year, Storm wrote another poem linking nature, death, and love. It relies upon a simple, direct narrative that imparts a secondary meaning. The theme reflected in the title, "Das ist der Herbst," at first appears subordinate to the account of the young girl's
departure, but the two are inextricably connected and function as emblematic death references.

Das ist der Herbst

Das ist der Herbst; die Blätter fliegen, 
Durch nackte Zweige fährt der Wind; 
Es schwankt das Schiff, die Segel schwellen— 
Leb wohl, du reizend Schifferkind!----

Sie schaute mit den klaren Augen 
Vom Bord des Schiffes unverwandt, 
Und Grüsse einer fremden Sprache 
Schickte sie wieder und wieder ans Land.

Am Ufer standen wir und hielten 
Den Segler mit den Augen fest— 
Das ist der Herbst! wo alles Leben 
Und alle Schönheit uns verlässt. 
(1843; Werke, I, 257-58)

Storm circumscribes the narrative with the portrayal of autumn that is both realistic description and subjective analysis. The repetition of "Das ist der Herbst" in the first and eleventh lines establishes that the depictions are parallel. In the first stanza the flying dead leaves and naked branches convey the passage from the harvest phase of autumn to the bleaker pre-winter period. Nature appears dead and the wind lends a threatening element as it rocks the ship (and thus threatens to take away the child, too). The last stanza reveals the subjective message gathered from the scene—life and beauty have departed. Indeed, Storm frequently employs the autumn season in poems involving the death motif. The attraction of this time of
year for the poet is clear in its relationship to his concerns about death. Fall is the period of transition, when the loss of vitality and the presentiment of death are most discernible. Autumn embodies the passage of time, the journey towards the bleak prospect of death and these are the thoughts that troubled Storm and impelled him to write much of his death poetry.

The central segment of the poem incorporates a parallel human story in telegraphic form. The first intrusion of a human into the setting is a farewell, offered to the sailor child. The story is then brought into focus as we receive the description of the child. She is lovely, foreign, and has a bond with those on land evident from the repeated greetings that she sends (greetings they implicitly, but not literally understand). The perspective is from those left behind, straining to keep the ship in sight as long as possible. The departing figure embodies youth ("Schifferkind"), beauty ("reizend," "mit den Klaren Augen"), and mystery ("Grüsse einer fremden Sprache"). In this sense, she resembles the personifications of nature in poems discussed previously. The element of threat or danger is absent, however. Instead the girl's leaving is perceived as loss of the positive aspects of life, just as autumn symbolizes that same loss. This girl is not meant to be an actual part of nature but instead
represents an analogous experience to the changing seasons. As with "Kauzlein," the poem constructs a triad of love—nature—death in relation to their effect on the living. Particular aspects of nature are associated with death or dying. Love (portrayed here by the emotional, affectionate feelings elicited by the girl) is not a permanent condition; it is transitory and can disappear at any time. The persona does not allude to the return of the girl or to a coming of spring. Death remains the only possible future, yet seems distant because we perceive it via indirect reference. This verbal barrier is constructed with a reliance on traditional associations of autumn and dying. The significance of this imagery is defined by the poet's cultural background. Thus Storm can convey his intention without directly confronting death. Instead, he places death in the realm of signs that have death as sub-meaning (i.e., autumn, naked branches, departure.).

The notions of transitoriness and temporality were depicted by indirect metaphoric reference in the previous two poems (the owl's song of death, the child's-autumn's departure). In the following poem, Storm establishes a direct contextual link between the life-death theme and the metaphors of natural process through the employment of a subjunctive speculation: what if life were nothing more than . . . :
Wie wenn das Leben war nichts andres
Natur, du kannst mich nicht vernichten,
Weil es dich selbst vernichten heisst.
Hebbel

Wie wenn das Leben war nichts andres
Als das Verbrennen eines Lichts!
Verloren geht kein einzig Teilchen,
Jedoch wir selber gehn ins Nichts!

Denn was wir Leib und Seele nennen,
So fest in eins gestaltet kaum,
Es löst sich auf in Tausendteilchen
Und wimmelt durch den öden Raum.

Es waltet stets dasselbe Leben,
Natur geht ihren ew'gen Lauf;
In tausend neuerschaffnen Wesen
Stehn diese tausend Teilchen auf.

Das Wesen aber ist verloren,
Das nur durch ihren Bund bestand,
Wenn nicht der Zufall die verstaubten
Aufs neu zu einem Sein verband.

(1848; Werke, I, 285)

As the motto indicates, this poem is Storm's response to Hebbel's poetic cycle, "Dem Schmerz sein Recht." Nature functions for Storm as the catalyst for the cosmologic principle of life-death-rebirth. The discussion begins with a generalizing simile ("Leben" in the broadest sense), proceeds from a specific statement of our dying process (the burning out of a lamp to a general one about the dissipation of our particles. Finally, the poet restates the idea from another, impersonal perspective (the described fate of "das Wesen"). Two supporting motifs provide the transition links throughout the poem. The image projected by the word "Teilchen" is important to Storm's
understanding of the individual's role in the life-death cycle. The elusiveness of the concept of "being" is apparent by the various words used to convey it: "Leben," "Leib und Seele," "Wesen," and "Sein."

The entire mood of the poem is determined by the use of the subjunctive in the first line. Yet Storm immediately allows the hypothetical tone to retreat behind the familiar present indicative. This tense change fulfills the dual purpose of emphasizing the constancy of the process and of shifting the focus from possibility to inevitability. After the persona postulates the condition, he transforms it into reality by the use of affirmative statements. Life is likened to the burning away of a light, an image which concentrates on process not event. But this notion is a negative one because burning the light is a diminishing rather than an increasing or productive occurrence. Thus, the first two lines, while apparently speaking of life ("Leben"), reveal that Storm's thoughts are on dying and on a perceived dichotomy of what actually happens in the death process. By using "geht," dying becomes a journey into nothingness. The disparity of "Verloren geht kein einzig Teilchen" and the disappearance of "wir selber" into the void is expanded in the second strophe as the separation of body and soul. In contrast to the Christian concentration of "dust to dust" and eternal life of the soul, Storm presents a cosmos in
which substance survives at the expense of the soul's dissipation. Only with the reconstruction of substance, an act dependent on the whims of random choice, can the metaphysical element of "Sein" reattain any existence.

In the second strophe, Storm alludes to the insecure bond that unites the two aspects of life that we call body and soul. These disintegrate into a multitude of bits and pieces. The final two lines of the second stanza echo those of the first. "Nichts" becomes "den öden Raum." The "Tausendteilchen" of the scattering body and soul drift through emptiness, seemingly contradicting the statement that nothing is lost. The poet, however, is merely anticipating the revelation of the third stanza, where he speaks of a "Leben" different from that in the first. This is life on the same grand scale as nature itself, universal life as the total existence of everything, in contrast to an individual life that is of no more significance or duration than the burning out of a light. This is life eternal and constant ("dasselbe"). The prospect of this infinite cycle of rebirth would seem to represent a positive view, an affirmation that some form of eternity exists. The final strophe, though, reveals Storm's personal philosophical concern with the prospect of dying. The consolation of rebirth in another body is relativized by the knowledge that the "being" ("Wesen") as
it exists in one given life is lost forever as a cohesive entity. Storm employs the same verb as in the first stanza, in deliberate contrast: "Verloren geht kein einzig Teilchen"—"Das Wesen aber ist verloren."

Several aspects of the poet's view of dying are drawn together within the context of his understanding of nature, which Alt calls a "nihilistic cosmology." Nature is eternal and has little concern for the death of any single being because in its process all things return in new cycles of life. Death, then, is of no significance. The individual on the other hand, sees himself at the mercy of this cycle, reduced to "Teilchen" and stripped of the union, however temporary, of the body and soul that constitutes identify. From this point of view, nature's eternal being is assured at the cost of unique individuals. Further, man's metaphysical "being" is tenuous at best and does not function in rhythm with the metaphysical forces of nature.

The threatening, haunting, and death-symbolic portrayals of nature present in poems such as "Lockenköpfchen," "Morgane," or "Käuzlein" attain a new importance. Rather than random poetic devices, they are reflections of Storm's coherent image of death as a central function of nature. The change of seasons, wind-tossed leaves, the last flowers of the year, every example of the universal cyclical order
constitutes a symbolic reminder for Storm of what Bernd refers to as "inevitable annihilation." Yet the poet is aware that we are seduced by the beauty of nature, as "Morgane" seduces unsuspecting sailors, and the sensory pleasures nature offers are a temporal indulgence that will fade along with our mortal beings. Storm was plagued by the duality of nature: its visual and acoustic beauty were tempting and intoxicating for the poet but he could not separate the appeal from a resigned and melancholy awareness that it embodied the timelessness of eternity inaccessible to him.

A similar expression of the duality is stated on a much subtler level in "Ein Grab schon weiset manche Stelle." Beauty obscures the presence of death but does not eliminate it:

Ein Grab schon weiset manche Stelle

Ein Grab schon weiset manche Stelle,
Und manches liegt in Traum und Duft;
Nun sprudle, frische Lebensquelle,
Und rausche über Grab und Kluft!

(1851; Werke, I, 124)

The image of the grave implies death and is contrasted with the positive imagery of "Duft" and "Lebensquelle." The focal point is the bubbling fountain of life that is instructed via the imperative verb to rush over "Grab und Kluft." The grave is associated with the natural geography which also signifies depth in the downward
direction. The "Quelle" conveys a rising image, particularly combined with the verb "sprudle." Storm speaks of one grave in the opening line, then drops the article to generalize the image in the final one. This quatrain evokes a superficial sense of positiveness but the reminder of the grave, emphasized by its appearance at beginning and end, creates a somber frame to the scene. The imperative verb is a directive affirming life. However, the presence of the grave in the idyllic scene is symbolic of the poet's constant awareness of impending death. The vitality of the "frische Lebensquelle" is muted by the contrasting image of "Grab."

A key factor in Storm's nature-death poems is the function of the persona. In "Ein Grab schon weiset manche Stelle," the persona's role is solely as observer. The scene is presented from an impersonal point of view, that is, we do not perceive an "I," instead we assume the direct voice of the poet reporting the description. "Über die Heide," written in 1875 and therefore near the end of the poet's creative years, places the persona within the poem's nature-death schema.

Über die Heide

Über die Heide hallet mein Schritt; Dumpf aus der Erde wandert es mit.

Herbst ist gekommen, Frühling ist weit—
Gab es denn einmal selige Zeit?

Brauende Nebel geisten umher;
Schwarz ist das Kraut und der Himmel so leer.
The rhythm of the poem echoes the regular plodding steps of the speaker much as the second line of each couplet echoes the thoughts of the first and the metaphoric meanings echo the actual imagery. Words such as "Dumpf" and "Brauende Nebel geisten" establish an eerie, mysterious tone. The persona's walk across the heath is clearly not a serene interaction with nature. It is a journey toward darkness ("Nebel," "schwarz," "leer") instead, away from the brightness of life ("Frühling," "Mai," "Leben und Liebe"). On the inner level of meaning, the poem is a metaphor for dying (not death), focusing on process, not on event.

The persona does not walk alone but has several companions. In fact, the reader does not see the persona walking, but hears his steps. In the first couplet, an "es" emanates from the earth, moving along with these steps. This "es" is certainly, on the superficial level, the sound of the footsteps, muffled by the ground. But "it" is also an entity in itself, a portent of approaching death. The surface reference to footsteps is supplanted when we realize that "es" cannot solely refer to "der Schritt." Coming up from the earth (traditional dominion
of the dead) with the hollowness of the descriptive "dumpf," stalking along with the persona, "es" is ghostly and haunting. Without mentioning death Storm establishes its nearness.

While expanding the nature of the "real" experience, the second couplet extends the metaphor. By contrasting autumn and spring and following this with the wistful question about the past, Storm portrays more than the setting; he describes the landscape of the persona's mind. The swirling fog, blackness of the vegetation, and emptiness of the sky unveil a somber and bleak nature. But the fog is also the clouding of memory (a direct link to the previous line) and the blackness is the result of a failing eyesight that, at least metaphorically, can no longer find the vital colors of life. The empty sky is also an empty heaven holding no promise of after life or salvation. Literally and figuratively, then, the future is a non-existent concept or, as Müller puts it, "Zukunft ist ganz und gar abgeschritten."  

The final couplet reveals the despondency caused by the approach of death. The persona wishes that the beautiful moments of the past had never been because now he is left with the pain of memory: "Wär ich hier nur nicht gegangen in Mai!" The rapid passage of life's joy is explicit in the final line, the dying having nothing more than memory as they wait for death to occur. That memory
includes the remembrance of love, which for Storm is identical to life (a factor that will be explored further in the love-death poetry). This identification is expressed in the alliterative pair of "Leben und Liebe" which reduce to a single "es." With this assertion, then, the persona does not distinguish love as a single facet of living but sees it as the essence of existence.

Interpretations of this poem by Müller and Alt point to a "cliché-like conventionality of his images and metaphors." Yet, while elaborately detailing the parallels of structure and content, and the dominance of death-related metaphors, neither analysis completes the conceptual correlation between cliché and death motif, concentrating instead on "typical" aspects of Storm's poetry. Alt, for example, defines the inner-outer tension of the poem in the following manner: "The objectivity is entirely contrived, hypostatized, providing a realistic nexus of continuity (the reminiscent character of the poem) for what is otherwise an entirely subjective process of recalling and feeling. The conventional images, therefore, serve to amplify the atmosphere of transiency and despair, since the profound and essential rhythm is more important than the thought content of the poem."  

Alt, in essence, separately qualifies the effect of form and content in conflict with Storm's belief in the
need for their unity of function. The dependence on conventional and traditional approach reflected in Alt's statements is not fully the result of a poet whose lyrical vision is limited by his own rigid poetic tenets. It is also indicative of the inadequacy of language to express feelings about death and of the poet's inherent fears that cause him to remain in the secure realm of cliche.

One of Storm's last poems exhibits a similar reliance on traditional nature metaphor to express awareness of death. Written in response to a Wilhelm Jensen poem, this work again considers the death of humans as an inevitable natural process:  

An Wilhelm Jensen

Es ist der Wind, der alte Heimatslaut,  
Nach dem das Kind mit grossen Augen schaut,  
"Bei dem es einschläfft, wenn er weitemummt,  
Der es erweckt, wenn jählings er verstummt;  
Bei dessen Schauern Baum und Strauch erbebt  
Und tiefer in den Grund die Wurzeln gräbt—  
Was bist du anders denn als Baum und Strauch?  
Du keimst, du blühst und du verwelkest auch!  
(1886; Werke, I, 304)

The nature imagery functions on two related symbolic planes. The wind represents the familiar sound of home ("der alte Heimatslaut") and offers a sense of security to the child. The element is given an added dimension, as the child looks (not listens) for it. The same wind causes
the plants to shake and grasp more firmly their earthly foundation, much as humans cling to their place on earth. But the images of wind, child, and plants construct an additional context of the life-death process. The wind embodies vitality and disturbs the child only when it becomes silent. The final couplet draws a parallel between the life cycle of plants and humans that has twofold significance. First, it stresses not death but the debilitating process of dying through the use of the verb "verwelken." Further, the likening of man to plants emphasizes the poet's perception of people as insignificant creatures having no more impact on the world than a tree or shrub, and, being at the mercy of the same forces of nature as these lesser creations, clinging as tightly as possible to their place in the order of things. The form of the query and answer in this couplet implies that one should not expect any more from life than its basic cycle of birth, fruition, and death, that man's supposedly elevated position as a "rational" being endowed with a metaphysical element called a soul means nothing to nature moving in its inexorable pattern.

Several links of continuity can be found in this group of poems that spans forty-three of Storm's creative years. In each, nature, or an element thereof, produces the realization of death's domination over life. Man's inability to comprehend, much less control the daemonic forces of nature, his vulnerability in the face of the
inevitable universal process, and his sense of insignificance constitute facets of a vision of nature which reflects the tensions within the poet's soul. We must recall Embler's assertion that man's view of nature reveals primarily his inner self (pp. 82-83). In these works employing nature as death signs, man's place in the natural order is tenuous. His material being is subject to the universal laws of life, death, and rebirth that all living beings experience. His intellect grants the recognition of the metaphysical or mystical aspects of the world but does not extend to comprehension. The threat of danger (i.e., death) that nature contains disrupts any prospect of harmony. Ironically, nature's eternal cycle of recreation offers a form of immortality Storm must reject because this rebirth occurs at the expense of spiritual essence: the sum of experience and memory structured in a singular form (the body). When the form in which this essence dwells decays, the structural fragments may remain but are rendered meaningless because only form and essence united achieve meaning.

If we remember Storm's lyric definition, a parallel between it and his vision of existence versus non-existence can be discerned. In poetry, form and content must be in complete harmony and, further, a poem is the result of an experience molded into an appropriate form. Man, is similarly, a singular creation whose core is experience
(and memory of past experiences) shaped by a specific body, with core and body united in a unique living entity. If this essential core cannot survive without its form and the body is destined to eternal reshaping, then nature holds man captive in a tragically ironic eternity. Such a conception of nature may induce awe and respect but eliminates the possibility of communal harmony between man and universe. If man is to find a source of security and solace in life, he must seek it elsewhere.
Notes

1 Harro Müller, Theodor Storms Lyrik, Literatur und Wirklichkeit, 13 (Bonn: Grundman, 1975), p. 121.
7 Stuckert, p. 208.
8 Stuckert, p. 206.
10 Clifford A. Bernd, German Poetic Realism (Boston: Twayne, 1981), p. 68.
11 Silman, p. 51.
12 These traditions are substantiated by numerous folk tales documented in Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens, ed. E. Hoffmann-Krayer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1931/32), IV, cols. 1188-1197; VI, cols. 802-03; VIII, cols. 1293-1295).
17. Müller, p. 88.
18. Alt, p. 56.
19. Alt, p. 56.
The value of life is determined by an arbitrary judgment system. Every person analyzes positive and negative aspects of life and conceptualizes the significance of each in determining the overall worth of existence. The parameters of such a process are structured by personal experience coupled with social tradition. Essentially, to elevate life above the hardships and monotony of daily subsistence (basic survival), one seeks a purpose for continuing to live beyond mere functioning. Such purpose can be accomplished only through the interaction of self with the outer world. The will to live is an internal drive fostered by external factors. The dilemma of defining existence by bringing the subjective understanding of "being" into harmony with the objective question of the "realness" of this outer world has been at the core of all philosophical ponderings.

Storm's nature poems involving the death motif reveal a vision of life that renders individuals insignificant. In the framework of eternity, a single being cannot expect to have impact when confronted with the awesome forces of nature that provide constant reminders of man's tenuous grasp on existence. If Storm's basic concept of existence has little implicit value, the spiritual alternative also
offers him no positive sense of purpose. In fact, his understanding of nature leaves no room for a benevolent, life-affirming deity: "Er löst zwar Gott nicht einfach pantheistisch in der Natur auf— daran hinderte ihn die tiefe Bewunderung der Welt und die Ehrfurcht vor dem Wunder der 'ungeheuren Weltschöpfung'—, aber er entkleidet ihn aller persönlichen Züge. Für Storm ist die Gottheit eine schicksalhafte prädikatlose Macht, die der Mensch in einem fatalistischen Kreaturgefühl und im Bewusstsein des unerbittlichen Ausgeliefertseins erlebt. Infolgedessen fühlt er sich nicht in einer höheren Macht gläubig geborgen, sondern ihr, ohne sie begreifen zu können, schonungslos preisgegeben. Ja, Gott wird ihm mehr und mehr mit dem Wirken eines unpersönlichen Schicksals gleichbedeutend."¹

With the traditional religious superstructure (which endows life with significance through an act of faith) untenable in Storm's thinking, where could he hope to find a reason for life to balance the despair created by awareness of death? The answer stems from the essence of Storm's daily existence: the intimate communing of individuals, be it the result of familial, conjugal, or friendship bond. The most intense joining of two single beings results in the unity of love, and this, rather than the religious concept of soul, holds Storm's potential for spiritual transcendency. Love, then, is Storm's ultimate defense in the battle of life and death, lending meaning as it overcomes the weighty sense of isolation imposed by a
constant prospect of death (that moment of absolute aloneness). The nature poems reveal the importance of Storm's view of death as "termination of identity." The love poems will show Storm's search for the preservation of the integrity of identity through establishment of a bond which offers hope for a spiritual extension of life: "Aus dem metaphysischen Grauen vor der Verlorenheit des Ich gibt es für Storm keine Erlösung in der Geborgenheit eines lebendigen Gottvertrauens, sondern allein in der Gemeinschaft mit dem Du, wie sie sich vor allem in der Liebe zwischen Mann und Weib darstellt . . . . In bewusst überspitzter Form sagt er dann auch: 'Liebe ist nichts als die Angst des sterblichen Menschen vor dem Alleinsein.'"\(^2\) This view of love, though, is not linear in its development as the following poems will show, and the emphasis continues to be on search rather than discovery.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the variety of perspectives from which we see death (p. 34). Storm's poems of love and death are characterized by similar distinctions. If one examines the way in which the two are encountered in these poems, several points of view emerge, ranging from abstractly philosophical to the most intimate contemplation of self-death. I shall analyze the poems within these groupings and conclude the chapter with a discussion of the resulting
implications for comprehending Storm's use of the death motif and his personal understanding of death as well. Rather than relying on the autobiographical and, hence, chronological approach, the use of groupings according to the varying applications of the motive can offer further insight into Storm's poetic thinking. In other words, these are not simply responses to separate personal experiences, but part of an evolving death concept that achieves universal presentation in Storm's poetry.

