I, Moon-Sook Park,

hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Musical Arts

in Voice

It is entitled:

Doubt and Belief:

Hugo Wolf's settings of Geistliche Lieder

from Mörike Lieder and Spanisches Liederbuch

Student Signature: Moon-Sook Park

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee Chair: Kenneth Griffiths, MM

Kenneth Griffiths, MM
Doubt and Belief: Hugo Wolf’s settings of Geistliche Lieder from Mörike Lieder and Spanisches Liederbuch

A document submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS in the Performance Studies Division of the College-Conservatory of Music 2010

by

Moon-Sook Park

B.M., Seoul National University, 1981

M.M., Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, 1988

Committee Chair: Professor Kenneth Griffiths
ABSTRACT

Doubt and Belief: Hugo Wolf’s settings of Geistliche Lieder from Mörike Lieder and Spanisches Liederbuch by Moon-Sook Park

This study focuses on Hugo Wolf’s settings of religious-themed poetry (“Geistliche Lieder”) in “Mörike Lieder” and Spanisches Liederbuch, composed during his highly prolific period of inspired creativity of 1888–90. While Wolf’s attitude towards religion was ambiguous, his settings of the “Geistliche Lieder” from both collections are remarkable examples of originality, artistry, and personal expression. The study traces Wolf’s motivation for working with religious-themed verses from two divergent poetic sources in the context of biographical circumstances and examines Wolf’s distinctive musical articulation in selected sacred songs from two representative works: the Mörike volume which initiated the mature period of the composer’s career and artistry, and the Spanisches Liederbuch, which represents his originality in full bloom. The study concludes with comparisons of Wolf’s approach to both sets of songs in light of his social and personal circumstances, sources of his inspiration and motivation for composing these works, and his compositional process. Finally, the issue of Wolf’s attitude towards religious subject matter, both musical and personal, is explored through supportive sources, anecdotes, and Wolf’s own statements as found in his personal letters, leading to the author’s informed perspective concerning the role of faith in the composer’s life and works.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a great debt of gratitude to various people who have aided and encouraged me during my work on this document. I would like to acknowledge and thank my document committee chair, Professor Kenneth Griffiths, for his tremendous, helpful guidance and assistance in the preparation of this document. I would also like to thank committee members Professor Mary Henderson-Stucky, my doctoral advisor, most of all for her invaluable support during my doctoral studies, and Professor Karen Lykes for her input and assistance. Special thanks go to Dr. Kathleen Maurer for her help in the preparation of this document, her countless hours of patient assistance and for her editorial expertise. It is no exaggeration to say that without her assistance during the last process, this document would have been impossible to complete. Thanks are also owed to my colleague, Dr. Timothy Thompson, for his helpful suggestions and his excellent editorial assistance and to Dr. Michael O’Connor for his inspiration and helpful suggestions. I would like to thank Dr. Lloyd Mims, the Dean of the School of Music and Fine Arts at Palm Beach Atlantic University, for his constant encouragement and generous grants, not only during my research for this document, but also during the years of study for my doctoral degree. I am indebted to research librarians Nerolie Ceus at Palm Beach Atlantic University and David Sandor at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music for their assistance in bibliographical matters. I am especially grateful to my husband, Professor Don-Oung Lee, and son, Ky-Hyeun, for their constant support and encouragement during the years of my doctoral study, research and writing. Finally, I would like to express gratitude with love to my parents for their continued moral and spiritual support and even for their posthumous guardianship in my
life. I owe a very special word of thanks particularly to my mother for her constant love, support and most of all her ineffable sacrifices that are always remembered in my heart.
## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 1: HUGO WOLF .................................................................................................................. 4

Hugo Wolf’s Attitudes toward Faith and Religious Belief ................................................................. 4

Significant Features of Wolf’s Compositional Style ......................................................................... 23

The Status of Wolf’s Lieder in its Genre .......................................................................................... 29

CHAPTER 2: “MÖRICKE LIEDER” .................................................................................................... 31

Formation of the “Mörike Lieder” .................................................................................................... 31

Wolf’s Settings of the Religious-Themed Poetry in the “Mörike Lieder” ........................................... 35

Significance of the “Geistliche Lieder” from the Mörike Volume ..................................................... 38

Wolf’s Musical Language and its Articulation in the Selected Lieder ............................................. 39

CHAPTER 3: SPANISCHES LIEDERBUCH ...................................................................................... 69

Geibel and Heyse’s Spanisches Liederbuch Anthology .................................................................... 69

The Formation of Wolf’s Spanish Volume .......................................................................................... 73

Significance of the “Geistliche Lieder” from the Spanisches Liederbuch ........................................ 79

Wolf’s Musical Language and its Articulation in the Selected Lieder ............................................. 82

CHAPTER 4: COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS .................................................................. 112

Comparisons ....................................................................................................................................... 112

Conclusions .......................................................................................................................................... 131

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................................. 138
INTRODUCTION

In his book *Hugo Wolf: Letters to Melanie Köchert*, Franz Grasberger posits that Wolf’s way of life remained fully and exclusively bound to his work, and the “Geistliche Lieder” should be considered a significant component of his essential artistic self-realization.\(^1\) The conflict between the surface evidence concerning Wolf’s personal religious faith and the importance of these “Geistliche Lieder” in his compositional output provides an opportunity for research into his motivation for working with religious subject matter. The “Mörike Lieder” and the *Spanisches Liederbuch* present a series of texts that offers insight into Wolf’s ambiguous religious attitudes, and allows for the study of comparisons between the two sets. Among composers of Lieder, Wolf is noted for the depth of his relationship to the poetry and the profound connection of the music to the text, so it may be surmised that careful study of the musical settings themselves can further illuminate the relationship between the composer and his ideas and motivations surrounding the text.

This study will focus on Wolf’s musical reflection on the religious subject matter contained in the “Mörike-Lieder” and the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, examining the originality of his musical approach to these songs, comparing his treatment of these texts to others, and making inferences regarding the role of these settings in his compositional direction and the role of these texts in his life and career. This study depends on several specific questions. What about Wolf’s musical language and approach to texts can be gleaned from the settings of the “Geistliche Lieder”? Which processes and techniques relate the “Geistliche Lieder” to other

settings, and which ones set them apart? What can be learned from a comparison of the compositional approach to the “Geistliche Lieder” in these two distinct sets? What intertextual connections exist between these two sets, and what suppositions can be supported by studying them? What motivating factors, personal or artistic, were involved in Wolf’s desire to compose the “Geistliche Lieder” despite the professed ambiguous nature of his attitude toward faith and religion? What is the significance of the “Geistliche Lieder” in the context of Wolf’s work in general?

In the recently published book, Hugo Wolf: Leben und Werk (Hugo Wolf: Life and Work), Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau asserts, “Wolfs musikalishe Wirklichkeit kümmert sich weder um ästhetische noch um musikwissenschaftliche Urteile.” In light of this expert point of view, I believe that my study of these “Geistliche Lieder” will offer a meaningful vantage point from which to examine Wolf’s innermost musical innovation, particularly in his musical articulation of religious-themed texts. Within the context of the opposing and sometimes controversial scholarly views regarding the ambiguity of his attitudes toward religion, this study will provide clues for insightful appreciation and more sophisticated interpretation of his music.

Regarding Wolf’s “Geistliche Lieder” Eric Sams suggests, “His special concentration on the sacred songs however, with their heavy emphasis on guilt and redemption, may well have had some personal significance.” In addition, in her article “Of Spain and Sin: A Glance at Wolf’s Spanisches Liederbuch,” Susan Youens suggests insightful questions which correspond to the questions addressed by this study: “What purpose did the “Geistliche Lieder” serve for this

---

2 Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Hugo Wolf: Leben und Werk (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 2003), 15. (Wolf’s musical reality relies neither on aesthetic nor musicological judgments.) This translation is by the author, Moon-Sook Park. All further English translations in this document, unless otherwise noted, are the author’s own. All of the author’s translations are enclosed in parentheses.

composer? What do they tell us about him? Can one deduce anything at all about a composer’s spiritual life from his music?" 4