The sense of isolation prevalent in the nature-death poetry is echoed in the first two poems. They treat death indirectly, as a philosophical proposition, a future reality. On this level, love, too, is a vaguely defined notion which is ineffectual in combatting the sense of aloneness imposed by death.

Bald ist unsers Lebens Traum zu Ende
Bald ist unsers Lebens Traum zu Ende,
Schnell verfliesst er in die Ewigkeit.
Reicht zum frönen Tanze euch die Hände!
Tut's geschwinde; sonst enteilt die Zeit!
(1833; Werke, I, 223)

Storm's early poetry is often ignored in secondary literature, presumably because of its simplicity. Yet precisely these poems are essential to observe the poet's unfolding death vision. This four-line stanza, for example, embodies most of Storm's feelings about life while also giving indications of his youthful thoughts on dying.
Transitoriness is emphasized by the accumulation of references to speed and time: "bald . . . Ende . . . schnell . . . verfliesst. . . geschwinde . . . enteilt . . . Zeit." Further, Storm gives the concept of life a nebulous, unreal quality with the phrase, "Lebens Traum," which has two possible connotations: life itself is nothing more than illusion; life is as beautiful and idyllic as a dream. In either case, the transiency of the experience is the theme. These verbal images strike a refrain of themes from poems discussed in the previous chapter: life ends and its ending is a disintegration or dissipation into the vastness of eternity. The addition of the modifiers creates a current of desperation, of having to beat some ticking clock, not to survive, but to reap any pleasure that fleeting life may provide.

The means of achieving this enjoyment requires the help of others. The dance symbolizes vitality and communal celebration. However, it, too, reinforces life's transient nature, as a dance is but a temporary moment of harmony. Yet Storm makes clear the importance of joining together in that dance before time runs out. The plural viewpoint of the persona ("unsers Lebens Traum") and the address to a plural second party ("reicht . . . euch") support the premise that with and through others, life attains its positive note.
Structurally, the four lines echo the rapid flow of time. The dominance of one syllable words in regular folk-song meter establishes a quick tempo reminding one of a rhythmic dance. One envisions the whirling participants striving to keep pace with the music so they will not lose their place in the ensemble. Each line is a complete thought with the second and final lines restating the initial assertion. The third line serves as the counterpoint presenting the opportunity to salvage something good of life. But at the same time, the metaphor of the dance trivializes life, emphasizing a notion of the mindless, mass repetition of a ritualized, yet rationally insignificant act. The consolation lies in the social nature of the event, in the sharing of the experience. If we, to whom Storm offers his words, fail to respond quickly, the possibility for any shared happiness will be lost.

Eighteen years later, Storm still struggles with the problem of the passage of life and the need for another human being. However, the perspective is no longer so optimistic:

\begin{center}
In böser Stunde
\end{center}

\begin{center}
Ein schwaches Stäbchen ist die Liebe,  
Das deiner Jugend Rebe trägt,  
Das wachsend bald der Baum des Lebens  
Mit seinen Ästen selbst zerschlägt.
\end{center}

\begin{center}
Und drängtest du mit ganzer Seele  
Zu allerinnigstem Verein,  
Du wirst am Ende doch, am Ende  
Nur auf dir selbst gelassen sein.
\end{center}

(1851; Werke, I, 137-38)
Whereas "Bald ist" exudes a positive tone by focusing on life in the face of death, this poem builds to death as the climax. The first strophe uses the tree as a metaphor for existence, with love as a single, weak vine tendril. The pessimism increases with the image of destruction in "zerschlägt." Love's ability to bring permanent joy is destined, in the final analysis, to be unsuccessful.

The second strophe speaks directly to the reader, bringing a warning: no matter how intimate the union, in the end you will remain alone. This thought is augmented by the repetition of "am Ende," a litany incorporating the theme of the poem. Although no explicit reference to death occurs, the metaphor refers to the only definitive "end"—the final moment of life, when even love has lost its power. The passion and joy of love are thus relativized by this disturbing observation. The closing lines of the poem reveal the absolute certainty of finality in death. No hint of eternal love on some spiritual level prevails. Indeed, Storm's pointed use of "mit ganzer Seele" in the previous thought nullifies any notion that the spiritual element of any being will endure.

The title would indicate that these are the thoughts of an individual at an emotional ebb. The pessimism is
constrained by a steady lyrical rhythm enhanced by the frequent use of alliteration such as "schwaches Stäbchen" or "drängtest du." However, the mood of the poem discloses brooding thoughts on a final moment of life for which the speaker can find no compensation in the transience of love.

These poems follow a pattern similar to the nature-death poetry by metaphorically circumventing death. In fact, each one emphasizes the image of "the end." The significance of this choice lies in its symbolism as a moment that is actually transition; in other words, that fraction of time between existing and the cessation of existence. The end of the one is the beginning (in Storm's view) of eternal nothingness. Storm's message is that life must be lived with the awareness of prospective isolation. Storm does not deal with the specific event of death. It is not yet as important as preservation of independent self-awareness. These intimations of death serve as reasons to aspire to a particular attitude in life. At the same time, Storm begins to seek an outlet through lyric expression for a more direct conceptualization of death.

Abschied
Mit Liedern

Was zu glücklich, um zu leben,
Was zu scheu, um Klang zu geben,
Was zu lieblich zum Entstehen,
Was geboren zum Vergehen,
Storm originally titled the first part, "Jugendliebe, Mit Liedern." The change is indicative of a decreasing optimism. Whereas "Jugendliebe" implies a happy potential for the future, "Abschied" embodies a retrospective glance at past happiness. The second portion compliments the melancholy tone engendered by the revised title.

The opening strophe establishes some intriguing conceptual pairs in a riddle form. Three of these lines are dying-oriented, but normal premises are inverted: something is too happy to live, too endearing to arise, born to dissipate. This mysterious entity is endowed with only a temporal existence. (Interjected is the trait of demure shyness, implying a passivity, a lack of dynamic will.) The poet does not allow a full stop at the end of the four lines but continues the image in the following strophe. The standard "props" of a disappointing, lost
romance solve the lyrical puzzle: that which is born to leave is love. The context of these figures, too, possesses a strong connection to Storm's death imagery. The presence of "nimmer" is a telling adverb in Storm's poetry (for example, in "Einer Toten" as well, p. 139. The figure of the wilted blossoms recalls "An Wilhelm Jensen" (p. 106) in which man's dying is likened also to the decaying process of "verwelken." Storm's use of the image here indicates once again the parallel he draws between the temporal nature of love and that of existence. The comparison of an ended romance to death is not uncommon in literature. However, the accumulation of metaphoric references to dying subordinates the love theme in these strophes. The simple romantic lament is a revelation of Storm's internalized vision in which love and dying are interrelated evocative experiences. Thus, Storm verbalizes the loss of love in the same way that he expresses actual dying because he sees the two from a similar emotional plane.

The second segment of the poem was written at a later date but supports the analysis of the first part. The poetic voice is now embodied in a speaker; indeed, the poem is intimately addressed to a specific second person. The message is laden with references to dying. This is no longer figurative usage of metaphor to heighten the impact of lost love. Real dying enters the scenario with
the presence of "sterben." In the poems discussed thus far, "sterben" and "Tod" have infrequently appeared, usually in relativized form (depersonalized death in war, mythologized death via daemonic force, in the owl's cry, etc.). In conjunction with "Du weisst es" the verb "sterben" acquires a more personal quality. It becomes a process to which "du" and the persona attach specific meaning—identification, if you will. The persona does not linger in the proximity of real dying for long, returning to the metaphoric likeness of lost love to death in the final two lines. The ode to an ended romance is completed when the final homage has been paid at graveside. Process becomes finalized event; the perspective shifts from anticipation to "Grab," a post-death point of reference. Until the final lines, Storm speaks of dying, not of death. We recall Smart's distinction in Chapter Two (p. 46). Storm's focus, revealed through his choice of imagery, is the passage of love, the withering away ("vergehen . . . verwelken"). The importance of love in Storm's life schema is evident by the comparison of its loss to the dying process.

The following poem from the same period contains intimations of eternity that appear incompatible with Storm's conception of mortality. A close reading not only dispels the conflict, it further suggests a critical aspect of the poet's death imagery which influences many of the poems yet to be discussed.
O bleibe treu den Toten
O bleibe treu den Toten,
Die lebend du betrübt;
O bleibe treu den Toten,
Die lebend dich geliebt!

Sie starben; doch sie blieben
Auf Erden wesenlos,
Bis allen ihren Lieben
Der Tod die Augen schloss.

Indessen du dich herzlich
In Lebenslust versenkst,
Wie sehnen sie sich schmerzlich,
Dass ihrer du gedenkst!

Sie nahen dir in Liebe,
Allein du fühlst es nicht;
Sie schaun dich an so trübe,
Du aber siehst es nicht.

Die Brücke ist zerfallen;
Nun mühen sie sich bang,
Ein Liebeswort zu lallen,
Das nie hinüberdrang.

In ihrem Schattenleben
Quält eins sie gar zu sehr:
Ihr Herz will dir vergeben,
Ihr Mund vermag's nicht mehr.

O bleibe treu den Toten,
Die lebend du betrübt;
O bleibe treu den Toten,
Die lebend dich geliebt!

(1848; Werke, I, 136-37).

The repetition of the opening verse to close the poem along with the short lines and regular rhyme scheme endow the poem with a strongly lyrical quality. The lines are dominated by the vowels, especially in the contrasting ie and a sounds that help to identify life- and death-oriented imagery. The diphthong occurs most frequently through
varying forms of the root word "Liebe." The a is evident in death vocabulary such as "starben," "zerfallen," "bang," or "Schattenleben." This heavy tone is concentrated in the pivotal fifth strophe.

The first stanza establishes a relationship that burdens the living with a sense of obligation arising from guilt. The imperative and direct address creates the immediate sense of "Unmittelbarkeit," compelling the reader to identify with the events. The dead are nameless and plural, symbolic of all those who have been important in one's life. The presently living are deemed responsible for the sorrows suffered in life by those now departed who had given so much love.

In the next three strophes, the current condition of the dead is juxtaposed with that of the living. Their death is incomplete; they remain shadowy specters until all those who loved them also die. Before that happens, they long to be remembered. This concept is a key one for Storm. The notion that the dead continue to exist after physical death is no spiritual transcendentalism. It is a belief that in the memory of others lies a semblance of afterlife. In a letter to Bertha von Buchan, his first love, Storm is explicit about the potent force of memory:
Denke Dir nur, wie nach wenigen Jahren das ganze lebende Geschlecht von der Erde getilgt sein wird, wie dann alle, die jetzt so eifrig sich regen und mühlen, dann so still schlafen werden mit allem was sie liebten und litten . . . doch, siehst Du, die alte Liebe geht von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht, und ist das Band zwischen Lebenden und Toten; denn die Sterbenden sind die Kinder der Gestorbenen und die Eltern der Geborenen. Aber wir streben vergeblich gegen die Macht der Vergessenheit . . . Nur so lang nach meinem Tode möchte ich leben, als die, die ich geliebt, die mich geliebt. Dann lass mich vergessen sein mit den Millionen der Erschaffenen, denen wie mir Freude und Leid das Herz bewegt hat, und die verschollen sind bis auf den letzten Klang ihres Names.

The third strophe reinforces the concept. These beings long to be remembered by those they loved during life. The tragedy of their dead "existence" is the inability to preserve their identity through the memory of others. Because they can no longer exert sensory presence, they are relegated to the forgotten past ("dufühltest es nicht . . . / Du aber siehst es nicht"). Storm's continual shifting from present to simple past and back augments this sense of the restless, unsettled condition of these beings.
The bridge crumbled to ruins is the ability to communicate. The loss of the power to communicate is the real prison of the dead in Storm's thinking. Doomed to an enforced silence, they lose their capacity to affect the living. They are thus consigned to eternal oblivion. Storm's plea for the reader to remain true to the dead, maintaining the integrity of their identity is a foreshadowing of his struggle to accept the silent destiny of death that will also consume him.

A major consideration in the death poetry (especially in conjunction with the love motif) is the function of a persona-speaker, i.e., the question of whose death is depicted and the nature of the reaction. Indeed, the degree of persona presence plays a vital role in assessing the message Storm attempts to convey. In the poems I have discussed thus far, the participation of a lyrical "I" has been limited to "Gräber in Schleswig," "Gartenspuk," "Waldweg," "Meeresstrand," "Über die Heide," and "Abschied." (In three of these six, the death motif is not a central issue, as these poems provide an adjunct to the nature-death schema). The persona symbolizes, in each case, a solitary figure apart from the flow of the rest of the world, confronting life from the perspective of inner meaning (i.e., the absurdity and irony of the poet's voice as a weapon in war, the compulsive fascination with daemonic
nature, the burgeoning awareness of isolation closing all avenues for potential, lasting happiness). Significantly, all of these poems circumvent the issue of death as a personal reality. "Abschied," for example, has death references only in the indirect third person: "alle die da sterben / Und die für immer scheid en g ehn . . . auf ein geliebtes Grab gelegt" (my stress). "Über die Heide," the last of these six poems having a visible persona, comes close to speaking of death-of-self but the poet examines instead the process of "vergehen," of mortal transition, not the final, resulting event. The immediacy of death is not definitive in these works.

In the poems discussed so far, the occurrence of vocabulary stemming from the root-words "sterben" and "Tod" is limited to twenty-two references (mostly repetitive in refrains) in eight poems: the three war poems, the mythologizing nature poems, and two poems of unrequited love in which death is a metaphor for departed love. Storm prefers verbs of transition such as "vergehen," "scheiden g ehn," "verderben," or "verwelken." His attention focuses on the passage from life. The end is always approaching, ever stalking, but it remains controlled, kept in the realm of eventuality by simile and metaphor. The critical factor is that no one has yet actually died, that is, no specific individual; as soon as this happens, Storm's
imagery becomes more graphic and the presence of the persona assumes greater importance. Two examples, one from 1844, the other written in 1872, demonstrate the manner in which perspective affects the tone of the death motif. Both deal with direct contemplation of self-death, although neither contains a lyrical "I." Yet the distinction in the tone is interrelated with the altered perspective stance. Whereas the first exemplifies distancing effects similar to the poems already discussed, the second brings death into sensory proximity.

Wer je gelebt in Liebesarmen

Wer je gelebt in Liebesarmen,
Der kann im Leben nie verarmen;
Und müsst er sterben fern, allein,
Er fühlte noch die sel'ge Stunde,
Wo er gelebt an ihrem Munde,
Und noch im Tode ist sie sein.
(1844; Werke, I, 132)

Love relativizes the pain of death in this six-line poem by endowing life with value ("Der kann im Leben nie verarmen"). One carries the thought of a love experienced, everywhere, including to the moment of death. Death, though, is qualified by the subjunctive "müsst er sterben." Storm tells us what will happen, but the scenario is distant, creating no sense of immediacy, and the personages involved are still anonymous ("Wer je gelebt"). Yet Storm has done something to bring death into closer focus. He
has established the context of a singular love relationship that transcends not death, but the bitterness of its approach, that effects this transcendence not by ethereal means, but through the grace of memory.

Müller points out that the sensual elements are so intense in the short poem, they provide a barrier against the event of one's own death. This is true to a point. Yet Storm pointedly limits love's power to life ("Der kann im Leben nie verarmen" [my stress]). Mann, on the other hand, sees a kind of paganistic transcendentalism of "vollendet unchristlichem Jubel" in the unabridged sensuality. The problem is Mann's interpretation of "im Tode;" if one were to assume, as Mann does, that "im Tode" signifies reference to an afterlife, the comment seems to have merit. Yet we must remember that Storm has created in his poetry a universe which does not have an "Ewigkeit." "Im Tode," then, is no more than the last conscious moment before oblivion. That is the boundary that religion, and even love, cannot cross.

The bond of marriage is the crux of the following poem. In contrast to Storm's deep feelings about family, love has no role in this relationship:

Engel-Ehe

Wie Flederwisch und Bürste sie regiert!
Glas und Gerät, es blitzt nur alles so
Und lacht und lebt! Nur, ach, sie selber nicht.
Ihr, schmuck Gesicht, dem Manne ihrer Wahl,  
Wenn ihre wirtschaftliche Bahn er kreuzt,  
Gleich einer Maske hält sie's ihm entgegen;  
Und fragt er gar so wirft sie ihm das Wort  
Als wie dem Hunde einen Knochen zu.  
Denn er ist schuld an allem, was sie plagt,  
Am Trotz der Mühsal und der Nächte Wachen,  
Schuld an dem schmutz'gen Pudel und den Kindern.--  
Und er?--Er weiss, wenn kaum der grimme Tod  
Sein unverkennbar Mal ihm aufgeprägt,  
Dann wird, der doch in jedem Weibe schläft,  
Der Engel auch in seinem Weib erwachen;  
Ihr eigen Weh bezwingend, wird sie dann.  
Was aus der Jugend Süßes ihr verblieb,  
Heraufbeschwören; leuchten wird es ihm  
Aus ihren Augen, lind wie Sommeratem  
Wird dann ihr Wort zu seinem Herzen gehn.--  
Doch wahrhet nicht, dass dies ihn tröste! Nein,  
Den künft'gen Engel, greulich hasst er ihn;  
Er magert ab, er schlottert im Gebein,  
Er wird daran erstickten jedenfalls.  
Doch eh es ihm ganz die Kehle zugeschnürt,  
Muss er sein Weib im Himmelsglorie seh'n;  
Die Rede, die er brutend ausstudiert,  
Womit vor seinem letzten Atemzug,  
Jedwedes Wort ein Schwert, auf einen Schlag  
Er alles Ungemach ihr hat vergelten wollen,  
Er wird sie nimmer halten; Segenstammeln  
Wird noch von seinen toten Lippen fliehn.  
Dass alles weiss er, und es macht ihn toll;  
Er geht umher und fluchtet innerlich  
Ja, manches Mal im hellsten Sonnenschein  
Durchfährt es ihm, als stürz er in das Grab.  
Es war sein Weib, sie sprach ein sanftes Wort;  
Und zitternd blickt er auf: "Oh, Gott sei Dank,  
Noch nicht, noch nicht das Engelsangesicht!"  
(1872; Werke, I, 142-43)

The dramatic difference between this poem and the previous one extends beyond the obvious structural considerations and the opposite emotional texture of the depicted relationship. Death is the pivotal element of the experience; its portrayal is explicit in its frightening, devastating aspects. It is a characterized, active agent: "der
grimme Tod / Sein unverkennbar Mal ihn aufgeprägt." Its debilitating power is confronted in terms of the realistic, physical results: "er magert ab, er schlottert im Gebein, / Er wird daran ersticken jedenfalls. / Doch eh ihm ganz die Kehle zugeschnürt . . . ." Words are delivered through "tote[n] Lippen." The sense of ugly destruction of the physical body dominates.