CHAPTER 1

HUGO WOLF

Hugo Wolf’s Attitudes toward Faith and Religious Belief

The study of Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) presents a captivating dilemma, in that the artist who pursued and maintained the attitude of a free thinker (in the words of Frank Walker, “neither Protestant nor Catholic, but a free thinker in his attitude towards religion...”\(^5\)), also formed his profoundly personal mature expression in part with deeply introspective and inventive settings of religious-themed subject matter in the “Geistliche Lieder” (spiritual songs) genre, particularly in the “Mörike Lieder” and the *Spanisches Liederbuch*. A review of the literature reveals a widely-held view of Wolf’s progress through religious development that acknowledges his early religious influences and his growth into a well-read, free-thinking intellectual with an artistic output that is wide-ranging in its contexts. The conventional assumption follows that Wolf’s interaction with religious texts were artistic in nature, and that it is neither useful nor possible to probe the question of his approach to these texts as reflections of his own personal spiritual impulses and beliefs. One can argue that the evidence is ambiguous, or that it reflects the ambiguity of Wolf’s own concept of his religious faith, his lack of it, or the subtle places in between. Even so, the topic is worth pursuit given the importance of place and the extraordinary expression in the “Geistliche Lieder” from these two collections.

To understand Wolf’s approach to the “Geistliche Lieder” it is not enough to make inferences directly from the texts and the musical settings. His personal formation was influenced by a wide variety of circumstances, and his correspondence offers insight into the role

of some of these circumstances on his outlook and work. Expressions regarding personal identity
and the place of his work are prevalent throughout his writings and in the anecdotes of others,
and can provide insights into the dualities that characterized his life and career. Many of the
particular contexts and circumstances of Wolf’s life and career provided a series of alternate
paths, and his responses to these choices ranged from ambivalence to deep anxiety and periods of
artistic paralysis. In many cases, his responses seem to have vacillated between the two
extremes. This could be surmised as ambivalence, indecisiveness, adventurousness, or restless
groping. It is evident from Wolf’s writings that it is often the latter. In many cases, this seems to
be the product of conflicts between his inner impulses magnified by what he perceived to be in
the best interest of his career and reception. An example of these conflicts is his Wagnerian
tendencies and desire to create large works versus his native affinity for concentrated expression
focused at the level of words, in context of the cultural swing toward post-Wagnerian
Nietzschean ideals. Wolf’s internal struggles with his abilities and impulses against his
expectations for himself and for his reception, magnified by the psychological issues that
plagued his adult life, led to the ultimate duality of doubt and confidence that fueled the drastic
cycles of long dry spells and manic bursts of creative output.

Wolf’s correspondence reveals a balance of personal doubt and hope that underlies
periods of both extremes of professional confidence. This seemingly ambiguous balance,
whether or not expressed in specifically religious terms, offers clues leading to the things that
were ultimately important and meaningful in his life. Examination of the musical settings of the
spiritually-oriented texts of the “Geistliche Lieder” in the context of these considerations creates
an understanding from which inferences can be drawn regarding the depth of Wolf’s relationship
to the texts and the place these Lieder hold in his compositional output.
Biographical Context, Correspondence, and Anecdotes

Comments and references to faith, religion, doubt, and hope from the available correspondence of Wolf to friends and family members do not give a ringing declaration of one side or another, but portray a spectrum of thought. This spectrum ranges from his own self-characterization as an unbeliever to his use of biblical allusions in the representation of his struggles, expressions of a fatalistic reliance on God, identification of his personal sense of sin and guilt with the sufferings of Christ, and even direct requests of friends to pray for him. The statements of others who knew him offer another layer of perspective, also with conflicting or ambiguous pieces of evidence. Examples of these are presented in the context of a loosely chronological accounting of aspects of his formation and his career that may illuminate the connections of religion and spirituality to his self-identity and inner motivations.


- 1888–91: over 200 songs to words by Mörike, Eichendorff, Goethe, Geibel, Keller and Heyse.
- 1895–97: an opera (Der Corregidor), another thirty or so songs, an unfinished opera (Manuel Venegas).7

Contrary to Wolf’s own statement regarding his hopes in a letter to a friend, Oskar Grohe, “Gott wolle mir noch langes Leben und viele gute Einfälle schenken! Und nun Gott befohlen, lieber

---


7 The “thirty or so songs” include the remainder of the Italian songs not composed in 1891.
Doktor,” Sams summarizes the outcome: “This is tragic irony . . . Wolf’s life was among the shortest and most sporadic known to musical history.”

Youth and Early Career

Wolf was raised as a Catholic from his birth in 1860. His mother was devout, and took him to mass regularly. It is apparent that this upbringing remained firmly rooted in his psyche, even though he had abandoned the faith as early as the 1880s. As a Catholic and a native of Styria, his musical formation did not take place in the context of Lutheran chorales, but with more Italianate influences including song and opera. His father, who was a currier by trade, but also a good musician, formed a family band in which Hugo was required to participate from a young age. Hugo began his studies of violin and piano in the early years.

One of the prominent conflicts in Wolf’s life leading up to the time of his mature musical output involved his father’s strong wish for him to have academic success and pursue a career outside of music. His early history introduced the recurring themes of his life, one of which is the incompatibility of his temperament with the wishes of his father. He could not escape the path of music, and he consistently failed to acquiesce to the authorities of institutions that might otherwise have furthered his cause. He lasted only half a year at the Gymnasium in Graz, having done poorly in general, but well in music. He entered the Benedictine Monastery of St. Paul in 1871, where he further developed his musical skills and played organ for the services, but failed to meet the academic standards. This record continued at the Gymnasium at Marburg, where he

---

8 Wolf, *Briefe an Oskar Grohe*. ed. Heinrich Werner (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1905), 18. (God grant me a long life and plenty of good ideas! And now God ordered, dear Doctor. (2 May 1890))

9 Sams, 1.
abruptly quit his studies and declared in a letter to his father that he must “devote himself entirely to music.”

Wolf finally entered the Vienna Conservatory in 1875 and was dismissed after only two years. He commented that he was “forgetting more than he was learning,” and never returned to formal training. Nevertheless, his time at the Conservatory afforded him the opportunity to see performances of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* and to meet his hero, Richard Wagner. After leaving the Conservatory he took what odd musical employment he could obtain, meanwhile pursuing his musical studies by himself. Frederic Austin explains:

He has related how at this time he laboriously analyzed the works of Bach and Beethoven, the songs of Schubert and Schumann, and exercised himself in the technique of composition generally, in the most exhaustive manner . . . Always a great reader, with decided and educated literary tastes, he was able to obtain, in 1886, an appointment as musical critic to the Vienna *Salonblatt.*

According to Ernest Newman, “To every composer and every piece of music that he took up he brought the same keenly critical intelligence, the same intuitive sense of relative values, the same enthusiasm for whatever was vital or characteristic.” He was especially drawn to the Lieder of Schumann, whose influence is strongly evident in the music from the first phase of his composing career, which includes song settings of the favorite poets of the time, such as Goethe and Heine. His early lieder tend to divide into light, comic pieces and deeply serious songs, exemplified respectively by the Mörike song “Mausfallen-Sprüchlein” (Mouse-catching rhyme,

---


12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 15.
June 1882) and the Kerner song “Zur ruh’, zur Ruh’, ihr müden Glieder” (To rest, to rest, you tired limbs, 1883).

Among the numerous letters written by Wolf before the start of his mature period in 1888, those to his family notably represent his characteristic ambiguous religious attitude. In a letter to Josef Strasser, his brother-in-law, on 23 December 1885, he writes:

How comes it that we have heard nothing from each other for so long? . . . I wanted to surprise you with some news that, with your sympathy in the fate of my artistic activities, would have given you, too, great pleasure . . . I have good prospects of bringing my Penthesilea to performance in Munich and Vienna. It must be decided before the end of January. Pray for me. 14

The day after his escaping from being godfather at the christening of his new-born nephew, Wolf confessed his churlish action to his sister Modena and her husband in his letter of 9 June, 1886:

I would like best to fall weeping on your neck, and on yours, too, Modena. I am wretched and at the same time furious with myself. Pity me, for now I know with certainty that it is my fate to wound all those who love me and whom I love . . . It is unfortunately not the first time that I have found myself in such a wretched state of mind. I have gained thereby the conviction that my mental constitution is a thoroughly morbid one and will remain so . . . And believe me at heart I was wholly agreeable, but there whispered in my ear a devil (and I harbor legions in me) that I should not do it, because that would hurt you. 15

Despite his immense suffering from the loss of his father, Wolf revealed the more optimistic, hopeful side of his personality as he tried to console his mother’s grief in a letter written in 1887:

. . . und ein Brief von Ihnen, liebste Mutter, ist für mich, wie Sie sich wohl denken können, immer ein Fest- und Freudentag. Ich darf nur die altmodischen, zittrigen Buchstaben ansehen, so füllen sich schon mit Tränen die Augen, und jedes liebe Wort zerreißt mir das Herz. Dann weiß ich mich vor Glück gar nicht zu fassen, und nur ein Gedanke, ein Gefühl beherrscht und durchdringt mich, und ich möchte es aller Welt jubelnd zurufen: “Ich hab’ noch eine Mutter!” . . . Wir wollen noch lange uns des Lebens freuen, wir wollen einholen, was uns so spärlich zugemessen worden, wir wollen