The theme of the poem revolves around a man's perception of his wife's behavior as a foreboding warning of his own death. The tone is reminiscent of Heine long after any influence by that poet had ceased to be a factor in Storm's writing. The irony of a man fearing the gentler side of his wife because it presages the immediacy of his death is a rare concept for a poet normally reverent toward the institution of marriage. The concept of time is redefined in non-temporal terms. Instead, the visage of the wife determines the end of his life. The dualistic significance of the designation, "Engel," runs counter to the mystical-religious connotations of traditional society. This angel is the oracle of a dreaded death, not of some heavenly salvation or afterlife. In fact, the angel represents, in the husband's eyes, an other-worldly aspect of woman ("Dann wird, der doch in jedem Weibe schläf, / Der Engle auch in seinem Weib erwachen"). But "angelic" behavior is dependent on the immance of his death, i.e.,
the husband's impending death is the prerequisite to stimulate his wife's loving responses that are otherwise atypical. He thus is grateful to accept her normal nagging and unkind accusations because they do not signal death as her gentle, loving ways would. This inverted reaction to the wife's shrewish behavior and to the contrasting gentle, sorrowing angel is an ironic twist of inner and outer meaning as perceived by the husband.

Although Storm presents the poem from a third-person narrative, the husband is, effectively, a first-person persona equivalent. The point of view is exclusively his on the narrative and on the emotional plane. The figure of the wife is seen through his eyes, heard through his ears. The feeling of loathing and fear are revealed to the reader as an intimate personal experience. The immediacy of the evocative power in this piece is accentuated by the lack of Storm's usual carefully structured lyrics. The prose-like form, unrhymed and with irregular meter, coupled with the well-defined personality of a "persona" and the vivid imagery elicits a strong sense of identification with the man's experience. In other words, the reader is caught up in the fascinating horror of such a relationship in a near stream-of-consciousness style.

The impact on readers is evident in the responses of Storm's contemporaries. Storm, who adopted the title from
a novella by Karl Spindler, deemed it "ein sehr inniges Gedicht." I have pointed out the unusual poetic stance toward love and marriage in this poem and this disclosure makes the content all the more intriguing. Heyse revealed his uneasiness with the subject in a single sentence reaction: "Die 'Engel Ehe' habe ich nun zum dritten Male gelesen und zum dritten und letzten Male mich resolviert, sie unverständlich zu finden." In a newspaper review of the collection in which it appeared, Fontane includes a cryptic reference to the poem. He recognizes a universality of Storm's theme but withdraws from acknowledging the potential conclusions of such disturbing implications: "Einige Zartbesaitete haben an diesem ... Gedicht Anstoss nehmen wollen. Es muss aber auch das gesagt werden dürfen, weil es etwas in tausend Herzen Lebendiges und von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht immer Wiederkehrendes ist. Es ist nur unstatthaft falsche Schlüsse daraus zu ziehen." Storm does not offer any elaboration on his course of inspiration for this poem. Therefore, this complex portrayal of the dichotomy between traditional conception and individual perception of human behavior must speak for itself. The one certainty in this poem is the dominant effect of death-oriented thinking on the inner-meaning interpretation of reality as well as of poetic imagery.
For the most part thus far, the poet has been the primary initiator of evocative character, eschewing a lyric intermediary, in the triad of poet-persona-reader. I have discussed the universalized, depersonalized aspect of death portrayed in the majority of the works. Love, in its relation to the death motif, has also remained mostly concept rather than a specific, intimate experience. The contrastive force of love against death has been inconsistently depicted. "In böser Stunde" (p. 125) would seem to warn against believing love to be a comfort at the prospect of death. "Abschied" (pp. 127-28) would appear to echo the notion that love is temporal. These poems have in common the lack of a definitive personal relationship at their centers and the absence of a fully involved first-person singular persona. In the ensuing discussion, I shall examine two groups of poems that concentrate on the presence of a lyrical "I" in contemplation of the death-love emotional polarity. The first group confronts the prospect of death-of-other, specifically, of a beloved. The second examines the death-of-self in light of a love bond between the persona and another. Similarities and differences will be weighed quantitatively as well as qualitatively to understand the real sense of death in Storm's application of death and love imagery. The poems will be discussed in chronological order within the two groupings.
Repos d'amour  
(Etude par Henselt)
Lass ruhn die Hände!—Gib dich mir!
Schon Dämmer webet durchs Gemach;
Nur deiner Augen glänzend Licht
Ist über meinem Haupte wach.

O lass mich ruhn in deinem Arm!
Fernhin verstummt der wilde Tag—
Ich hör allein dein flüstern Wort
Und deines Herzens lauten Schlag.

Lass schauerd deiner Blicke Graus
Durch meine tiefste Seele ziehn,
O gib dich mir, gib mir im Kuss,
Dein ganzes Leben gib mir hin!

Und alle bange, sel'ge Lust,
Was in dir lacht und weint und glüht,
Gib mir der Träne süßen Schmerz,
Die brennend durch die Wimper sprüht.

So bist du mein—ob auch der Tod
Zu früh dein blaues Auge bricht,
Du lebst in meiner tiefsten Brust,
Ein ewig liebliches Gedicht.

(1842; Werke, I, 254-55)

The first four strophes develop the persona's emotional, sensual bond with his beloved whose characterization is drawn mainly in sense imagery, always returning to the eyes: "Nur deiner Augen glänzend Licht ... Lass schauerd deiner Blicke Graus... der Träne süßen Schmerz, / Die brennend durch die Wimper sprüht." The eyes hold a special attraction as the measurement of human personality and emotion. The tone of these four strophes is infused with emotion: "Gib dich mir!" "O lass mich ruhn in deinem Arm!" The imperative form is repeated as the persona asks the lover to give completely of self, as if the persona
seeks to consume his beloved. The desire is for possession of this lover, who acquiesces in a willing "sich hingeben."

These four stanzas establish the context for the last one in which the sum meaning of the sixteen lines is reduced to four words, "So bist du mein." The persona wishes to assert the scope of his ownership even at her death. The depiction of that death concentrates on its harsh finality. Death is an active agent destroying the lover's principal conveyance of vitality and feeling, "ob auch der Tod / Zu früh dein blaues Auge bricht." As signifiers of life and death, the eyes are a recurring supporting motif in much of this poetry.

Possession of the lover in spite of death, however, has a connotation determined entirely by the persona. The beloved is reduced, not to a memory, which has some level of independent identity, but to an idea shaped by the persona's words. The lover, then, becomes an abstract concept in death, which reattains meaning through the lyrical form created by the persona: it does not matter whether the image of "ein ewig liebliches Gedicht" is a metaphoric or literal reference to the memory of love captured in the form of poetry. What is significant is the notion that the memory of a beloved is a preservation of that person ("du lebst"), but it is shaped by the thoughts (and thus dependent upon the will) of another (i.e., one can choose to remember or to forget).
The following poem is a dialog with God, an infrequent point of reference in Storm's poems, as we have seen. In this poem, the lyrical "I" not only prays, but receives an answer directly from God:

Du hast sie, Herr, in meine Hand gegeben

Ich betete:
Du hast sie, Herr, in meine Hand gegeben,
Dies treue Herz an meine Brust Gelegt,
Du hast ihr friedlich, kindlich heiteres Leben
Durch meines Lebens trüben Ernst betwegt.

Drum wolle, Herr, so viel des Glückes geben,
Dass nicht zu sehr die Sorge Raum gewinnt,
Dass der Geliebten anspruchsloses Leben
An meinem Herzen friedlich still verrinnt.

Der Herr sprach:
Ich wandle meiner Weisheit ew'ge Wege,
Von mir beschrieben ist jedwede Bahn;
Wie du gebeten, kann's erfüllt nicht werden,
Doch wie's erfüllt wird, ist es wohlgetan!

Du sollst verwehen wie die Spreu im Winde,
Und sie soll weinen, lang in bitterm Schmerz.
Doch auch verrinnen sollen diese Tränen,
In mild Vergessen tauchen sie ihr Herz.

Und wenn sie dann das matte Haupt erhebet,
Soll sie erblicken sanften Sonnenschein;
Zwei helle Augen will ich ihr entzünden
Und neuer Liebe herzlichen Verein.—

Wie du gebeten, kann's erfüllt nicht werden,
Doch wie's erfüllt wird, ist es wohlgetan.
Drum sorge nicht! Wenn lange du verschollen,
Bricht ihres Glückes später Morgen an.

(1845; Werke, I, 279-80)

Introduced with the simple past, the prayer and its answer are placed in retrospect. The first strophe establishes the persona-lover relationship in which the persona
views himself to have been chosen as the protector and source of happiness. This leads him to the conclusion that the best thing for her would be to die first and this he asks of God. The apparently selfless act is deceptive since he would prefer to contemplate his love's death with the confidence that he will survive her. The gentle nature of the metaphor, "still verrinnen," does not lessen the fact that as the closing thought, he is preoccupied with his beloved's death.

Whereas the persona argues from a viewpoint of emotional involvement (e.g., from personal considerations), God's argument is a logical progression, beginning with an assertion of His supreme eternal authority. He proceeds to deny the petitioner his request, assuring him that His way will be for the best ("wohlgetan"). She will love again, after grieving for his loss. The omnipotence of God in contrast to the insignificant destiny of man is emphasized by the metaphor, "Du sollst verwehen wie die Spreu in Winde." God sets up a parallel with her tears that will also flow away ("verwehen . . . verrinnen") but with the last tears she will achieve the state of mind necessary to find new love. She will forget and in this forgetting, a new happiness will be discovered. The repetition of God's decision from the first strophe emphasizes His absolute control over the persona's destiny. God's interjection, "Drum sorge nicht!" is a reminder (not
without some apparent tongue-in-cheek attitude by the poet) that the persona's prayer has thus been positively answered.

The contrast of the two fates is concisely drawn in the final one and a half lines. God's reply has placed death in a threefold time perspective. It contrasts to His "Weisheit we'ge Wege," and not only will it occur before the beloved's death, but the persona is now privileged to a divine foreshadowing which reveals her future long after he is forgotten. The religious superstructure of this poem does not negate what we have previously determined to be an essentially non-religious understanding of the universal process. Storm never denies God's existence as much as he insists that the question of His existence has no bearing on the individual fate of man. God's presence here does nothing to temper that view. Other than God's own eternal omniscience, no version of eternity for man is extant. Death still results in "verwehen" and "verschollen sein." If anything, Storm utilizes the religious aspect to proclaim the awareness of death's finality, and of mortal man's powerlessness to alter the inscrutable fate that awaits him. In this sense, God is simply synonymous with destiny, having the power to dictate when death will occur but not altering the fact of its totality.
If the persona merely speculated on his beloved's death in the previous poem, in "Einer Toten," the death-of-other is realized along with its emotional impact on the survivor:

Einer Toten

1
Du glaubtest nicht an frohe Tage mehr,
Verjahrtes Leid liess nimmer dich genesen;
Die Mutterfreude war für dich zu schwer,
Das Leben war dir gar zu hart gewesen.—

Er sass bei dir in letzter Liebespflicht;
Noch eine Nacht, noch eine war gegeben!
Auch die verrann; dann kam das Morgenlicht.
"Mein guter Mann, wie gerne wollt ich leben!"

Der hörte still die sanften Worte an,
Wie sie sein Ohr in bangen Pausen trafen:
"Sorg für das Kind--ich sterbe, süßer Mann."
Dann halb verständlich noch: "Nun will ich schlafen."

Und dann nichts mehr;--du wurdest nimmer wach,
Dein Auge brach, die Welt ward immer trüber;
Der Atem Gottes wehte durchs Gemach.
Dein Kind schrie auf, und dann warst du hinüber.

2
Das aber kann ich nicht ertragen,
Dass so wie sonst die Sonne lacht;
Dass wie in deinen Lebenstagen
Die Uhren gehn, die Glocken schlagen,
Einförmig wechseln Tag und Nacht;

Dass, wenn des Tages Lichter schwanden,
Wie sonst der Abend uns vereint;
Und dass, wo sonst dein Stuhl gestanden,
Schon andre ihre Plätze fanden,
Und nichts dich zu vermissen scheint;

Indessen von den Gitterstäben
Die Mondesstreifen schmal und karg
In deine Gruft hinunterweben
Und mit gespenstig trübem Leben
Hinwandeln über deinen Sarg.

(1853; Werke, I, 129-30)
The poem is conceived in two complementary parts: a narrative of the death event and a reflective response to the resulting loss. Müller points to the logical progression in the form, which controls the emotional tone: "Sowol die hypotaktische Anordnung als auch die konzessive Verknüpfung zu Beginn der dritten Strophe des zweiten Teils zeigen, wie der stimmungshafte Protest in ein rationales Beziehungsgefuge gestellt wird." The simple past and the heavy tone of the poem brought about by an abundance of dark vowels, particularly a, create a funereal atmosphere which parallels the unfolding events. The strong punctuation breaks the flow of images as it the narrator would wish to stop the inevitable progress of time toward that final moment of life.

The aura of denouement is evident from the first line with "nicht mehr." This is followed by "nimmer," a time element negating any sense of future. After alluding to the positive image of motherhood, the past perfect verb builds upon the sense of sorrow: "Das Leben war dir gar zu hart gewesen." The aspect of time and final destiny is a focal point as the moments tick away bringing an increasing sensation of impotence: "in letzter Liebespflicht ... Noch eine Nacht, noch eine ... Auch die verrann; dann ... in bangen Pausen ... Nun ... dann nichts mehr ... nimmer wach ... immer trüber ... dann warst du hinüber."
The reader receives the death imagery on two levels. The woman exhibits a complete acceptance of her death which is reflected in her pragmatic perception, "wie gerne wollt ich leben! . . . ich sterbe . . . Nun will ich schlafen." All of these are indicative of passage. The narrator also remains in the perspective of process until the last possible moment when he employs the metaphorical, "Dein Auge brach." The witnessing of the transition is finalized in the last word, "hinüber." The dead woman has entered a realm beyond experience and expression.

The secondary "plot" of the narrative involves the bittersweet entwinement of life and death. The woman dies at the moment in which her child asserts its existence by crying out. Her submission to the inexorable cycle of life and death is typified by a mother's wish, "Sorg für das Kind." The living must go on and care for the living; this is the universal rule of survival.

The following segment presents the emotional response that proves death is a problem only for the living. Death is once again portrayed from the perspective of time. But now the imagery emphasizes continuity and progression: "so wie sonst . . . die Uhren gehn . . . Einförmig wechseln Tag und Nacht . . . wie sonst . . . wo sonst . . . " Absence and loss are the focus as the persona struggles with the realization that life did not change upon the
woman's death, only his perception did.

This second part reveals a persona stricken by the sense of loss and by the fact that the outer reality of life remains constant while the inner meanings he attached have been altered. The last stanza considers the dead woman's present place in the world: she is imprisoned, cut off from the living. Her domain is in a darkness that even the moonlight (a traditionally romantic symbol) can barely reach. The other-worldliness of her resting place is reflected in a moon that has only a ghostly life. Much as the closing word of the first part emphasizes finality, the last image here is the "Sarg," the last known resting place of the dead and the closest the living come to the presence of the dead. The persona has continued to speak to the departed as a second-person but the stark, harsh image of the coffin suppresses any transcendental thoughts of love. She remains personified via his act of remembering, because memory alone can cross the barrier created by the reality of the "Sarg."

This message perpetuates the same two themes touched upon in "Du hast sie, Herr:" our helplessness and inability to control fate, to stop or alter the destiny imposed on us or the ones we love; a strange fascination with the conception and portrayal of a man's loss of his beloved with whom a bond had been formed determining in large part, the quality of his life. Once again this reminds us that death
is an emotional concern for those who must continue to live. The attempt to come to terms with such deaths becomes, as will be seen, a recurring theme and one of the primary subjects provoking Storm's use of the death motif.

Lucie

Ich seh sie noch, ihr Büchlein in der Hand,  
Nach jener Bank dort an der Gartenwand  
Vom Spiel der andern Kinder sich entfernen;  
Sie wusste wohl, es mühte sie das Lernen.

Nicht war sie klug, nicht schön; mir aber war  
Ihr blass Gesichtchen und ihr blondes Haar,  
Mir war es lieb; aus der Erinnerung Dünster  
Schaut es mich an! wir waren recht Geschwister.

Ihr schmales Bettchen teilte sie mit mir,  
Und nächstens Wang an Wang schliefen wir;  
Das war so schön! Noch weht ein Kinderfrieden  
Mich an aus jenen Zeiten, die geschieden.

Ein Ende kam;—ein Tag, sie wurde krank  
Und lag im Fieber viele Wochen lang;  
Ein Morgen dann, wo sanft die Winde gingen,  
Da ging sie heim; es bluhten die Syringen.

Die Sonne schien; ich lief ins Feld hinaus  
Und weinte laut; dann kam ich still nach Haus.  
Wohl zwanzig Jahr und drüber sind vergangen—  
An wieviel andern hat mein Herz gehangen!

Was hab ich heute denn nach dir gebangt?  
Bist du mir nah und hast nach mir verlangt?  
Willst du, wie einst nach unsern Kinderspielen,  
Mein Knabenkopf an deinem Herzen fühlen?  
(1852; Werke, I, 128-29)

The stimulus for this poem was a memory of Lucie, a younger sister, who died when Storm was not quite twelve years old. The experience was instrumental to Storm's development as a writer because it inspired his first poem.
The only remnant of that lyric outpouring of grief is two lines: "Und der Totenkranz umwindet / Jetzt ihr engelgleiches Haar." The young boy's perception of death is revealed in a visual metaphor. The dualistic meaning of "engelgleich" allows the youthful Storm to see Lucie in a transition state. Her hair was angel-like in life and attains a transcendental Christian implication through her death. But the key image is the "Totenkranz" which surrounds, imprisons, and dominates the image of the beautiful hair. Death deprives the living of the vital beauty once embodied in the departed person.

Written in 1852, at a time when Storm had surpassed his early imitative "Gedichte ohne Gehalt," the poem "Lucie" represents a contemplative interpretation of Lucie's death in contrast to the immediate reaction of the youthful lyric attempt. Storm stresses the retrospective aspect of the poem by interweaving present and past; re: effect of memory and reminiscent narrative. He begins with the affirmation "Ich seh sie noch," then shifts into the past. The reader receives a characterization of Lucie first via her behavior, followed by a descriptive rendering. In using the image of the solitary, pensive girl shunning the playing children, Storm creates a multi-dimensional portrait that intensifies the subjective observation "Nicht war sie klug, nicht schön" and lends an aura of objectivity. A similar elaboration of "wir waren
recht Geschwister" occurs in the third strophe vignette. But Storm breaks the spell cast by the remembrance as he reminds the reader (and perhaps himself) that all this exists only as memory. Through this technique, the reader senses the impact of memory, the significance that it holds for the living.

The pivotal point in the memory is placed at the exact center of the poem: "Ein Ende kam." The fourth strophe contains no present tense interjections that would disturb the melancholy tone of the narrative. Lucie's death is phrased in the least harsh death terminology—"Da ging sie heim." To heighten the aura of a gentle passing into death, Storm surrounds it with nature imagery and soft vocabulary such as "sanft" and "blühten." Much as the young Storm tried to distance himself from the moment by running away into the fields, the poet begins to reassert the perspective of memory and retreat from the immediacy of the death experience. He clarifies the time frame and redefines the emotional context by speaking of other intervening loves.

This distancing, however, is not successful. In fact, the persona shifts from narrative reminiscence to questions addressed to the dead Lucie. There is an essence of "O bleibe treu den Toten" in the persona's impression that Lucie still reaches out to him. The second question implies that the dead have some power to stimulate memory and in so doing send a message of their longing to have
a continuing place in the lives of the living. Further, the persona expresses a wistful longing for his childhood happiness. By closing the poem with a series of questions, the poet indicates an uneasy fascination with the realm of the dead and the evocative potency of memory. Müller phrases this somewhat differently: "Der Tod—'das Ende'—wird zwar als Heimgang interpretiert, doch die wiederum kontrastiv gesetzte Natur und die sechste Strophe, in der sich das lyrische Ich fragt, ob die Tote ihm nah sei und nach ihm verlange, verdeutlichen, dass auch hier der Tod als dunkels Rätsel erscheint."