14 Walker, 178.
15 Ibid., 180.
einander leben und lieben und nichts anderes im Sinne haben, als uns das Leben nach Kräften angenehm zu gestalten.\textsuperscript{16}

Wolf’s youth came to an end with the death of his beloved father in May 1887. Wolf’s grief was immeasurable and he expressed his mourning in a letter to Marie Lang, “What does it matter to me if my songs are published now? No success can any longer give me pleasure.”\textsuperscript{17} Years later, Wolf was still expressing his perpetual desolation due to the loss of his father in a letter to his sister Käthe:

“In the quiet churchyard”—it was the only song that Father’s dear hand provided with an inscription. And now he lies in the quiet churchyard and none of my songs can reach him. Ah, why do I go on composing when he can do longer hear?—he, who only in music lived and breathed, and for whom my music never sounded, to whom my song never spoke!!!\textsuperscript{18}

In a letter of 22 October 1887 to Melanie Köchert, with whom he shared an intimate relationship and a deep trust, Wolf piteously compared his depression and anguished doubt regarding his creative impulse in the context of his father’s death and the relinquishment of his job as a music critic for the \textit{Wiener Salonblatt} with a biblical reference with which he places himself between sin and redemption:

\begin{quote}
Ich . . . übe mich in Geduld und Entsagung, bin auch schon ganz stumpsinnig geworden. Meine ausschließliche Beschäftigung konzentriert sich in Variation über die sieben
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} Walker, 197.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
letzten Worte des Erlösers, wobei es mir manchmal passiert, daß ich über die ersten “Mein Gott, mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen” gar nicht hinauskomme.19

Through the encouragement and support of his close friend, Friedrich Eckstein, “Das mächtige Eck” (The powerful Eck),20 to publish his compositions, Wolf ultimately regained his hope, which rekindled his impulse to compose. Dolf Lindner describes this notable recovery of Wolf’s creativity:

Die Aussicht, sein Werk nun der Öffentlichkeit zu übergeben, erweckte in Wolf eine neue unglaubliche Schaffenslust. Gleich einem Muttertier folgte er seinem Instinkt und begab sich auf die Suche nach einem ruhigen abseitigen Platz, um zu “gebären.” Sein Blick und seine Hoffnungen richteten sich auf das Werner-Haus in Perchtoldsdorf, in dem er in glücklichen Sommern 1880 und 1882 von Mayerling kommend oftmals geweilt hat.21

Wolf’s optimism for the future is reflected in a confident letter from 4 January 1882, written in response to his father’s despairing letter regarding his troublesome situation with his employment as Kappellmeister at Salzburg:


19 Andreas Dorschel, Hugo Wolf: Mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten (Rowohlt, 1985), 64. Translated by Louise McClelland Urban, Hugo Wolf: Letters to Melanie Köchert (New York: Schirmer Books), 3. (I have been . . . practicing patience and self-denial; have also become a complete dolt. My sole occupation centers on variations of the Seven Last Words of the Redeemer, during which it sometimes happens that I don’t even get past the first “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me.”)


21 Ibid. (The prospect of publishing his work awakened in Wolf an incredible desire to work. Like a mother, he followed his instinct and went in search of a quiet, distant place to "birth." His eyes and his hopes were fixed on the Werner’s house in Perchtoldsdorf, where he often stayed in the happy summers in 1880 and 1882, coming from Mayerling.)

Mature Career

Wolf eventually found himself in the highly inspired compositional outburst that produced fifty-three Mörike Lieder in 1888. In what Mosco Carner describes as the “Poetic Supremacy Act of 1888,” the year 1888 was of utmost significance in Wolf’s career, marked by a leap of compositional development that initiated the phase of his mature artistry, particularly in the vocal music genre. Regarding this remarkable year in Wolf’s life, Edmund von Hellmer, the publisher of Hugo Wolf: Familienbriefe and a close friend to Wolf, writes, “Mit dem Jahre 1888 erreicht Wolf gleichsam mit einem plötzlichen Sprunge die volle Höhe seiner künstlerischen Bedeutung und Originalität.”