Although the six lines of "Trost" concentrate on the association of love and life, the message they deliver has much to do with death. In fact, this poem, written in 1853, became the motto poem of the 1865 cycle, "Tiefe Schatten." That it was written twelve years before Constanze's death makes its premonitory aspect all the more potent:

_Trost_

So komme, was da kommen mag!  
Solang du lebest, ist es Tag.

Und geht es in die Welt hinaus,  
Wo du mir bist, bin ich zu Haus.

Ich seh dein liebes Angesicht,  
Ich sehe die Schatten der Zukunft nicht.

(1853; _Werke_, I, 168; 185)
The tension between the parallel structure in the couplets and the implied contradictions of the thoughts is correctly alluded to by Stuckert. The form incorporates the dualistic possibility of an unpleasant future. The imagery is simple, traditional, and executed with perfect cohesiveness. Living, specifically embodied in the life of the persona's beloved, is equated to light ("Tag"). The beloved relativizes change by representing a constancy of support and security. The present is positive and vital, the future holds uncertainty and, hence, danger. The persona cannot rid himself of an awareness of these "Schatten der Zukunft," even though they may be obscured now. The notion of time is defined in terms of the beloved's existence. Her life connotes the happy present; the future means potential death. This portent of darkness assumes preeminence when Constanze, the source of the "Trost," dies. The shadows were no longer in the future; they were so dark and deep that Storm attempted to find his way through that darkness from a multitude of perspectives which formed together "Tiefe Schatten:"

Tiefe Schatten
"Trost" (see p. 155)

1
In der Gruft bei den alten Särgen
Steht nun ein neuer Sarg,
Darin vor meiner Liebe
Sich das süßeste Antlitz barg.
Den schwarzen Deckel der Truhe
Verhängen die Kränze ganz;
Ein Kranz von Myrtenreisern,
Ein weisser Syringenkranz.

Was noch vor wenig Tagen
Im Wald die Sonne beschien,
Das duftet nun hier unten:
Maililien und Buchengrün.

Geschlossen sind die Steine,
Nur oben ein Gitterlein;
Es liegt die geliebte Tote
Verlassen und allein.

Vielleicht im Mondenlichte,
Wenn die Welt zur Ruhe ging,
Summt noch um die weissen Blüten
Ein dunkler Schmetterling.

2
Mitunter weicht von meiner Brust,
Was sie bedrückt seit deinem Sterben;
Es drängt mich, wie in Jugendlust,
Noch einmal um das Glück zu werben.

Doch frag ich dann: Was ist das Glück?
So kann ich keine Antwort geben
Als die, dass du mir kamst zurück,
Um so wie sonst mit mir zu leben.

Dann seh ich jenen Morgenschein,
Da wir dich hin zur Gruft getragen;
Und lautlos schlafen die Wünsche ein,
Und nicht mehr will ich das Glück erjagen.

3
Gleich jenem Luftgespenst der Wüste
Gaukelt vor mir
Der Unsterblichkeitsgedanke;
Und in den bleichen Nebel der Ferne
Täuscht er dein Bild.

Markverzehrender Hauch der Sehnsucht,
Betäubende Hoffnung befällt mich;
Aber ich raffe mich auf,
Dir nach, dir nach;
Jeder Tag, jeder Schritt ist zu dir.
Doch, unerbittliches Licht dringt ein;
Und vor mir dehnt es sich,
Ode, voll Entsetzen der Einsamkeit;
Dort in der Ferne ahn ich den Abgrund;
Darin das Nichts.

Aber weiter und weiter
Schleppe ich mich fort;
Von Tag zu Tag,
Von Mond zu Mond,
Von Jahr zu Jahr;

Bis dass ich endlich,
Erschöpft an Leben und Hoffnung,
Werd hinstürzen am Weg
Und die alte ewige Nacht
Mich begräbt barmherzig,
Samt allen Träumen der Sehnsucht.

4
Weil ich ein Sänger bin, so frag ich nicht,
Warum die Welt so still nun meinem Ohr;
Die eine, die geliebte Stimme fehlt
Für die nur alles andre war der Chor.

5
Und am Ende der Qual alles Strebens
Ruhig erwart ich, was sie beschert,
Jene dunkelste Stunde des Lebens;
Denn die Vernichtung ist auch was wert.

6
Der Geier Schmerz flog nun davon,
Die Stätte, wo er sass, ist leer;
Nur unten tief in meiner Brust
Regt sich noch etwas, dump und schwer.

Das ist die Sehnsucht, die mit Qual
Um deine holde Nähe wirbt,
Doch, eh sie noch das Herz erreicht,
Mutlos die Flüte senkt und stirbt.

(1868; Werke, I, 185-88)

The evolution of this cycle was not a coherent, progressive development. The various segments were written and revised between May and August 1865. They were
not necessarily conceived to appear in this order and
Storm juggled the sequence in several versions sent to
friends. In Müller's words, these varying approaches
are the poet's attempts "gegenüber dem Problem des Todes
Standort zu finden . . ." Hans, Storm's eldest son, did
not want the cycle to reach public eyes and the poet's
response reveals his lyric convictions and holds a key to
his death poetry in general: "Du meinst, ich hätte die
Gedichte nicht drucken lassen sollen. Ich glaube, dass
Du dich irrst, mein liebes Kind. Ein Dichter, der an seinem
Beruf glaubt--und das tue ich--darf gerade sein Heiligstes
seinem Volke nicht vorenthalten; ich glaube sogar, es ist
ein Kennzeichen des echten Dichters, dass er es ohne Scheu
hingibt, vielmehr mit dem Bewusstsein, dabei im Dienst
des Grossen und Schönem zu stehen. Wie der Reiche dem
geliebten Toten ein Monument von Marmor setzt, so setzt
der echte Dichter ein Monument, in der Kunst des Wortes
ausgeprägt, und findet seinen Stolz und sein schmerzliches
Glück darin, sich vor aller Welt zu dem Geliebten zu
bekennen." The notion of monuments in words to uphold
the memory of the beloved dead and simultaneously to ease
the sorrow of the living forms a central motivation for
much of Storm's poetry about specific death-of-other.

The first poem of the cycle is a visual, object-
oriented depiction of death: "... und dies führt hin auf
The persona's attention is focused on the coffin which, much like in "Einer Toten," symbolizes the physical barrier separating living and dead. There is no transcendental spiritualism here, only the stones and bars and the black wooden lid of a new coffin among older ones. The flowers, too, have been separated from their sunny habitat. The melancholy aura of the locale reaches an apex in the image "verlassen und allein." But these are feelings that the beloved can no longer experience. In truth, they are the emotional reaction of the persona, transferred to the dead. The closing strophe elaborates on this concept of division and the resulting despair of the living. The dark butterfly seeking out the white flowers is symbolic of the persona's thoughts seeking to reach out into the night of darkness and death. Stuckert also sees it as a broader symbol of the poet's struggle: "Es ist wie das Denken des Dichters, das ruhelos um das Grab irrt."\(^{18}\) Storm, in fact, deems it the culminating image of the cycle: "Die letzte Strophe in Nr. 1 aber ist Keim und Spitze des Ganzen; in dem dunkeln Schmetterling verkörperten sich damals unwillkürlich meine Gedanken, die in jenen Nächten, wenn ich schlaflos lag,
 immer drunten in der Gruft um den bekränzten Sarg waren. Auch poetisch befriedigt mich die Strophe ganz."

If the image of the butterfly is a symbolic effort to transcend the separation brought by death, the second poem of the cycle is an objective, realistic response to that romantic but futile notion. The first strophe creates the sense of distance from the death by demonstrating the passage of time. The combination of "seit deinem Sterben" and "Nich einmal" place the persona in a time frame that is far enough from the immediacy of the death experience to permit reflection on the value of his own life. But even in this reflective posture, the definition of "Glück" is only possible in terms of the loss of his beloved. Her return is the equivalent of happiness. Thus the first two strophes set up an antithetical situation. The passage of time after the beloved's death has allowed the persona to consider the possibility of seeking new happiness, but happiness can only occur with the return of his love which would constitute a reinstatement of the past. The resolution of this conflict concludes with the destruction both of memory of the past and hope for the future. The image that dispels the positive potential is not the "Gruft" but the sunshine of the burial day. The bitter incongruity of the bright morning to the finality of the resting place imposes reality
on wishes and thoughts that would create a different landscape. The death-of-other thus terminates the possibility for achieving happiness because it is the end of the bond that represented the persona's joy. (This is quite the opposite of God's vision for the surviving partner in "Du hast sie, Herr," p. 145). The motifs of death and joy occur in parallel form in the three strophes: contemplation of distance from death = possibility of happiness; happiness = elimination of separation by death and restoring of previous state; remembrance of reality of death = cessation of desire for happiness.

The third poem in the final version of the cycle is an appropriate core because it contains the most intimate depiction of death and its effect on poetic expression, a "Schrei des verzweifelten Herzens."\(^{20}\) This is the only unrhymed poem in the cycle and the only one that does not adhere to Storm's usual application of regular meter and rhythm.

It is the most haunting portrayal of death discussed thus far, relentlessly moving from the death-of-other toward the death-of-self. Every image builds on the evolving perspective of the persona's own journey toward death. The emotional tone of the poem is framed by two images of illusion, "Luftgespenste" and "Träume." In essence, the two are emblematic of precisely the same
notion of immortality. Both are dispelled by the figure of Death: the first by the irreversible separation from his love, the second by the persona's own death.

The structure of the poem is unusual for Storm, and yet exhibits the blending of form and content which is the heart of his lyric vision: "Das rhythmische Gesetz, das diese freigebauten Verse durchwaltet, ist durch den Gegensatz von Antrieb und Hemmung bestimmt. Strophe eins bezeichnet den Grundgedanken, Strophe zwei und vier stellen das atemlose Hinstreben nach dem Ziele dar, Strophe drei und fünf die Vergeblichkeit dieses Ringens. Jenes Strophenpaar ist gekürzt und gestrafft, von harten, schweren Akzenten beherrscht, dieses gedehnt, regelmässiger gefügt und beruhigt."21 The repetition in the short, heavily punctuated lines creates a grim tone of inexorable movement toward the final destruction. As we have seen, for example, in "Meeresstrand" (p. 86) or "Lucie" (p. 152), the critical image lies at the poem's formal center. "Nichts" is the climactic vision of despair and pessimism. Immortality is no more than a mirage. The tension of loss and longing for his love, not the desire for an eternal self, drives the persona toward the ultimate goal: his own impending death toward which he resignedly is continually moving. Hope is the initial impetus for the journey, but its destruction alters neither path nor destination.
As in the nature-death poems or "Du hast sie, Herr," man has little choice in the final determination of his destiny.

The four-line verse constituting the fourth portion of the cycle seems incongruent with the building emotion of the first three parts. It is an interlude allowing the reader a moment of respite from the intimate reflection upon death-of-self in the preceding piece. Storm turns to his musical interest to achieve an interesting and unique euphemism for Constanze's death: "die geliebte Stimme fehlt." Again, though, the subtle shift of focus from the dead to the persona's loss and his present vision of life is evident.

Because the speaker is a singer himself, he does not need to question the stillness now afflicting the world; in the second two lines he gives us the reason. The importance of the loss is reflected in the repetition, "Die eine, die geliebte Stimme." The absence of this one voice silences everything else in the world. The imagery expresses the total desolation that the "Sänger" feels at this loss because he, too, was a part of the chorus surrounding that singular beloved voice (and he, too, is a voice that will one day be silenced). After Constanze's death, Storm locked himself in a room and played the piano for hours. These four lines make clear, however, that the
missing voice is irreplaceable. The other sounds of the world cannot fill the void.

The fifth segment returns to the thoughts of the third with the perspective more concisely phrased. Life is reduced to the "Qual alles Strebens," a much simplified figure for the prolonged repetitions in the third poem. Emphasis is placed on the cessation of striving and three of the four lines are dominated by such verbal images: "am Ende . . . jene dunkelste Stunde des Lebens . . . die Vernichtung." Indeed, the key word is "ruhig." The persona establishes with it a definitive contrast between life and death. If life is agony and struggle, annihilation can be no worse. Death, after all, ends this period of despair and is, thus, welcomed. What it brings is of no consequence, only that it offers release from the "Qual." This poem echoes the dispassionate resignation with which Storm closes the third. The death imagery here is not negative: the "Ende" is that of the persona's agony, the "dunkelste Stunde" provides a gift ("beschert"), and "Vernichtung" is seen in the retrospect of the pain of living as having value. The death imagery which normally carries negative connotations is given a positive function in this segment.

The final poem originally contained a different opening strophe: 23
Das Wort der Klage ist verstummt,
Und keine Tränen hab ich mehr,
Als trug ich alle Schuld der Welt,
So liegt es in mir tot und schwer.

Storm offers no explanation of its ultimate removal but the content is not compatible with the tone of the final version. The lyrical "I" assumes more importance here than the "etwas" of the other verses. The image of the first line, however, will be employed again by Storm, and with increasing significance in other poems.

The two stanzas use parallel imagery with each strophe concentrating on the primary emotions aroused by death: pain and longing. These emotions assume the metaphoric form of birds—the vulture symbolizing pain, longing embodied by some unnamed bird. The flight of the vulture is contrasted to a remaining "etwas." The weight of that as yet unknown is stronger than pain, "dumpf und schwer." The image of the vulture represents the depth of pain experienced by the persona. When the vulture departs, he leaves behind empty spaces, having devoured his fill of the victim. Yet in spite of the vulture's feeding on the carcass, something has survived deep within that went unnoticed or undesired by the scavenger.

The following stanza identifies the "etwas" as longing. Its condition, however, is one of agony as it, too, is in the final throes of death from its struggle. Whereas
the vulture contented itself with the outer shell of the carcass, this bird ("Sehnsucht") strives to reach the heart. The significant word is "mutlos," implying not defeat, but resignation. No outside force imposes itself upon the metaphorical bird; "Sehnsucht" perishes from a lack of self-will to continue the struggle toward its goal. The persona does not speak of death-of-self, instead he speaks of the death of longing as it simply gives up the search for the elusive "deine holde Nähe." The death of longing on the part of the persona suggests a submission to the blow dealt him by life and marks the conclusion of a poetic journey that begins at the coffin of the beloved, newly laid in its crypt, and moves toward the persona's coming to terms with the finality of her death and the futility of longing for what cannot be changed. Such submission, of course, has bearing on acceptance of his own fate as well. The multiple perspectives of the cycle emphasize that the life of the persona and his concept of death is forever, inextricably altered by the death-of-other.

Ein Leib und eine Seele

Ein Leib und eine Seele, die wir waren,  
Kann ich von deinem Tode nicht genesen;  
Wie du zerfällst einsam in deinem Grabe,  
O fühl ich mich, mein Leben, mit verwesen.  
(1865; Werke, I, 295)
This four-line poem was also intended to be a part of the "Tiefe Schatten" cycle. In fact, it was written during the same period and was to assume the third place in the order. Essentially, this poem summarizes the contents of the cycle. Both the physical and the spiritual union have been broken by the death of one partner. The effect on the persona is initially devastating, eventually dulled to a despondent acquiescence. "Zerfallen" reiterates death as termination and the void which is left in the persona's life. "Einsam" describes not only the condition of death, but also the loneliness of the survivor.

Constanze

Längst in das sichere Land der Vergangenheit warst du geschieden;
Nun, wie so viele zuvor, dämmerte wieder ein Tag.
Laut schon sangen die Schwalben; da neben mir krachte das Bettchen,
Und aus dem rosigen Schlaf hob sich ein Köpfchen empor.
"Ebbe!" so rief ich, "klein Ebbe!"--Da kniete sie schon in den Kissen;
Aber geheimnisvoll blühten die Augen mich an.
"Ebbe?" frug sie zurück, und leis aus innerstem Herzen
Klang's wie ein Lachen herauf: "Elschen hiess ich ja sonst!
Wer doch nannte mich Elschen?" Da plötzlich fiel es wie Schatten
Über das Kindergesicht; trüb sich umflorte das Aug.
"Ja, wer nannte dich so?"--Und zögernd kamen die Worte:
"Meine Mutter." Und still senkte das Köpfchen sich nun.
Lange kniete sie so. Den sterblichen Augen unfassbar--
War sie dem Kinde genaht, die mich so lange beglückt?

Nicht dem Geliebten allein, wie vielen warst du entrissen!
Glaubten die Freunde doch kaum, ohne dich blühe die Welt.--
Deine geliebten Rosen, ach, dreimal blühten sie wieder,
Und deinen Namen wie lang hab ich von keinem gehört.
Rastlos wandert die Zeit, in den Augen der Kinder
verdämmt
Mählich dein Bild, und bald—wer noch wüsste von dir!
Denn so schwindet der Menschen Gedächtnis: Siehe, noch
einmal,
Höher als je zuvor, hebt es die spiegelnde Flut;
Scheidender Abendstrahl der Sonne verklärt es noch einmal;
Doch die Welle verrauscht, nimmt und begräbt es die Nacht.
(1871; Werke, I, 299)

"Tiefe Schatten" was written almost immediately after
Constanze's death. A lengthy time lapse ensued before
Storm approached the experience again from the death-of-
other context. Indeed, the after-effects of her death
became more poetic than personal as time wore on. Storm
alludes to this in a March 1871 letter to his daughter,
Lisbeth: "Ich habe in diesen Tagen zwei kleine Elegien
fertiggemacht und leider dabei erfahren, dass meine Zeit
des Dichtens wohl vorüber ist. Gedanke und Anschauung
prägt sich nicht mehr so von selbst aus, wie das einst
der Fall war."24

This two part elegiac piece exhibits the stoic tone
that comes with the perspective of time. In fact, the poem
begins with an acknowledgment of that distancing influence:
the land of the past is a secure one.25 The narrative bulk
of the poem underscores the importance of memory in Storm's
death poetry. It also shows the same fascination with the
mysterious origins of memory and the nagging question of
the power of the dead to inspire such memory. Just as
"Lucie" (p. 152) ends with uneasy queries, the speculation
is raised here in a closing question. What causes the mystical arousal of the child's faint memory of her mother, and how does this ethereal force ("den sterblichen Augen unfassbar") invade a world that is so strongly controlled by the senses? The answer, like the death experience itself, remains beyond the poet's comprehension.

As in "Tiefe Schatten," the narrative segment is followed by one which is subjectively analytical. The first line provides a logical transition from the story of the preceding elegy. Storm's preoccupation with death and memory dominates, yet remains dependent on the contextual foundation of the intimacy of the love bond. If we recall that death destroys the identity of the individual and that memory seems the only possibility for a transcendental preservation of individual existence, the message in this poem becomes a graphic portrayal of the survivor's dilemma. Life and time cloud memory, extinguishing the dead's identity ("wer noch, wüsste von dir!"). Living by its very definition precludes the survivor's ability to sustain the past ("Denn so schwindet der Menschen Gedächtnis"). As Alt states it, "even the past is not safe because as memory fades with time so does the past."

Yet memory, through some inexplicable force, rises from the darkness of a faded past, casting shadows on life, before sinking back into the obscurity of eternal
night. Thus Stuckert's analysis that the first elegy remains "so ganz in Nahen und Alltäglichen" while the second aspires "zu hoher betrachtenden Überschau" is too vaguely delineated. The first elegy portrays an "Alltag" that can suddenly give way at the intrusion of memory, i.e., past. Conversely, the second elegy descends from the elevated poetic musings as the present subdues memory again, causing it to fade away. The need to carry on with life and the conflicting feeling of obligation to remember the dead create a psychological battle which dominates Storm's death-of-other poems. (Concomitantly, the awareness that the dead are destined to be forgotten must also influence his vision of death-of-self.)

The final work under consideration in this grouping reflects Storm's continued contemplation of the topic:

Begrabe nur dein Liebestes!