Undoubtedly the year 1888 was a decisive crossroad for Wolf in which his reputation as a recognizable composer began to increase. On 2 March, Rosa Papier, a celebrated mezzo-soprano in Vienna, performed two of his Lieder for the first time in a public concert. Two collections, Sechs Lieder für eine Frauenstimme (Six Songs for a Female Voice) and Sechs Gedichte von Scheffel, Mörike, Goethe und Kerner (Six Poems by Scheffel, Mörike, Goethe und Kerner), were published in that month. From February through November Wolf composed the collection of fifty-three Lieder, Gedichte von Eduard Mörike; in August and September thirteen Lieder, the Gedichte von Eichendorff volume; and from the end October until the end of the year the collection of twenty-five Lieder, Gedichte von Goethe. On 15 December, Wolf gave his first public performance as an accompanist with the famous Wagner-tenor, Ferdinand Jäger.

now have I become aware of my strength . . . Only now am I glad; I am in my element; I will extinguish my unlucky star and replace it with a star of fortune . . . Don’t worry so much, please, and hope the best.)

---


24 Wolf, Hugo Wolf: Ein Persönlichkeit in Brieven. Familienbriefe, 78. (With the year of 1888, Wolf, with a sudden leap, fully reached his artistic importance and originality.)

At the beginning of his unprecedented inspired activity with Mörike’s poetry, Wolf’s innermost psychological state between hope and doubt for the future and for lasting creative ability is represented well in a letter from 22 February to his youthful friend, Edmund Lang:

I have just written down a new song. A divine song, I tell you! Quite divinely marvelous! By God! It will soon be all over with me, for my cleverness increases from day to day. How far shall I get? I shudder to think about it . . . I feel my cheeks glow like molten iron with excitement, and this condition of inspiration is to me exquisite torment, not pure happiness. . . . Today I have sketched out at the piano practically a whole comic opera. I believe I could write something really good of this kind. But I am afraid of the exertion. I am too cowardly for a proper composer. What will the future yet unfold for me? This question torments and distresses me and preoccupies me waking and dreaming. Have I a vocation? Am I really one of the elect? God forbid the latter. That would be a pretty kettle of fish. I believe I am mad.26

Several hours later Wolf wrote to Lang again:

The days of Lodi really seem to be renewing themselves. My Lodi in song is known to have been the year ’78; in those days I composed almost every day one good song and sometimes two . . . Scarcely was my letter dispatched than, taking the Mörike in hand, I wrote a second song, in 5-4 time, and perhaps I may say that seldom has 5-4 time been so fittingly employed as in this composition. . . . Now congratulate me, or curse me, just as you please.27

The following examples, excerpted from Wolf’s personal correspondence, representatively illustrate his typical alternation between expressions of hope and doubt regarding his work and its reception. Wolf first bragged to his friend Werner in a letter from 24 February about his setting of Mörike, “It is now just seven o’clock in the evening and I am as happy as a king . . . When you hear it the devil will take you with pleasure.”28 On the other hand, he told Marie Lang on the following day about his doubt regarding the setting of another Mörike poem, “Today two new songs have occurred to me of which one sounds so weird and strange

26 Walker, 202.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 203.
that I am quite afraid of it . . . God help the unfortunate people who will one day hear it!” 29 In a letter to his mother on 30 December 1888, Wolf reflected on his fruitful year and expressed his hope for the following year with a nod to reliance on the will of God, “Es war das fruchtbarste und deshalb auch glücklichste Jahr meines Lebens…Ich denke, ich darf mit dem Jahre 1888 zufrieden sein. Was wird das Jahr 1889 bringen? In diesem Jahre muß die Oper, an deren Ausführung ich in den nächsten Tagen zu schreiten denke, fertig sein. Gott gebe seinen Segen dazu.”30

Only a week after completing the fifty-one Goethe Lieder on 21 October 1889, Wolf began to work on the Spanisches Liederbuch. The forty-four “Geistliche” and “Weltliche Lieder” (sacred and worldly songs) were set from 28 October 1889 through 27 April 1890, including a six-week break, “in einem Krampf von Freude und Stolz” (in a spasm of joy and pride).31 Walker describes Wolf’s work on the Spanisches Liederbuch, “Twenty-six of these songs were written in the next two months, in a state of burning inspiration similar to that in which the Mörike and Goethe volumes had been produced. On no less than five different occasions a single day saw the completion of two songs.”32

After he had set nine of the Spanish poems, Wolf predicted to his sister Käthe that he would set forty-four songs in all—in fact, the precise number of the Lieder contained in the

29 Walker, 204.

30 Wolf, Hugo Wolf: Ein Persönlichkeit in Briefen. Familienbriefe, 80. (It was the most productive, and therefore the happiest year of my life. I believe that I can be satisfied with the year 1888. What will the year 1889 bring? This year has the opera, which will proceed over the coming days, and should be ready. May God grant his blessing for it!)