Begrabe nur dein Liebestes! Dennoch gilt's
Nun weiterleben;--und im Drang des Tages,
Dein Ich behauptend, stehst bald wieder du.
--So jüngst im Kreis der Freunde war es, wo
Hinreissend Wort zu lauter Rede schwoll;
Und nicht der Stillsten einer war ich selbst.
Der Wein schoss Perlen im Kristallnen Glas,
Und in den Schläfen hämmerete das Blut;--
Da plötzlich in dem hellen Tosen hört ich
--Nicht Täuschung war's, doch wunderbar zu sagen--,
Aus weiter Ferne hört ich eine Stille;
Und einer Stimme Laut, wie mühsam zu mir ringend,
Sprach todesmüde, doch süß, dass ich erbebte:
"Was larmst du so, und weisst doch, dass ich schlafe!"
(1873; Werke, I, 190)
Storm begins with an assertion introducing the narrative of a specific experience. In the first three lines, the crucial thought revolves around the intriguing phrase, "Dein Ich behauptend." It contains a multiple layer of meanings: as a contrast to "im Drang des Tages" when the ego seeks to maintain its uniqueness in the midst of the crowd; as a reassertion of the independent self no longer in a "Leib und Seele" union; and as an affirmation of self-identity which is possible for the living, but has been lost by the dead.

In the midst of this vibrant, communal celebration of life (for the reader is exhorted to bury only the beloved and not the self, too), the power of memory gains an other-worldly essence enhanced, certainly, by the persona's tipsy condition. The voice ("Nicht Täuschung war's") that calls from the dead is from the land of the past. Her message conveys a dualistic intent transcending the barrier between inner-meaning and outer reality. The key image, of course, lies in the modifier, "todesmüd," and the verb "schlafen." Stuckert recognized the framing effect which encapsulates the persona's experience in death imagery: "Erst mit dem letzten Wort rundet sich das Gedicht zum Ganzen, indem es das Wort 'schläfe' mit dem Anfangswort 'Begrabe' sinnvoll verknüpft." Superceding the literal context of a person disturbed from sleep is the
metaphoric connotation of sleep as death. Now the modifier "todesmüd" acquires a further possible interpretation of someone tired of the death state in which she is bound.

The source of all this is within the persona, but the perplexing question lingers about its provocation. What causes thoughts of the dead to invade the lives of the survivors with the inexplicable suddenness and potency? Is it meant as a reminder of our own mortality, of our future dependence upon the living for our fraction of immortality? Storm reaches no definitive conclusion, but the impassioned "O bleibe treu den Toten" (p. 131) initiated a haunting refrain that we have seen recur in many subsequent poems.

This poetry has treated death as a separation resulting in loss. The perspective is primarily from the survivor who seeks a redefined vision of life in the context of the other's death. It is, in other words, the reaction stimulated by a specific death-of-other. As the poetic premise evolves from a speculative to completed death-of-other schema, the verbal imagery has increasingly incorporated real death references through a proliferation of "sterben," "Tod," and graveyard images. Static noun forms occur more frequently than in the nature-death poems, which are dominated by verbs emphasizing the transitional act of
dying. Death is more often a completed finality, in the past tense, associated with "das Ende" and other intimations of total annihilation ("Vernichtung," etc.). The poetic form becomes more tenuous in execution and less predictable. These changes escalate rapidly after 1865, the year of Constanze's death.

The death-of-self poems evoke an unexpectedly different mood. The despondency gives way to an elevated, visionary experience. Death-of-self is entwined with erotic, romantic elements relativizing its impact. In these poems, love achieves a measure of victory over death.

_Auf Wiedersehen_

_Das Mädchen spricht:_

_Auf Wiedersehn! Das ist ein trüglich Wort!— O reiss dich nicht von meinem warmen Herzen! Auf Wiedersehn! Das spricht von Seligkeit Und bringt mir doch so tausend bittre Schmerzen._

_Auf Wiedersehn! Das Wort ist für den Tod!— Weisst du, wie über uns die Sterne stehen! Noch schlägt mein Herz, und meine Lippe glüht— Mein süßer Freund, ich will dich immer sehen._

_Du schwurst mir ja, mein Aug bezaubre dich; Schaut ich dich an, so könntst du nimmer gehen! Mein bist du ja!—Erst wenn mein Auge bricht, Dann küss mich sanft und sprich: Auf Wiedersehen!_ (1839; Werke, I, 148)
The poet introduces the persona as a young girl, establishing a particular viewpoint from which the thoughts originate. "Auf Wiedersehen," is the thread linking the three strophes, with each strophe focusing on a different interpretation of the phrase. The girl employs a clever word play to demonstrate that it is a "trüglich Wort." Her intention is to convince her lover to stay with her now, instead of having to wait for the return the "wiedersehen" implies. (In other words, the phrase signifies departure and return as well.) The central idea, placed in the second strophe, contrasts the lovers' perception of the phrase. Farewell is for death, she says, and because she loves him, "ich will dich immer sehen" (my stress). But "immer" is a relative time frame negated by the death image.

The final strophe, too, reveals the irony of the girl's words. The first two lines employ the traditional imagery of the eye as a romantic communicative device (it casts spells). If she were to exercise her power, "so könntst du nimmer gehn!" That ownership, however, would still only extend to the limit of life, because death destroys the power of the eye ("es bricht"). At this point, the bond is broken through the final parting. Not until then should the lover consider farewell. The poet is using the contrast of literal meaning and cliche usage
in order to express the importance of the present because, as the girl is well aware, a "wiedersehen" may never occur.

It is the girl's death which would prompt this parting farewell, and she speaks of it with a pragmatism and indifference quite distinct from the emotional reaction to death-of-other in the preceding poems. The young girl lives in the present and her concerns are for the love she experiences in the here and now. Fear of death does not affect her coquettish use of allusion to dying.

The context of the following poem is relativized by the subjunctive form endowing the scenario with its hypothetical overtone. Neither the love nor the death imagery is fully realized, they remain in the sphere of conjecture:

Stünd ich mit der auf Bergeshöhn!
Stünd ich mit dir auf Bergeshöhn!
In dieser trüben Nacht,
Tief unten Todesinsamkeit
Und droben Wolkenjagd!

Nur in den Schlünden schwatzte
Der Wind durch die Grabesruh,
Und droben in der wilden Nacht
Alleinzig ich und du!—

Ich wollte dich fest umschlingen
Und küssen aus Herzensgrund,
Und leben und vergehen
Tiefinnig Mund an Mund.
(1844; Werke, I, 274)

Each of the three strophes contains a central death-oriented image in an essentially romantic-erotic context.
These death allusions are associated with a downward perspective while the upward imagery projects the love relationship. The contrast in the first two strophes is thus clearly defined: "mit dir auf Bergeshöh' . . . Tief unten Todeseinsamkeit . . . Schlünden . . . Grabesruh . . . droben . . . ich und du." The final strophe unites the ecstasy of love with the notion of death in the "Herzensgrund." The persona does not seek to escape dying as long as it, like life, can be experienced together with his beloved. The concept of metaphorically dying in the intensity of love is not common in Storm's death-of-self poetry. It must be noted, however, that the poet's use of key death images (with dualistic metaphoric intent) in a poem having strong erotic tones, marks the pervading nature of the death theme in Storm's thinking, even at the height of passion.

Schliesse mir die Augen beide
Schliesse mir die Augen beide
Mit den lieben Händen zu!
Geht doch alles, was ich leide,
Unter deiner Hand zur Ruh.

Und wie leise sich der Schmerz
Well' um Welle schlafen leget,
Wie der letzte Schlag sich reget,
Füllest du mein ganzes Herz.

(1852; Werke, I, 132-33)

The content of the poem is an elaboration of the vignette depicted in the first line, "schliesse mir die Augen,"
as the ensuing images flow from this initial idea. Like the previous poem, this one interweaves dual meanings of love and death in metaphor. The value of these metaphors can be interpreted to enhance the love bond (in life) aspect, or, simply, as a final act of love emblematic of the persona's death. If read in that frame of reference, the death portrayal is one in which peace and liberation from pain prevails. This gentle death-of-self, significantly, is accomplished through the loving assistance of the other. As with the two preceding poems, the death imagery does not attain its full potency. Instead, it hovers in the realm of dual purpose, never reaching the concise reality of dying portrayed in the death-of-other poetry.

Written in the same year as "Schliesse mir die Augen beide," the identical concept serves a different purpose in "Sprich, bist du stark," in which the persona speculates on the beloved's reaction to his death:

Sprich, bist du stark

Sprich, bist du stark, wenn schon mein Leben brach
Und nur nicht scheiden kann von deinen Blicken,
Das Auge, das von deiner Liebe sprach,
Auf Nimmerwiedersehen zuzudrücken?

Und bist du stark, was sonst das Herz verführt,
Wenn es sich schmeichelnd, zwingend dargeboten,
Dir stets zu weigern fest und unberührt
Und jungfräulich zu hängen an dem Toten?

Und bist du stark, dass durch den trüb'en Flor,
Dass durch die Einsamkeit mühsel'ger Jahre,
Wenn dein Gedächtnis schon mein Bild verlor,
Doch unsre Liebe noch dein Herz bewahre?
(1846; Werke, I, 281-82)

The persona queries his beloved in each strophe, beginning with the closing of the eyes in death. The poem is a challenge to the steadfastness of her love. Will she have the strength to close his eyes "auf Nimmerwiedersehen"? Can she remain chastely true to him even in his death, and can she maintain her love for him beyond the time of fading memory?

The love relationship is defined by a qualitative value of death. The persona depersonalizes his own dying, which is of secondary importance beside the question of her love, by using third-person images. Rather than saying, for example, "ich sterbe," in the first line, the persona abstractly views his bodily demise, "wenn schon mein Leben brach" (a non-traditional verbal image).

Similarly, in the second stanza, he refers to himself as "den Toten." He then becomes a reflection, "mein Bild." The poet makes clear that his questions are concerned with a projected reaction to his death in the future. He is not thinking of the personal significance of impending death. Instead, death is a measuring device to determine the magnitude of her love for him.

The poet turns again to a more immediate consideration of dying; the theme is the passing of life in the following poem:
Wohl fühle ich, wie das Leben rinnt
Und dass ich endlich scheiden muss,
Dass endlich doch das letzte Lied
Und endlich kommt der letzte Kuss.

Noch häng ich fest an deinem Mund
In schmerzlicher bangender Begier;
Du gibst der Jugend letzten Kuss,
Die letzte Rose gibst du mir.

Du schenkst aus jenem Zauberkelch
Den letzten goldenen Trunk mir ein;
Du bist aus jener Märchenwelt
Mein allerletzter Abendschein.

Am Himmel steht der letzte Stern,
O halte nicht dein Herz zurück;
Zu deinen Füssen sink ich hin,
O fühlé's du bist mein letztes Glück!

Lass einmal noch durch meine Brust
Des vollsten Lebens Schauer wehn,
Eh seufzgend in die große Nacht
Auch meine Sterne untergehn.
(1848; Werke, I, 120-21)

Each thought is a metaphor for dying. The construction of the poem relies upon repetition, which magnifies the termination of all sensory enjoyment inherent in death. The recurrence of "endlich" melds the process of transition with the result. A progressive elimination of all symbolic elements of love and beauty follows. All of these exist via the beloved, who endows the world with a magical quality. Each moment of life ticks away, registered by the repeated "letzt." Death is reached in the final two lines. The persona is resigned to being extinguished in the vast darkness of night. In truth,
metaphorically his life has faded away already, with nothing remaining but the last symbolic moment of demise.

For the first time, the poet allows his persona to analyze directly the process of his death, although limited to the metaphoric context of love and sensory pleasure. Lack of hope for eternity, an emptiness emblematic of death and life without love, prospective annihilation, these aspects so evident in the death-of-other poetry have not been addressed in the early death-of-self poems. Not until the following, eloquently brief poem written in 1849 as an adjunct to Immensee, did Storm draw together the haunting premonition of self-death and painful acknowledgment of transitoriness:

Lied des Harfenmädchens

Heute, nur heute
Bin ich so schön;
Morgen, ach morgen
Muss alles vergehn!

Nur diese Stunde
Bist du noch mein;
Sterben, ach sterben
Soll ich allein.
(1849; Werke, I, 114)

In twenty-six words, Storm expresses the complete conceptualization of life and death forming the core of all his death poetry. As Müller notes of this poem, "Mit dem Augenblick der Erfüllung ist zugleich die Erfahrung der
Versagung verbunden." The work is a delicately constructed series of thoughts that represent a brutally logical progression, culminating in the crucial factor of the life-death dichotomy: isolation. Stuckert calls this the "Ausdruck einer menschlichen Ursituation."  

The poem begins with the present, its limits vividly conveyed in the repetition, "Heute, nur heute" (my stress). This is set in immediate contrast with the future, a melancholy prospect. Today is beauty; tomorrow is complete devastation. The brevity of time which the young girl has for the enjoyment of life is intensified by the short lines, dominating repetition of key time elements, and the succinct parallel structure. The second strophe constricts the time frame further. By balancing "Nur diese Stunde" with "Sterben, ach sterben," which contains no time modifier, the image of immanent death consumes the notion of time. The temporal opportunity for love is reminiscent of "Bald ist unsers Lebens Traum zu Ende."

Up to this point in the poems that have dealt with death-of-self, the lyrical "I" manipulates the death concept by employing conjecture, supposition, and metaphor. "Lied des Harfenmädchens" strips away the superficial distancing techniques and allows its persona to express the essential reality: "ich sterbe." The following poem attempts to cross the barrier to expression which death creates:
Im Zeichen des Todes

Noch war die Jugend mein, die schöne, ganze,
Ein Morgen nur, ein Gestern gab es nicht;
Da sah der Tod im hellsten Sonnenglanze,
Mein Haar berührend, mir ins Angesicht.

Die Welt erlosch, der Himmel brannte trübe,
Ich sprang empor entsetzt und ungestüm.
Doch er verschwand; die Ewigkeit der Liebe
Lag vor mir noch und trennte mich von ihm.

Und heute nun—im sonnigen Gemache
Zur Rechten und zur Linken schlief mein Kind;
Des zarten Atems lauschend, hielt ich Wache,
Und an den Fenstern ging der Sommerwind.

Da sanken Nebelschleier dicht und dichter
Auf mich herab; kaum schienen noch hervor
Der Kinder schlummerselige Gesichter,
Und nicht mehr drang ihr Atem an mein Ohr.

Ich wollte rufen; doch die Stimme Keuchte,
Bis hell die Angst aus meinem Herzen schrie.
Vergebens doch; kein Schrei der Angst erreichte,
Kein Laut der Liebe mehr erreichte sie.

In grauer Finsternis stand ich verlassen,
Bewegungslos und schauernden Gebeins;
Ich fühlte kalt mein schlagend Herz erfassen,
Und ein entsetzlich Auge sank in meins.

Ich floh nicht mehr, ich fesselte das Grauen
Und fäste mühsam meines Auges Kraft;
Dann überkam vorahnend mich Vertrauen
Zu dem, der meine Sinne hielt in Haft.

Und als ich fest den Blick zurückgegeben,
Lag plötzlich tief zu Füßen mir die Welt;
Ich sah mich hoch und frei ob allem Leben
An deiner Hand, furchtbarer Fürst, gestellt.

Den Dampf der Erde sah empor ich streben
Und ballen sich zu Mensch- und Tiergestalt;
Sah es sich schütteln, tasten, sah es leben
Und taumeln dann und schwinden alsobald.
Im fahlen Schein im Abrund sah ich's liegen
Und sah sich's regen in der Städte Rauch;
Ich sah es wimmeln, hasten, sich bekriegen
Und sah mich selbst bei den Gestalten auch.

Und niederschauend von des Todes Warte,
Kam mir der Drang, das Leben zu bestehn,
Die Lust, dem Feind, der unten meiner harrte,
Mit vollem Aug ins Angesicht zu sehn.

Und kühlens Hauches durch die Adern rinnen
Fühlt ich die Kraft, entgegen Lust und Schmerz
Vom Leben fest mich selber zu gewinnen,
Wenn andres nicht, so doch ein ganzes Herz.—

Da fühlt ich mich im Sonnenlicht erwachen;
Es dämmerte, verschwebte und zerrann;
In meine Ohren klang der Kinder Lachen,
Und frische, blaue Augen sahn mich an.

O schöne Welt! So sei in ernstem Zeichen
Begonnen denn der neue Lebenstag!
Es wird die Sturm nicht allzusehr erbleichen,
Auf der, o Tod, ein dunkles Auge lag.

Ich fühlte tief, du gönnetest nicht allen
Dein Angesicht; sie schauen dich ja nur,
Wenn sie dir taumelnd in die Arme fallen,
Ihr Los erfüllend gleich der Kreatur.

Mich aber lass unirren Augs erblicken,
Wie sie, von keiner Ahnung angeweht,
Brutalen Sinns ihr nichtig Werk beschicken,
Unkundig deiner stillen Majestät.

(1852; Werke, I, 161-63)

The sixteen-strophe poem divides into six unequal parts: 1) the retrospective, analytic vision of youth [1,2]; 2) the narrative of the transition experience [3-6]; 3) the narrative of his submission to that experience [7-10]; 4) the analyzed response [11,12]; 5) the return from the experience [12]; 6) the revised view of life [14-16]. In a letter to Mörike in 1863, a year after the poem's
inception, Storm dispels any illusion that this experience has some Christian foundation: "[Das Gedicht] wurde zur stillen Abwehr gegen die Brutalität und Gemeinheit, wie sie nach Verhältnissen, welche wir hier gehabt, wohl überall zutage kommen, und aus vollstem Herzen geschrieben; die Überschrift ist wohl verkehrt, weil sie leicht irreleitet; ich habe nur das Zeichen des Todes gemeint, nicht das konstantinische christliche †."31

Each strophe presents an element of death contrasted to the positive aspects of life. The poem's intent is the revelation of the persona's coming to terms with death (accepting it, if you will) and the implication of this analyzed experience for an interpretation of the value of life. The first strophe establishes the persona's subjective and objective starting point in retrospect. His youth instills anticipation for the future with no sense of passing time (no "Verdränglichkeitsdrang"). Death, however, makes its presence felt in spite of the "hellsten Sonnenglanze." Its image is personified or, more accurately, given a form through which it is able to function as an active agent. It intrudes upon his pleasant life as something which looks into the person's visage.

The following strophe details the ensuing results in universalized metaphors. The world is annihilated and the heavens (supposed source of salvation) burn gloomily.
At the dramatic apex, as the persona protests ("ich sprang empor"), death disappears because of the presence of the eternal quality of love. "Ewigkeit" is an ironic emphasis of the youthful perspective. The inclusion of "noch" reminds the reader that the persona is recalling a past event from an advanced level of understanding. Indeed, he immediately makes the transition to the present. However, the experience that he now relates is also from a reflective standpoint: this event, too, is completed, with the persona having acquired some distance, allowing a comprehensive picture. This distancing effect is conveyed to the reader by use of the past tense. "Und heute nun" determines the time frame between the previous past of the first strophes and the current reflective stance. Into the peaceful portrait of the third strophe, Storm weaves a hint of uneasiness harking back to the menacing vision of death: on the loveliest of summer days, the persona is standing watch as if in expectation of some threat. The "Nebelschleier" is death's precursor inflicting sensory deprivation. It enshrouds the persona, severing his vital links to life (the perception of the children's faces and breathing).

The following strophes convey helplessness and the futility of struggle, acknowledging the fearful awareness of death's proximity and power. The love which had protected him in the second strophe is no longer an effective
weapon, and the persona's sudden isolation magnifies his defenselessness. He stands "verlassen, / Bewegungslos und schauernenden Gebeins." At the moment of utter vulnerability, Death appears and the thing that once merely touched his hair and looked at him now grips his heart while a terrifying eye bores into his. The emotional tenor of the poem shifts from desperation to absolute submission and this marks a critical turning point.

Capitulation replaces futile efforts to retreat, "ich floh nicht mehr." In the moment of defeat, however, the persona becomes the victor, not of death, but of the fear it engenders. He overcomes the instinctive "Grauen" and discovers a certain trust for his captor. As soon as this occurs, his vision is restored. The importance of the eyes and the power of sight as a communicative avenue is a leitmotif that binds the separate events in the poem. By overcoming his fear and stoically confronting death, the persona's ability to see is not only restored, but also expanded. He observes the whole of the life-death process: "Der Blick richtet sich auf die Erde: Tierisches und vor allem menschliches Leben wird in balladesken Verknappung vorgeführt. Stilistisch zeigt sich plötzlich eine Prävalenz von Verben, die inhaltlich auf vitalistische Aspekte der menschlichen Existenz abzielen." Further, the persona sees himself and his
place in the universal order. The imagery from the nature-
death poetry recurs, conveying Storm's firm conviction
of man's insignificance and of the arbitrariness of life
and death. "Hoch ob allem Leben" at the side of death,
the persona observes a vision of himself in the "Abgrund
. . . bei den Gestalten auch."

This rational analytical nature of the persona reacts
in a series of decisions: "das Leben zu bestehn; dem Feind
mit vollem Aug ins Angesicht zu sehen; Vom Leben fest mich
selber zu gewinnen . . . ein ganzes Herz." The vision
given him by Death causes re-evaluation of the expecta-
tions he has placed on life and unveils the greatest goal,
"ein ganzes Herz." By resolving his fear of death, he
has received a vision of universal reality leading to a new
vision of self.

As soon as this resolution is accomplished, the per-
sona returns to life literally and metaphorically, or as
Müller puts it, "Jenseits der Einsamkeit, in der sich die
Begegnung mit dem Tod ereignet hat, ist der Kontakt mit
der Umwelt wiederhergestellt."33 But the "neue Lebenstag"
begins under the sign of death, signifying the compromise
between the persona and death's ultimate power over him.

I have discussed in context the death-oriented imagery
which clearly dominates the poem. If we extract the
specific references to the figure, Death, a pattern parallel
unfolding events can be discerned:

Strophe 1  "der Tod"  traditional conception

  6  "ein entsetzlich Auge"  fear response

  8  "furchtbarer Fürst"  ruler of the worldly realm

 11  "Feind"  negative enemy of life

 14  "O Tod"  respected adversary

 15  "Angesicht; Arme"  personified captor

 16  "Majestät"  esteemed, acknowledged ruler

What, then, is the meaning of the pseudo-death experience? Is this submission to death an act of willing acceptance or resignation to an imposed fate? Martini sees the poem as part of Storm's search, "das Verhängnis des Erloschens durch eine Kraft des Ich gesammelte Schicksalsgefasstheit zu bestehen." But this begs the question of resignation versus will, for one can merely choose to endure or one can act to overcome. In this poem, the persona's experience leads from the former to the latter. He feels he has been elevated above the common mortal because of it. Privileged with a broader perspective, the persona sees his life changed by the figure of Death and by his envisioned personal death. Dying attains altered significance due to the new connotations given to life. Further, the persona replaces a fear reaction with an acceptance.
resembling Schiller's notion of sublime "Erhabenheit" (in an acquiescent submission to fate, one achieves victory over that fate). But Storm's thoughts are not so ethereal. His persona's choice grows out of a "Drang, das Leben zu bestehn;" it is a pragmatist's effort to survive and grasp tightly as much of life as he can, aware that he must surrender it again at the time prescribed by Death.

The love-death schema culminates in this poem because the persona begins with the notion of the eternal nature of love as his protector, and evolves an understanding that love's power does not extend beyond the grave. With this awareness, the lyrical "I" of the poem resolves to make love the guiding principle of life, with no expectations of some mystical, transcendental unity.

Storm approaches the love-death paradox from a variety of perspectives leading, essentially, to the same conclusion. Love is a temporal power, ineffectual in the face of death. In life, however, it offers a respite from the isolation in which humans would otherwise be destined to live and die. Isolation rather than death is Storm's great fear; death merely represents its ultimate form.

If we reexamine the imagery of death-of-other and death-of-self, several disparities are apparent. The death-of-self poetry with a definitive persona ceases, in essence,
after 1852, with the exception of its role in the "Tiefe Schatten" cycle in 1865. The problem of death-of-other (again, with a specific persona) continues to occupy the poet's thoughts into the 1870s. These poems involve the related theme of memory. Because of this, images such as "Grab," "Sarg," "Totenkranz," etc. play an important role. These are, after all, tangible links between the living and dead. As monuments erected by the living, they symbolize remembrance. In evocative terms, the poems elicit reaction or response to loss. The death-of-self poems are primarily reflective, either attempting to conceptualize the reaction of others or contemplating the process of dying. The reality of self-death, however, remains in the future. What makes "Im Zeichen des Todes" so intriguing, is the persona's leap into the other realm (post-death) maintaining conscious awareness. In transcending the physical moment of death, he is still not granted an insight into the death state but receives the vision of life which gives him renewed vitality. The realm of "der furchtbare Fürst" remains unknown. Because of this, the mystical force of memory is a haunting message from the "other side," a message that Storm and his lyrical "I" have not yet entirely encoded.
Notes

2Stuckert, p. 127.
3Written in response to a Freiligrath poem, "O lieb, solang du lieben kannst."
4As quoted by Elmer Otto Wooley, Studies in Theodor Storm (Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1943), p. 30, date unavailable.
6Thomas Mann, Schriften und Reden zur Literatur, Kunst und Philosophie (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1968), II, p. 57.
7Theodor Storm & Paul Heyse, Briefwechsel, ed. Clifford Bernd (Berlin: Schmidt, 1974), III, p. 44.
8Storm & Heyse, III, p. 58. Goldammer, the editor of Werke, attributes this remark as Heyse's reaction to the poem. Bernd, on the other hand, clouds the issue in his notes to the letter which list the reference to "Novelle von Karl Spindler," p. 136.
As quoted in Werke, I, p. 698.

Müller, p. 155.

Gertrud Storm, Theodor Storm: Ein Bild seines Lebens (Berlin: Curtius, 1912), I, p. 56.

Müller, p. 154.

Stuckert, p. 211.

As cited in Werke, p. 712.

Müller, p. 170.


Stuckert, p. 212.

Stuckert, p. 213

As quoted in Werke, p. 713. Letter to Fontane written 21 November 1868.

Stuckert, p. 213.

Stuckert, p. 213.

Müller, p. 170.

As cited in Werke, p. 713.

As quoted in Werke, p. 747.

Reference to the 99th letter from Seneca to Lucilius, according to Goldammer, Werke, p. 747.


Stuckert, p. 214.
Stuckert, p. 214.

Müller, p. 152.

Müller, p. 201.

Goldammer explains the original title as *In hoc signo vinces* from an inscription supposedly seen by Roman emperor Constantine the Great in 312 before his victory over Emperor Maxentius, in *Werke*, p. 705.

Müller, p. 157.

Müller, p. 157.


In Chapter Two, the question was raised how we can use language to convey our tenuous conceptions of an unknown entity such as death. The disparity becomes greater when a poet seeks to mold an expression of death in an ordered and fluidly cohesive form. Death, by its arbitrary and unseen nature, is a chaotic, indeterminate intangibility. How then, does one write about an instance when all that is known is left behind? Scattered throughout Storm's poetic endeavors are five poems which venture to illuminate something of that moment. They are, in a sense, extensions of the attempts begun in the poems previously discussed. More importantly, they provide insight into the poet's struggle with the inadequacy of lyric expression and thus reveal Storm's most intimate response to death.

Eine Frühlingsnacht

Im Zimmer drinnen ist's so schwül;
Der Kranke leigt auf dem heissen Pfuhl.

Im Fieber hat er die Nacht verbracht;
Sein Herz ist mude, sein Auge verwacht.

Er läuscht auf der Stunden rinnenden Sand;
Er hält die Uhr in der weissen Hand.

Er "zähl"t die Schläge, die sie pickt,
Er forschet, wie der Weiser rückt;

195
Es fragt ihn, ob er noch leb' vielleicht,  
Wenn der Weiser die schwarze Drei erreicht.

Die Wartfrau sitzt geduldig dabei,  
Harrend, bis alles vorüber sei.

Schon auf dem Herzen drückt ihn der Tod;  
Und draussen dämmert das Morgenrot.

An die Fenster klettert der Frühlingstag.  
Mädchen und Vögel werden wach.

Die Erde lacht in Liebesschein,  
Pfingstglocken lauten das Braufest ein;

Singende Bursch ziehn übers Feld  
Hinein in die blühende, klingende Welt. --

Und immer stiller wird es drin;  
Die Alte tritt zum Kranken hin.

Der hat die Hände gefaltet dicht;  
Sie zieht ihm das Laken übers Gesicht.

Dann geht sie fort. Stumm wird's und leer;  
Und drinnen wacht kein Auge mehr.

(1844; Werke, I, 147-48)

The thirteen rhymed couplets in the present tense portray the unfolding death event from an objective standpoint: no persona is involved, yet the narrator is in immediate proximity to the death scene and thus intrinsic to the event. The imagery is concrete and sensory-oriented. Each line is a complete thought and follows in progression, building upon the preceding information in near journalistic style.

From the opening line, the reader feels the oppressive, sickly atmosphere of the deathbed, as the first couplet establishes the physical condition of the setting and the
man. This carries into the second couplet where the time frame is set. The narrator moves closer to the scene: "heiss" becomes the result of "Fieber;" the "Kranke" is given specific characteristics of illness, "sein Herz ist müde, sein Auge verwacht." Both qualities impart the feeling of faded energy, of a body near the end of its vital strength.

The ensuing two couplets convey time slipping away, unstoppable, as well as the waiting posture of the dying man. That he is dying is metaphorically expressed with the hourglass sand running out (a traditional death image) and the ticking clock. Both metaphors are sensory manifestations of an unseen, silent power. The hand holding the clock is already deathly white. These four lines are constructed in uniform manner, paralleling the inexorable passage of time: "Er lauscht . . . Er halt die Uhr . . . Er zählt . . . Er forschet." Patiently, he observes the last minutes of his life with detachment. One senses no panic, no fear, and, significantly, no futile longing to stave off the inevitable. The old man is depicted in a posture of complete passivity. Indeed, an aura of anticipation for the release from life surrounds his behavior. This portrait conflicts with the general conception of Storm as a man who had a deeply rooted fear of death.
The following couplet concentrates on the unyielding, arbitrary consummation of destiny. The randomness of death's appearance is evident in "vielleicht," just as "drei" might well have been "vier" or "zwei." Coupled with the reversed perspective of the question "Es fragt ihn," (my stress), the reader perceives not only the dying man's lack of control, but an accompanying absence of will to contest the taunt implied in the question. This is a human being ready to die, uninterested in any struggle for self-preservation.

Similar apathy transfers to the figure of the "Wartefrau," whose function is, precisely, to wait for death. There is no emotion, regret, or sorrow, merely the same disinterested patience with which the sick man watches the seconds ticking away. For her, death is no more than an abstract process, reduced to a non-specific "alles." Yet in that word rests the thrust of the utter finality.

At the center of the poem, the contrast of life and death is clearly drawn in fluid imagery. As death crushes the inner life source of the man, the red of a new dawn begins to glow outside. The finite nature of the individual life and the eternal, re-creative force of the universe share a single couplet, stressing the dichotomy of man's actual insignificance and his self-imposed importance.
To complete the contrast, the next three couplets present a sequence of life-affirming vignettes. The nature imagery is rebirth-oriented: "Frühlings­tag," "blühend." At the center of this scenario is the dominating quality of love ("Die Erde lacht in Liebesschein") and the union of man and women ("Brautfest"). All of the images constitute opposites to the domain of death within the room. In fact, only the window, which divides the two, allows access to this vista of life. Day replaces night, the girls "werden wach" while the old man's eyes are "verwacht," the young men sing and he "lauscht auf der Stunden rinnenden Sand." Life is sound and constant motion, while the death room is passive and stagnant. The punctuation at the end of the tenth couplet draws an incontrovertible barrier between the vital landscape outside and the interior dissolution.

The carefree sounds of the outer world are oblivious to the event taking place in the room, and similarly, those sounds do not penetrate the death scene which grows "immer stiller." The "Wartfrau" no longer waits and is now, simply, "die Alte." However, the final rituals of death have not transpired. Once the hands are in their final, fixed position and the sheet covers the face, the last death sign has been put in place. The man no longer is a part of this world, his identity obliterated by death,
as his features are hidden by the sheet. After the old woman has symbolically separated him from the living world, her duty is accomplished and the room is left to the dead. The final lines do not refer to her departure though. All along, she has no function other than allowing the course of events to take place. Like the narrator and the reader, she has been an observer and her presence was inconsequential to the moment of death. The watchful eyes belonged to the man as he anticipated death. The silence and emptiness are the result, not of her leaving, but of death.

The impact of this poem stems less from the progress of the event itself than from the perspective assumed by the poet. No lyrical "I" allows the reader to remain securely at a distance by subjectively relating the experience; instead, the tone of the narration is clinically objective. The present tense, similarly, does not offer any comfort of distance from the event. We, the readers, detect no emotion in the narrator's words. No attempt is made to analyze or reflect on the meaning of this man's dying. He is, in fact, an anonymous individual, already stripped of identity before death, having no name and no link to life (i.e., no "other" who endows his existence with some significance). The "Wartfrau" was no more than a mechanical device placed there by tradition. In death, all power to assert "self" is lost.
and unless someone else preserves "self" via memory, nothing remains: "stumm wird's und leer." With his death, the poem too, ends, consigning the man to his fate of silent anonymity. As a result, the reader is presented with a conception of death that complements and expands that of the previous chapter (i.e., the importance of memory). This man is already dead in the sense that he is an isolated and forgotten individual. The poem does not evoke a fear of death; instead it generates sorrow that anyone should be consigned to such a lonely death. Yet this graphic portrait remains consistent with Storm's conviction that, ultimately, all of us must face death alone, "sterben, ach sterben / soll ich allein" ("Lied des Harfenmädchen," p. 181).

Sengle at first attempts to place this poem in the sphere of social critique, then relativizes the issue: "'Eine Frühlingsnacht' ist ein Gedicht, das sich dem Hässlichen nicht verschliesst. Daher ist es zugleich wohl auch ein soziales Gedicht, wie so viele in der naturalistischen Literature . . . . Dies soziale Motiv wird allerdings mehr angedeutet als theatricalisch ausgespielt." Müller, on the other hand, applies psychological implications to the death: "Mittichten erhält durch den allgemeinen Fortgang des Lebens . . . der Tod des einzelnen Menschen seine Rechtfertigung, sondern der Übergang ins
Stumme und Leere wird durch die Frühlingsrequisiten in seiner grauenerregenden Unverständlichkeit noch gesteigert. 

Both, however, allow their speculations to range too far beyond the immediate context of the poem, which revolves around the central figure of the dying man. Neither social critique nor incomprehensibility of death have any significance for him; death is neither "hässlich" nor "grauenerregend." He simply lives until death comes to him, without question or complaint. Whatever value he placed on life (or places on death) has been resolved beyond the narrator's perception. Once again we are left with the dichotomy of death-of-other, death-of-self, because we experience the event as the former only. We are not privy to the old man's thoughts, only to his behavior. Therefore, we must rely on observation of the experience. The dying man is, for the reader, as silent as the death which claims him.

The narrative focus of "Ein Sterbender" is placed as well on an old man and here the title depicts his condition. In contrast to "Eine Frühlingsnacht," which did not probe character, Storm presents impressions of internalized experiences in the midst of chronicaling the old man's actions:

Ein Sterbender

Am Fenster sitzt er, alt, gebrochen Leibes,
Und trommelt müßig an die feuchten Scheiben;
Grau ist der Wintertag und grau sein Haar. 
Mitunter auch besieht er aufermerksam 
Der Adern Hupfen auf der welken Hand. 
Es geht zu Ende; ratslos irrt sein Aug 
Von Tisch zu Tisch, drauf Schriftwerk aller Art, 
Sein harrend, hoch und höher sich getürmt. 
Vergebens! Was er täglich sonst bezwang, 
Es ward ein Berg; er kommt nicht mehr hinüber. 
Und dennoch, wenn auch trübe, lächelt er 
Und sucht wie sonst noch mit sich selbst zu 
scherzen; 
Ein Aktenstoss, in tücht'gen Stein gehauen, 
Es dunkelt ihn kein ubel Epitaph. 
Doch streng aufs neue schliesset sich sein Mund; 
Er kehrt sich ab, und wieder mit den grellen 
Pupillen starrt er in die öde Luft 
Und trommelt weiter an die Fensterscheiben. 

Da wird es plötzlich hell; ein bleicher Strahl 
Der Wintersonne leuchtet ins Gemach 
Und auf ein Bild genüber an der Wand. 
Und aus dem Rahmen tritt ein Mädchenkopf, 
Darauf wie Frühtau noch die Jugend liegt; 
Aus grossen, hold erstaunten Augen sprüht 
Verheissung aller Erdenseligkeit. 
Er kennt das Wort auf diesen roten Lippen, 
Er nur allein. Erinnrung fasst ihn an; 
Fata Morgana steigen auf betörend; 
Lau wird die Luft—wie hold die Düfte wehen! 

Mit Rosen ist der Garten überschüttet, 
Auf allen Büschen liegt der Sonnenschein. 
Die Bienen summen; und ein Mädchenlachen 
Fliegt süß und silbern durch den Sommer-Tag. 
Sein Ohr ist trunken. "Oh, nur einmal noch!" 
Er lauscht umsonst, und seufzend sinkt sein Haupt. 
"Du starbst.—Wo bist du?—Gibt es eine Stelle 
Noch irgendwo im Weltraum, wo du bist?— 
Denn dass du mein gewesen, dass das Weib 
Dem dieser unergündiglich susse Trunk, 
Und susser stets, je länger du ihn trinkst, 
Er lässt mich zweifeln an Unsterblichkeit: 
Denn alle Bitternis und Not des Lebens 
Vergilt er tausendfach; und drüberhin 
Zu hoffen, zu verlangen weiss ich nichts!" 
In leere Luft ausstreckt er seine Arme; 
"Hier diese Räume, wo du einst gelebt, 
Erfüllt ein Schimmer deiner Schönheit noch; 
Nur mir erkennbar; wenn auch meine Augen 
Geschlossen sind, von keinem dann gesehn."
Vor ihm mit dunklem Weine steht ein Glas, 
Und zitternd langet seine Hand danach; 
Er schlurft ihn langsam, aber auch der Wein 
Erfreut nicht mehr sein Herz. Er stutzt das Haupt. 
"Einschlafen, fühl ich, will das Ding, die Seele, 
Und näher kommt die ratselhafte Nacht!"--
Ihm unbewusst entfliehen die Gedanken 
Und jagen sich im unermessnen Raum.--
Da steigt Gesang, als woll's ihn aufwärts tragen; 
Von drüben aus der Kirche schwillt der Chor. 
Und mit dem innern Auge sieht er sie, 
So Mann als Weib, am Stamm des Kreuzes liegen. 
Sie blicken in die bodenlose Nacht; 
Doch ihre Augen leuchten feucht verklärt, 
Als sähen sie im Urquell dort des Lichts 
Das Leben jung und rosig auferstehn. 
"Sie träumen," spricht er--leise spricht er es--
"Und diese bunten Bilder sind ihr Glück. 
Ich aber weiss es, dass die Todesangst 
Sie im Gehirn der Menschen ausgebrütet." 
Abwehrend streckt er seine Hände aus:
"Was ich gefehlt, des einen bin ich frei; 
Gefangen gab ich niemals die Vernunft, 
Auch um die lockendste Verheissung nicht; 
Was Übrig ist--ich harre in Geduld." 
Mit klaren Augen schaut der Greis umher; 
Und während tiefer schon die Schatten fallen, 
Erhebt er sich und schleicht von Stuhl zu Stuhl, 
Und setzt sich noch einmal dort an den Tisch, 
Wo ihm so manche Nacht die Lampe schien. 
Noch einmal schreibt er: doch die Feder straubt sich; 
Sie, die bisher dem Leben nur gedient, 
Sie will nicht gehen in den Dienst des Todes; 
Er aber zwingt sie, denn sein Wille soll 
So weit noch reichen, als er es vermag.

Die Wanduhr misst mit hartem Pendelschlag, 
Als dränge sie, die fliehenden Sekunden; 
Sein Auge dunkelt; ungenommen naht, 
Was ihm die Feder aus den Fingern nimmt. 
Doch schreibt er muhsam noch in grossen Zügen. 
Und Dämmerung fällt wie Asche auf die Schrift: 
"Auch bleib der Priester meinem Grabe fern; 
Zwar sind es Worte, die der Wind verweht, 
Doch will es sich nicht schicken, dass Protest 
Gepredigt werde dem, was ich gewesen, 
Indes ich ruh im Bann des ew'gen Schweigens."

(1863; Werke, I, 178-81)
From the initial line, the narrator delineates the old man's place in the present life schema: he is aged and ailing, in the drab gray winter of life much like the season; the hand has lost its former firmness and strength. The man, too, notices his hand and the struggling of the life blood, both signals that "Es geht zu Ende." Not enough energy remains to complete the mountain of paper work. In contemplation of that symbol of his life purpose, his thoughts turn to death, imagining that same paper mountain to be a monument to his demise. Yet the thought disturbs him and he sinks again into the passive, pathetic posture of the opening lines.

At the same time, the narrative thread of the poem twists in another direction. The momentary wan-ray of sunlight illuminates a bright memory of youth, beauty, and love. The intimacy of his remembrance is important: "Er kennt das Wort auf diesen roten Lippen. / Er nur allein." Memory's illusory nature is reflected by the Fata Morgana reference. From this point forth, the old man's thoughts and the narrative weave in and out of each other in a blend of past and present. Remembering youth and love leads inevitably to the recall of his beloved's death. The swift intrusion of the past amplifies the span of time between her death and the present. The question of her current fate ("Gibt es eine Stelle / Noch
irgendwo im Weltraum, wo du bist?--") brings further mus-
ings about life and love, but they hold no optimism and
in their midst, the notion of God and immortality are
briefly pondered and cast aside. The beloved, however, is
preserved and revered through memory. Yet this, too, is
temporary consolation, as the old man realizes that his
death will mean the death of the last remnant of his
beloved as well: "wenn auch meine Augen / Geschlossen
sind, von keinem dann gesehen."

The sensory pleasures of life such as the pain-numbing
effects of wine no longer counteract his consciousness
that death is near. Life becomes an abstraction, its
essence no more than an object--an entity to which the old
man no longer feels attachment ("Einschlafen, fühl ich, will
das Ding, die Seele" [my stress]). Müller alludes to
the anti-Christian implications: "Provokatorisch wird
die Seele, einst Sitz des Göttlichen im Menschen,
versachlicht und damit zugleich verendlicht." Concomi-
tant with the image of dying as "einschlafen," the state of
death is portrayed in its traditional metaphor of night,
but the familiarity of the "alte ew'ge Nacht," has given
way to its enigmatic, mysterious nature.

As if response to the image of the unknown, the im-
pression of the church choir fills his mind, the sounds
drifting "von drüben," emphasizing the distance between
the man and the religious symbol of salvation. The old
man sees with his subjective, inner eye. The people around the traditional Christian symbol of protection look into the same endless night that he has seen, but where he sees only the unknown, they find resurrection and rebirth. Because the source of the light from which they draw sustenance is hidden from him, he concludes they are the victims of their own Fata Morgana: "sie träumen." At the source of their self-created dreams is fear of death; without fear, the old man requires no such dreams.

The dying man longingly reached out toward the memory of his beloved; now he extends his hands in defense, "abwehrend" against the religious phantoms. He has, after all, his own conception of life and death, evolved at the grace of "Vernunft" which he will not forsake for mere dreams. Death, lying beyond his capacity of reason, compels him to wait patiently for its revelation. This, then, is the individual's response to the communal hope devised by religion: allowing reason to govern life and acceptance of the inevitable. While the eyes of the worshippers "leuchten feucht verklärt," the old man's eyes are clear, his inner vision unclouded by spiritual mysticism.

The falling shadows intimate the passing time and approach of both figurative and metaphoric night. This drives him again to grasp the pen and write. A struggle ensues within the man whose pen rebels at serving death
until, finally, he wills it, as Storm must have willed himself to write "Ein Sterbender." The old man's final act of will is to write, to resolve his conception of death in words.

The narrator reminds the reader of the continuing passage of time as the clock ticks and the indefinable "was" which the reader knows to be death, creeps nearer. Its presence imposes itself in a triad of events symbolic of the dying process: the escaping rush of time; the individual's loss of power; the prospect of annihilation as "Dämmerung fällt wie Asche auf die Schrift." Yet the old man perseveres long enough to complete his final message, a testament to his life as well as his death. The importance of the words he writes stands in contrast to the words of the priest which have negative meaning for the old man, and in spite of their inherent insignificance ("die der Winde verweht") he will not have spoken that which so contradicts his conviction. Moreover, he will not have someone speak thought foreign to him while he is condemned to eternal silence. These final lines are no poetic contrivance. The poet demanded his own burial to be carried out in precisely this manner. His daughter's account attests that in accordance with his wishes not a word was spoken when Storm's body was laid in its final resting place.
"Ein Sterbender" inspired an array of analyses. Stuckert places it in the philosophical-religious context and determines. "So zieht sich eine steigende Linie durch das Gedicht; es führt aus der ziellosen Untätigkeit des Anfangs zur Selbstfindung und Selbstbehauptung gegenüber dem drohenden Nichts." All this is accomplished without the framework of traditionally spiritual revelation. To the contrary, Sievers sees the poem as an example of Storm's misguided reflection of Christianity in that Storm seeks continuation of earthly happiness in the afterlife; indeed, in an exalted form. According to Sievers, Storm fails to realize that precisely this clinging to earthly joys erects a barrier between man and God: "In der christlichen Ewigkeitshoffnung geht es nicht um die Erneuerung unseres Glücks, sondern um unsere eigene Erneuerung . . . Storm aber bleibt dem Irrischen verhaftet, ohne Wissen davon, dass er selbst in Lobpreis des irdischen Glücks sich von Gott und seiner Zukunft abgewendet hat, nur ehrlich darin, dass er Gott im Munde des Sterbenden als den Unbekannten bezeichnet und dass er selbst die innere Haltlosigkeit seiner Träume vom Jenseits erkennt." 

Martini arrives at a conclusion similar to Stuckert, but from the perspective of the poem's relationship to "burgerlicher Realismus," when he states, "Es ist offenbar, dass dieses Gedicht ein Akt der überlegenheit des Menschen
Although Müller elaborates upon this viewpoint ("Der Tod erschien nicht mehr als Dämon oder Gott, als eine aus dem jenseits einbrechene Macht oder als Konsequenz magischreligiöser Konstellationen, sondern als am Ende der biologischen Kräfte wirkende natürliche Gesetzlichkeit."), his attention focuses on aesthetic presentation: "Der Text enthält sowohl Gedankliches, dass er aus der von Storm artikulierten lyrisch-ästhetischen Dogmatik herausfällt."

These varying observations all possess some degree of validity. Yet they all require an imposition of an external philosophical schema bringing a particular set of expectations. The problem of religion is certainly a crucial question in the death poetry. However, one must exercise restraint in applying it too freely to analyses of the death motif in a given poem. The significant underlying factor of the motif is not simply the question of Storm's personal view of death, but, further, the lyric expression of the concept, and these two do not necessarily coincide. Although Müller touches on the issue, he is distracted by Storm's need for artificial poetic devices to achieve symbolically the narrative transitions (i.e., the necessity of winter, the setting sun, etc.). Yet precisely these exemplify the difficulty confronting the poet. After all, the pen does not easily allow itself to be used in the service of death, as the persona, "der Sterbende"
(and Storm) discover. By trying to approach the poem from organized philosophical or sociological contexts, we look past the poet's quandary of language: to convey what is perceived as the essence of dying, death, or being dead. The poet is ironically caught in the complex patterns of his language and cultural tradition that compel him to attempt definitions in terms inadequate for expressing what he is trying still to conceptualize. He is consigned to speak of religion, to apply such comparisons as the gray winter day and the old man's hair because, after all, he must communicate in universally understood images. At the heart of this dilemma, of course, is the nebulous enigma of death, defying both comprehension and expression. The "Bann des ew'gen Schweigens" becomes a refuge and a prison for the poet's voice, because no matter what his fate—eternity or nothingness—he is doomed to silent acceptance.

The following poem continues the metaphoric association of death with "das Ende" begun in "Bald ist unsers Lebens Traum zu Ende," p. 115). Stripped of external connotations such as philosophical pondering or interpersonal relations, the poem attempts to capture the essence of the death moment. The three strophes examine the experience from a sensory, an expressive, and a receptive standpoint. However, the title already implies that the effort must fall short: this is the beginning; the
culmination is beyond the expressive grasp of the poet:

Beginn des Endes

Ein Punkt nur ist es, kaum ein Schmerz,
Nur ein Gefühl, empfunden eben;
Und dennoch spricht es stets darein,
Und dennoch stört es dich zu leben.

Wenn du es andern klagen willst,
So kannst du's nicht in Worte fassen.
Du sagst dir selber: "Es ist nichts!"
Und dennoch will es dich nicht lassen.

So seltsam fremd wird dir die Welt,
Und leis verlässt dich alles Hoffen,
Bis du es endlich, endlich weißt,
Dass dich des Todes Pfeil getroffen.
(1864; Werke, I, 184-85)

In the opening strophe, the reader is addressed by a didactic speaker ("Und dennoch stört es dich zu leben"). The subtlety of encroaching death is accented by the modifying phrases: "Ein Punkt nur . . . kaum . . . Nur ein Gefühl . . . eben." A balance is effected by the parallel "dennoch" constructions which reiterates death's unavoidable violation of our lives.

The middle strophe returns to the topic discussed in "Ein Sterbender." The first two lines speak not only of the person feeling death draw near, they recall also the poet's dilemma: "Wenn du es andern klagen willst, / So kannst du's nicht in Worte fassen." This is the crux of the death "experience." As one senses its immediacy, the compulsion for expression continues, but the language has
no authority to convey what is felt. Since it cannot be verbalized, the person tries denying its existence, knowing all the while it is, indeed, real and immanent.

Although the sensations are abstract, the final strophe comes as close to the moment as words and experience can attain. The world (outer reality) becomes "seltsam fremd" and hope (a sense of future) vanishes. Awareness supplants denial. In an image accordant with the opening line. Storm applies a traditional metaphor of the arrow of death. On 21 November 1868, he replied to a Fontane query about the image: "Diese Vorstellung ist allerdings eine geläufige, althergebrachte, schon vom Ferntreffer Apollo her, der die Kinder der Niobe tötet; aber es ist nicht trivial und bildet den notwendigen Ausgang des Gedichtes. Denn der Inhalt der Vorwurf ist nicht die Ahnung an sich, sondern die unruhige Ahnung, die zur Gesissheit wird."^9

Once again, the disparity between the requisites of lyric expression and the limitations of the language form the pivotal point of the poem. Müller notes a deterioration in aesthetic quality: "Dem Gedicht eignen durchaus ästhetischen Schwächen. Rhetorisch übertrieben wirkt das dreifache 'und dennoch,' ebenfalls die Dopplung 'endlich, endlich.' Die Konventionalität des Bildes 'des Todes Pfeil' hatte bereits Fontane kritisch gemerkt."^10 Müller, however, balances his criticism with an acknowledgement
of Storm's stylistic finesse. Yet he does not associate Storm's aesthetic difficulty with the thoughts expressed by the speaker of the second strophe, which he himself defines as "die mangelnde Fähigkeit, den Schmerz genauer verbal fassen zu können." Müller would separate the speaker's problems of language from Storm's poetics rather than seeing them as parallel phenomena.

Before that moment of death is upon us, Storm encourages a carpe diem—live for today—approach, particularly to love:

Nur heute ist
Nur heute ist, und morgen ist zu spät!
Hast du ein Weib, so nimm sie in den Arm
Und hauch's ihr ein, dass sie es auch versteht.

Fällt auf ihr Antilitz dann des Abgrunds Schein,
Der Heut noch oder morgen euch begräbt,
Getrost! nur um so schöner wird sie sein.

Und bebt ihr Herz, dann halte sie so fest,
Dass ihr zusammen in die Tiefe stürzt.
Was wollt ihr mehr—Und Schweigen ist der Rest.

(1873; Werke, I, 300)

This poem restates the themes typical of much of Storm's love-death poetry, although here, life's final moment is also shared. The reader is exhorted to fill today with love, but further, to tell his beloved the same message, "Nur heute ist." In so doing, we are reminded as well to appreciate fully the love and joy provided by another human being while that person is still with us.
The passage of time flows faster in the middle strophe, for death might not wait until tomorrow. Yet death does not arouse fear. The nearness of death may even increase one's appreciation for the beloved's beauty. Everything is measured in terms of the present. All that anyone can aspire to is a loving union which, if one is fortunate, allows the lovers to be joined even as they meet death. Within the realm of death itself, each destiny remains separate and unknown. The words of the poet can take us no closer and we must be content if we can come this far together with a beloved. The future, the "Rest," is silence. It does not reveal its secrets.

Originally published in 1879 with the title, "Einem Toten" the following poem is based on the death of a friend's son, but Storm effectively universalizes the event, beginning with the imperative verb of the revised title:

```
Geh nicht hinein

Im Flügel oben hintern Korridor,
Wo es jählings einsam worden ist
--Nicht in dem ersten Zimmer, wo man sonst
Ihn finden mochte, in die blasse Hand
Das junge Haupt gestützt, die Augen träumend
Entlang den Wänden streifend, wo im Laub
Von Tropenpflanzen ausgebälgt Getier
Die Flügel spreizte und die Tatzen reckte,
Halb Wunder noch, halb Wissensrätsel ihm
--Nicht dort; der Stuhl ist leer, die Pflanzen
lassen
Verdürstend ihre schönen Blätter hängen;
Staub sinkt herab;--nein, nebenan die Tür,
```
In jenem hohen dämmrigen Gemach
--Beklommene Schwüle ist drin eingeschlossen--,  
Dort hinterm Wandschirm auf dem Bette liegt
Etwas--geh nicht hinein! Es schaut dich fremd
Und furchtbar an.

Vor wenig Stunden noch
Auf jenen Kissen lag sein blondes Haupt;
Zwar bleich (von Qualen, denn des Lebens Fäden
Zerrissen jäh; doch seine Augen sprachen
Noch zärtlich, und mitunter lachelt' er,
Als sān er noch in goldne Erdenferne.
Da plötzlich losch es aus; er wusst es plötzlich
--Und ein Entsetzen schrie aus seiner Brust,
Dass ratlos Mitleid, die am Lager sassen,
In Stein verwandelte--, er lag am Abgrund;
Bodenlos, ganz ohne Boden.--"Hilf!
Ach Vater, lieber Vater!" Taumelnd schlug
Er um sich mit den Armen; ziellos griffen
In leere Luft die Hände; noch ein Schrei--
Und dann verschwand er.

Dort, wo er gelegen,
Dort hinterm Wandschirm, stumm und einsam liegt
Jetzt etwas;--bleib, geh nich hinein! Es schaut dich
dich fremd und furchtbar an; für viele Tage
Kannst du nicht leben, wenn du es erblickt.
"Und weiter--du, der du ihn liebtest--, hast
Nichts weiter du zu sagen?"

Weiter nichts.
(1879; Werke, I, 192-93)

The stark portrayal of the death experience confused
and impressed Keller: "Sie haben auch ein mysterioses,
wenigstens mir unverständlichliches Gedicht in der 'Rundschau'
gehhabt, fällt mir eben ein, das mir aber trotzdem gefiel
und imponierte; ich hab es mir auf meine Weise
zurechtgelegt."12 In responding to Keller, Storm emphasized
its broad intent: "... so hat die Überschrift "Einem
Toten" wohl Sie wie andre irregeführ. Es gilt keinem
bestimmten Falle, wenn es auch durch solchen hervorgerufen
ist; ich habe darin nur den Eindruck niederlegen wollen,
den der Anblick eines Gestorbenen—ich glaub, im wesentlichen auf denen—macht und wogegen es keine Rettung als den des Glaubens an ein Wiederaufleben in einem andern Zustand gibt, die aber für mich nicht vorhanden ist.\textsuperscript{13}

Significantly, this last and most graphic death poem was written at the age of sixty-one and treated the death of a young boy, stripped of ancillary themes and motifs, as Müller notes: "Argumentative Überlegungen, pathetisch aufgeladene Spruchdichtungen, eine Hinnahme des Todes in Rückbesinnung auf die Vernunft und die Liebe werden nicht vorgeführt, vielmehr in einer immer wieder stockenden Syntax—den ersten Abschnitt des Gedichtes bildet einen Satz, der immer wieder erneut anhebt, um ja nicht zum Ende zu kommen—werden in einem Rhythmus, der ständig aufgebrochen und gestaut wird, Entsetzen und Grauen dargestellt angesichts des Todes eines jungen Menschen.\textsuperscript{24}

However, Müller misinterprets the evocative effect of the poem as revulsion. Reaction to the boy's death reflects instead the impotence of the living who witness this process of dying.

The atmosphere created in this work is one of complete sterility. The vivid depiction of the youth's death is conveyed retrospectively in the context of the narrator's present, devoid of life signs and thus divested of a future. The poet takes the reader physically through
the domain of the living and beyond into the separate space where the dead youth lies. Along the way, the objects that possessed meaning because of the life of this boy are revealed now in their abjectly sterile condition. In a constant reminder of the emptiness, the description is interjected with negatives: "Nicht . . . Nicht dort . . . nein . . ." Without its life center, the boy, the room is a collection of lifeless symbols: the empty chair, the drooping tropical plants, settling layers of dust.

Storm wishes to take his readers beyond the emblematic nature of death to the reality itself. Instead, he is confronted with another enigmatic emblem, so potent in its evocative force that the inner meaning supercedes the outer reality. As outer reality, the body is literally no more than "etwas." "Die Frage nach dem Tod ist eine höchst persönliche Frage, der Leichnam aber ist Sache, nichts weiter." The poet perceives in "Sache," a significance exceeding its mere presence, heightened precisely by its indefinite designation: "Hier gibt der ehrliche Dichter zu, dass es kaum Worte gibt, die dem Tode angemessen sind: der Mensch wird durch den Tod zu einem 'Etwas'." The image thus achieves dual purpose by exemplifying death in its dehumanizing aspect (outer reality) and by simultaneously demonstrating the limitations of language for expressing
the substance of death other than by creating a contextual metaphor: "es schaut dich fremd und furchtabr an."

The thought of such a confrontation drives the would-be observer back with the exhortation "Geh nicht hinein!" Similarly, the poet retreats to the past event. The battle of life against the destructive force of death is noble but futile. As so often in the death poems, the eyes are the critical determinant of life's presence. They strain to "see" hope for the future "in goldne Erdenferne." Once that vision is gone, the knowledge that death is immanent evokes a final protest. The utter separation of the living from the dying is graphic in the frozen images of the witnesses. As death subdues life, the sense of slipping down, out of reach of the living, is overwhelming and the poet, too, must struggle past the impact of this image, as he repeats, "Abgrund; / Bodenlos, ganz ohne Boden--." The physical struggle of the dying is mercilessly portrayed as the boy reaches out to grasp some form of rescue. But the grappling is "ziello" and finally, life is consumed by the unknown predator.

The boy, however, is not taken away—he disappears. The incomprehensible nature of the actual moment of death remains intact. One cannot see or hear or feel what overcomes life; life merely vanishes. Left behind is a thing
which is neither death, nor life, neither the boy nor some-
thing other than the boy. It lies there, a testimony
to death's power over the individual, taking away ident-
ity and expression, "stumm und einsam." The poet reminds
us once again of the danger of approaching too near. He
has been there; the poem is his witness, and he knows,
indeed, he feels the damage which can be done: "für viele
Tage kannst du nicht leben."

These closing lines form the corollary to the conclu-
sion of "Ein Sterbender" (p. 193). In that work, the
writer envisions his post-death state as a realm of eternal
silence. His final communicative act is to acknowledge
the futility of ritual, ceremonial words, and to forbid
their utterance at his grave. Survivors (particularly)
the representatives of the misguided fantasy of religion)
can say nothing which will have meaning while the dead
are relegated to perpetual silence. "Geh nicht hinein"
has reached the limit of expression in speaking of death.
It has explicitly delineated the horror of the dying
process from an observer standpoint. Neither the poet nor
the readers can fathom the actual experience. The poet
thus leaves us with a rhetorical question. The offset
closing line of two words acts as a signature to the
final inadequate attempt at revelation. He has nothing
more to say because the bitter reality is that nothing more
can be said.
Martini deemed "Geh nicht hinein" to be the representative culmination of the evolution of Storm's language and style: "Auch die Sprache bekommt traumhaft Schwebendes, einsames Verstummen, Unsinnliches, die Strophen zerfließen in das Fragmentarische . . . . Im Tode bricht das Elementare, um das Storm in tiefen Augenblicken immer wusste, in das Leben ein, es sich entfremdend, eine harte Tatsächlichkeit, die der Sprache, gerade im nur andeutend Verhaltenen, eine fast leidenschaftliche Ausdrucksintensität gibt. So das Spätgedicht 'Geh nicht hinein' . . . Diese einem Tröstlichen fernste Ausformung des Todesmotivs weist sprachlich-formal über den Typus von Storms Lyrik hinaus; sie bedeutet Neuartiges, das auf kommende Entwicklungen des lyrischen Sprechens verdeutet."\(^{17}\)

The importance of the silence motif in Storm's lyrics is acknowledged by Martini: "Bei keinem anderen Lyriker jener Jahrzehnte wird die Nähe der Sprache zum Verstummen so intensiv zum Hintergrund des Sprechens. Erst wo die Stille gegenwärtig ist, werden die inneren Stimmen, sei es in den Menschen oder in den Dingen, vernehmbar."\(^{18}\) Storm's use of silence in the death poetry is more explicit in its significance; its specific function is to describe the poet's conception of death. They become equal and interchangeable. As Sievers puts it, "Das
This observation, however, neglects to point out that death itself means eternal silence.

Silence seems to impose itself ever more on Storm's ability to write poetry. Stuckert notes Storm's shift away from lyricism to prose in the later years: "Mit dem Jahre 1870 beginnt der neue Schaffensabschnitt des Dichters. In erstaunlicher Fruchtbarkeit fördert er in den letzten zwanzig Lebensjahren eine Fülle erzählender Werke zutage, während er als Lyriker fast verstummt." 20 Martini's comments above allude to the same phenomenon. Storm himself expresses in a series of letters the disturbing loss of what he calls his poetic muse: "Ich schreibe Ihnen noch ein paar Verse aus diesen Tagen hin; aber mir ist, als vermochte ich nicht mehr so recht 'was ich leide;' ist ja doch meine Muse für immer schlafen gegangen." 21 (To Mörike, 6 July 1865). After his first collected works edition appeared in 1865, he said, "Das ist mein Testament. Seit vorigem Frühjahre schweigt alles in mir; ich habe zu viel Sorgen und Grimm in mir zu verarbeiten." 22 A year later, he wrote to Pietsch, "... ob ich etwas gedichtet, geschrieben? Nein, ich schreibe nichts mehr;
meine bescheidne Muse schläfst unten in der Gruft auf Constanzens Sarg einen festen Schlaf. Trotz allen Tröstlichen, was mir geblieben und geworden, ich lebe in einer untergegangenen Welt; ich kann von ihrem Tode nicht mehr genesen." In 1868, he writes to his children: "Könnt ich nur wieder einmal etwas Ordentliches schreiben! Aber—wo ist meine Muse? Sie schläfst auf Nimmerwiederwachen. Ich werde jetzt nichts mehr schreiben, was ein Menschenherz begeistert." Nineteen years later, he again writes, "Die Lust zu fabulieren schwindet und das Leben wird alt." That the stimulus for this uncertainty originated with Constanze's death is evident. However, according to his daughter, the poet struggled with the problem over an extended period of time, even when he once again was writing: "Er bemühte sich, alle bisherigen Lebensinteressen aufrecht zu erhalten. Aber die Furcht, seine Muse sei mit Constanze schlafen gegangen, bedrückte oft das Herz des Dichters."26

If one examines Storm's poetic productivity after 1865, three interconnected facts can be discerned: the total number of poems written declines steadily and, after 1871, essentially disappears, the number of poems dealing with death increases; the tendency of the poetic form to disintegrate increases in conjunction with the quantity of death poems. In fact, all of the major death poems after
1865 ("Tiefe Schatten," "Constanze," "Begrabe nur dein Liebstes," "Geh nicht hinein") contain elements counter to Storm's theoretical poetic concepts. Is it possible to reconcile these factors with the silence-death schema presented in the poems?

Storm's vision of self as "der letzte lebende Lyriker" dominated his productive years in the 1850s and early 1860s. After his initial exercises in form, the majority of poems in this period are rich in lyric quality and exhibit the delicate sense of "Erlebnis" so essential to his poetic stance. The death poetry provides examples of Storm's integration of personal, intimate experience with the requisites of lyric form, but the nature and love poems of the period demonstrate as well, the poet's inclination to draw on moments from his own life and to universalize them through poetic expression. As the motif begins to dominate, the poet is more and more inclined to silence his lyrical efforts until, finally, he allows his poetic muse to lose its productivity and chooses the broader, less-limiting prose forms. The explanation for this dichotomy lies in the death poetry itself. As death influences his personal life (through death-of-other and advancing age, which inherently prompts contemplation of death-of-self), Storm attempts to express his feelings in poetry, as he so eloquently did with his nature or love
poetry. But Storm loses control of the death motif; it begins to assume dominance over the poet's ability to write. The poetic form to which Storm entrusted so many of his intimate feelings and thoughts could not hold his contemplations of death experiences. The smooth rhythms of fluid language dissipate in rambling prose-like sentences filled with punctuation that creates constant obstacles to the progression of thoughts.

In the midst of the structural breakdown of Storm's death poems, the portrayal of death as a silent realm becomes less threatening, i.e., fear, despondency, etc. do not play a further significant role in the poet's conceptualization of death. Thus, the aspect of silence in death acquires a twofold meaning for the poet. First, he acknowledges through it his finiteness as a poet. Death condemns a poet to silent eternity, negating completely the former essence of his existence. On the other hand, the poet's dilemma is mercifully ended. He is no longer forced to struggle with the inadequacy of this ability to communicate "was ich leide." In "Ein Sterbender" the old man acquiesces to the inevitability of death and the totality of the silence in which he will rest ("Indes ich ruh"). His final testament is made in the context of a protest against the words of others, but otherwise he expresses no despair at his destiny of eternal silence. The last
substantial death poem, "Geh nicht hinein," is the narrative counterpoint (age-youth; submission-struggle). The question put to the narrator at its conclusion is the self-directed query of the poet. The answer applies, not merely to the context of the poem; it is a statement reflected in his ensuing silence as a poet. His lyric confrontations with death have exhausted the creative spark. He has written, not all that he has to say, but all that it is possible for him to say. To attempt more would be futile and, hence, "Weiter nichts."
Notes


3 Müller, p. 164.

4 Gertrud Storm, Ein Bild seines Lebens (Berlin: Curtius, 1912), I, p. 238.


7 As quoted in Müller, p. 167.
Müller, pp. 166-67.

9 As quoted in Werke, p. 712. Fontane's letter apparently was not preserved.

10 Müller, p. 169.

11 Müller, p. 168.


13 Storm, Keller Briefwechsel, p. 50.

14 Müller, p. 173.


16 Sengle, p. 29.


19 Sievers, p. 36.

20 Stuckert, Dichter, p. 23.


25 G. Storm, II, p. 188.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to take the occurrence of the death motif in Storm's poetry and to examine it on the basis of form, perspective, and interplay with adjunct motifs. A consideration of these factors clarifies Storm's poetic portrayal of death and offers insights about his conception of himself as a poet. Each facet of the discussion contributes particular aspects that, taken together, dispel some commonly held preconceptions and provide new points of view about Storm and his poetry.

The use of the term "form" has a twofold meaning: poetic form and the form that the concept "death" takes in the poetry. In Chapter Six, I summarize the effect of the death motif on Storm's use of form. The majority of his poems are written in traditional folksong strophes with strict attention to rhyme, meter, and lyric quality. In the early death poetry, Storm strives to maintain these requisites. However, as his conception of death evolves and becomes more personal (i.e., due to the death of Constanze, maturing age, etc.) in orientation, the lyric four-line folksong strophe is no longer an adequate form.
of expression. The death poetry written after 1865 exemplifies the breakdown in structure characterized by lack of strophic divisions, heavy punctuation, lack of rhyme or regular meter, and loss of the melodic effects of carefully chosen lyrical words. Storm's overall poetic output declines rapidly at this same time. (Thus, one cannot accurately discern a correlated condition in the few poems not dealing with the motif.) This structural disintegration of Storm's death poems reveals the emotional stress naturally created by a contemplation of death. It also reveals a conflict confronting the poet that required a conscious resolution: Storm's firm conviction that he (more than others) recognized and adhered to an ideal theory of lyricism stood in direct confrontation with his own poetry. If we recall that Storm's poems contain his "Herzblut," that they reflect his innermost feelings, and that these poems should evoke a similar sort of response in the reader, then the death poems are indicative of a chaotic and unharmonious element in the poet's spirit. Storm cannot (indeed, we are uncertain that he tried to) apply the death motif within the confines of his own lyric vision. Thus, the question arises: does Storm fail as a poet or does lyric poetry (the genre) fail to offer the form of expression required by a non-lyrical motif such as death? Before one can attempt an answer, the other factors must also be considered.
The discussion in Chapter Two focussed on the problem that death is not always death (i.e., the term can represent many different subordinate conceptions). In many of Storm's early poems, particularly those associated with the nature motif, dying rather than the moment of death receives the focus. This transitory process is often depicted via the metaphor of other natural phenomena ("verwelken," "verwehen," etc.). Dying is not seen as a journey because no destination is hinted at by the poet; it is instead the fading away or dissipation of the entity from its prime state of vitality into a realm of nothingness. The moment of death preoccupies Storm in the later poems, but the poet is confronted by the difficulty of conveying the incomprehensible. Thus, death as the moment of crossing over is usually described from an observer standpoint. The one exception can be found in "Im Zeichen des Todes," in which the persona is taken temporarily into the realm of death and faces a personified representation of the concept. Yet here, too, the imagery remains vague. We receive an essence of death's appearance in the terrible eye whose gaze rests upon the persona but Storm foregoes any true characterization. Similarly, the realm of death remains closed. The persona relates what he observes of earth, not the state of death itself. Throughout the poetry, Storm's concern is with the pre-death condition (e.g., life) of the persona and/or
other characters. In the poems about dying and those about death as the moment of transition, the perspective reflects a conception of death as absence. In other words, death serves as the counterpoint to what one has or is in life. The precise nature of the state of death thus becomes unimportant because, no matter what that state may be, life as the poet knows and conceives of it ceases to exist. The effect on the poet, as "Im Zeichen des Todes" exemplifies, is an affirmation of life and a desire to live every moment to the fullest without hope or despair for the unknown future realm of eternity. Death, then—as the absence of life as it is known—becomes synonymous with complete nothingness. Storm, certain of man's destiny of being relegated to this emptiness at the end of life, exhibits a keen awareness or sensitivity to the individual's insignificance in the universal order. His poetry provides a minor victory over the termination of identity awaiting all human beings in that it exalts the love of one individual for another even in the face of death.

Storm's perspective of death distinguishes between and confronts the issue of death-of-other and death-of-self. In early poems (primarily those discussed in the first parts of Chapter Four and Five) the poet assumes a didactic, philosophical stance, addressing the reader as a second person. These poems, however, consider for
the most part the act of dying. The moment of death requires a more intimate involvement between persona and event. In that later poetry, death-of-other poems as well as death-of-self poetry focus on a particular instance of death. By its very viewpoint, the death-of-self poetry, for the most part, is typified by solemn contemplative musings. However, the persona does not ponder what will happen to him after death—he considers what the meaning of his death will be for those around him. The worst possibility would be that the persona's death would have no effect ("Lied des Harfenmädchen" carries this bleak note, for example). "Sprich, bist du stark" or "Schliesse mir die Augen beide" exemplify this concern with the situation for the living after the persona dies (and the ongoing effect of the persona in their lives).

A parallel phenomenon is evident in the death-of-other poems. Death-of-other is important from the survivor's perspective (i.e., what is life like or what does life mean for the persona now that this other person is dead?) This placement of death-of-other into a context of personal loss is a crucial one for understanding Storm's fundamental conception of death. He addresses the issue in a letter to Constanze: "Traumloser, das heisst volliger Schlaf, ist ein zeitweiliges Aufhören des geistigen Lebens. So wird der Tod ein vollständiger sein. Denn warum sollten wir nicht vollständig aufhören, wenn wir zeitweilig
aufhören? Du weißt es ja, ich glaube, dass der Tod das völliche Ende des einzelnen Menschen ist. Trotzdem drängt mich etwas, mich zu einem weiteren Flüge über diese Grenze hinaus zu rüsten, drängt es mich für diesen Flug ins Ungewisse, Grenzenlose mir eine Seele zu vermählen, die bereit, alles mit mir zu teilen, bis an die letzte Grenze der Existenz, nur unzertrennlich mir gehören will" (1863).¹

What Storm reveals in this letter, and repeats consistently in his poems, is that the beloved belongs to him; affirmation of self is accomplished through the love of another. Death-of-other as the loss or departure of a beloved is perceived from a wholly egocentric viewpoint. This will become clearer when the remaining facets have been considered.

The poems were grouped in this study according to the application of the death motif in conjunction with specific other motifs. From this analysis two observations can be made: the basic image of death as eternal nothingness does not change; the poet employs varying metaphors to stress particular functions of death (i.e., the graveyard represents the anonymous memorializing of the war dead, the verbal forms depicting transition show the parallel between man's dying and all natural processes, the eye—"Das Auge bricht"—characterizes the loss of a love relationship, silence symbolizes the personal death of the poet). Thus, while Storm modifies the presentation of the motif,
he does not alter the underlying conception of death.

Upon considering jointly the factors of form, perspective, and interplay with other motifs, three conclusions essential to understanding Storm's death poetry can be drawn: death is not a fear-evoking entity/concept; poetry offers a potential means to preserve the significance of an individual's life after death but personal memory is the only true hope for this form of "immortality;" the use of the death motif reflects a self-centered vision of life.

The generalized assumption that death, by definition, evokes fear has dominated research on Storm's poetry. The most recent major studies by Alt and Muller as well as numerous minor research efforts continue to adhere to the assumption. The poems, however, do not support the image of death as a terror-or fear-involving concept. As this study has shown, the realm of death does not concern Storm at all. His focus is on life and, hence, on the effect the reality of death's immanence has on the living. He does not deny or attempt to circumvent the inevitability of dying.

The perception of Storm as a poet who feared death is largely the result of researchers' attempts to impose Western European Christian values on the interpretation of the poems. This study, however, has made clear that Storm's death poetry is independent of any structured dogmatic philosophy and must be analyzed from that same
perspective. Storm speaks for himself in "Ein Sterbender," specifically rejecting the traditional parameters of a theological foundation from which to confront death. This is not to say that Storm was non-religious. As Wooley aptly points out in his essay on the subject, Storm possessed religious beliefs, but they were conceived within the context of his own personal vision of life.3

If it can be said that Storm feared something, death would not be the cause. Instead, the focus of this "fear" is that life will have been lived in isolation, without meaning. The death poems in Chapters Three and Four reflect the anonymity of the dead as well as the insignificance of individual life in the face of eternal natural forces. Through love, Storm is able to endow life with meaning. Although love cannot prevent the inevitability of death, it can offer a form of perpetuation (life beyond death, if you will) within the framework of memory. As the love-death poems demonstrate, a loving union in life is the counterbalance to the prospect of complete annihilation in death. When we die, the love of others preserves our identity by means of memory. As Taylor states, "Die Ehe sei die Rettung vor dem Alleinsein und dem Vergessenwerden, und hier finde die Liebe erst Dauer."4 Throughout Storm's death poems ("O bleibe treu den Toten," "Lucie," "Constanze," for example) the importance of remembering the beloved dead is impressed upon the living as a solemn responsibility. Sievers addresses the
connection between death-of-other and the obligations of the living: "Ist nun die Stille, die die Toten um sich verbreiten, das Anzeichen dafür, dass sie 'schlafen,' dass sie nicht mehr lebensfähig sind, so bedeutet das für die Lebenden eine besonders starke Verpflichtung den hilflosen Schatten gegenüber, vor allem dann, wenn sie zu Lebzeiten von den Toten geliebt werden." As the persona contemplates dying in "Ein Sterbender," he perceives that his death will signify the final annihilation of his long-dead beloved as well: no one will be left who remembers her. Clearly, Storm's concern about memory is not solely in the context of death-of-other. He, too, longs to be remembered after death, to achieve a small measure of immortality. Stuckert pinpoints Storm's worries with being forgotten: "Denn das Quälendste an der Vorstellung des Todes ist für Storm nicht die physische Auflösung, mit der als unabänderlicher Naturtatsache er sich abgefunden hat, sondern die Furcht, dass sein ganzes menschliches Dasein damit ausgelöst sein, dass er 'vergessen' werden könnte." Yet, while his writings would seem automatically to offer that possibility, the emotional need can be met only if the foundation of the memory is one of love. When Storm speaks of his poetry ("Meine Gedichte werden bleiben ... auch wenn ich längst vergessen bin") he makes a clear distinction between his significance as
a poet—to be reflected in the preservation of his work—and his personal desire for being remembered, requiring the intimate thoughts of those who love him in life.

As we examine all the various aspects of the death poetry, a common thread is discernible throughout: the death poems reveal Storm's strongly egocentric perception of the world. This self-centeredness appears on many levels. For example, his basic lack of concern with the post-death realm is essentially the result of his belief that individual existence ceases. If identity of self is lost, the sole possibility in Storm's schema is nothingness.

The perspective from which death-of-other is presented, as I have already mentioned, is primarily the loss suffered by the survivor. Storm's love of other is defined by the love he received from that other, and this is a key to the poet's character: although he was himself capable of great love, he had a stronger need to feel loved by another, thus making his life meaningful and establishing the foundation for being remembered after death. "Sprich, bist du stark" culminates the need to be assured of love and faithfulness on the part of the other even beyond his death. But, more importantly, Storm's death-of-other poems bespeak the compulsive need for love as the persona time and again assumes the unmistakable perspective of an individual asking: How am I to survive this isolation,
this being left alone?

The final question, then, must be, why Storm wrote the death poems and why the very writing of them led to a virtual abandonment of the lyric form? If we recall that Storm believed a poem must arise from an experience (i.e., cannot be "created"), clearly the later years of the poet's life were filled with death-related events. Constanze's passing devastated the poet, taking away the person through whom Storm felt unequivocally loved. However, Storm's thoughts of death did not present themselves in precise, simple lyrical forms and his poetic nature would not force content into artificially designed molds. Confronted by the conflict of his own requisites of form and the inability to reconcile content with these lyric principles, Storm is forced to make a choice. His decision reflects an acceptance of the limitations of the lyric form. The ideal of a "pure lyricism" precludes a fundamentally chaotic concept such as death. Rather than continuing to write poetry that did not bespeak the "Tirili der Seele," Storm forsakes the genre. When he acknowledges death as the "Bann des ew'gen Schweigens," he also acknowledges his inability to convey poetically the essence of that realm.

The death poetry written after 1865 provides continuing reminders of the finite nature of life. More importantly, it is a testimony to the limits of language and
poetry experienced by Storm. With the realization of the inability of lyric poetry to convey anything beyond what he had already accomplished with it, he forsakes without despair the form he loved and employed in such simple, eloquent poems as "Die Stadt," "Im Herbste," and "Meeresstrand." With the calm awareness and acceptance of the limitations imposed upon man and poet which typified his mature death perspective, Storm's voluntary abandonment of the lyric form seems a fitting preparation for his impending entry into the realm of ultimate silence.
Notes

1 Storm, Briefe an seine Frau, ed. Gertrud Storm (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1915), p. 177.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary Sources Cited


II. Secondary Sources Cited


Feigel, Freidrich K. *Das Problem des Todes*. Munich: Reinhardt, 1953.


* Hereafter cited as *Schriften*. 