32 Walker, 222.
volume. On 16 April 1890, in the midst of his setting of the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, Wolf wrote enthusiastically to his supporter and friend from Mannheim, Oskar Grohe, about his ardent hope of definitive success given the current vogue for things Spanish, “Jede Menge zu tun, mir die Spanier (ein großer Zyklus nach Heyse und Geibel) vom Halse zu schaffen. Sie werden in diesen Gesängen mich von einer ganz neuen Seite kennenlernen; dürfte auch das beste sein, was bis jetzt aus meiner Feder geflossen.”

On 5 November, Wolf wrote to Eckstein suggesting he come for a visit, “Mein Lieber Eck! Soeben habe ich ein Lied vollendet, das zu hören allein schon der Mühe verlohnte, mich baldigst zu besuchen. Das Gedicht (aus dem spanischen Liederbuch) hat zum Gegenstand den hl. Joseph, Maria auf der Flucht nach Ägypten geleitend. Wenn Sie diese Ereignis erleben wollen, müssen Sie meine Musik dazu hören. …Ihr glückliches Wölferl.”

Wolf’s overly confident mood during the significantly creative period of the *Spanisches Liederbuch* is evident in his letter to Strasser on 23 March 1890:


---

33 Walker, 222–23.

34 Dorschel, 82. (There is a lot to do in order to finish my compositions on the Spanish (a large cycle by Heyse and Geibel). You will get to know an entirely new side of me in these songs; it should be the best so far that has flowed from my pen.)

35 Decsey, *Hugo Wolf*, vol. II, 31. (My dear Eck! I just completed a song—to hear it alone would make it worth the trouble to come visit me. The poem (from the Spanish songbook) is St. Joseph leading Mary on their flight to Egypt. If you want to experience this event, you really need to hear my music. You will be surprised… Your happy Wölferl)

36 Decsey, *Hugo Wolf*, vol. II, 31. (I work with a thousand horsepower from dawn until night, without a break. What I now write down, my dear friend, is also for posterity. They are masterpieces. Meanwhile, however, just songs… each one surpassing the other.)
A year later, however, Wolf lamented in deep doubt of his reputation and recognition as a “Liederkomponist” (song composer), in a letter to Emil Kauffmann, who was a music director at the University of Tübingen and became Wolf’s trustworthy friend in 1890:

Die schmeichelhafteste Anerkennung als “Liederkomponist” betrübt mich in die innerste Seele. Was anders will es denn bedeuten, als eben einen Vorwurf, daß ich immer nur Lieder komponiere, daß ich doch nur ein kleines genre beherrsche und dieses nicht einmal vollkommen, da sich in ihm ja nur Ansätze zum dramatischen Schaffern vorfänden. Also ware ich nicht einmal ein ordentliche Lyriker! Gott besser’s!37

Regarding the interruption in his creative impulse, Wolf’s letters of the summer and autumn reflect his depression and weariness. “I feel myself, bodily as well as mentally, utterly exhausted. Of composing I have no longer the remotest conception. God knows how it will end. Pray for my poor soul.”38 In the letter to Kauffmann from 1 June, Wolf complained bitterly, “I should almost like to believe that I am come to the end of my life. I cannot possibly continue for thirty years more to write songs . . . I am just about at an end.”39 A letter to Grohe on 12 June illustrates his continuous expression of suffering: “It’s all over with me as a composer. I believe that I shall never write another note. So stupid and dried-up, I have never found myself before in all my life. I thoroughly despise myself.”40

---

37 Wolf, Hugo Wolf: Vom Simm der Töne, 135. Excerpted from the letter to Emil Kaufmann from 12 October 1891. (The flattering recognition as a "Liederkomponist“ saddened me in the innermost soul. What else will it mean, as just a reproach, that I only compose songs, mastering only a small genre, and that not even completely, as it only approaches the beginning in terms of dramatic works? If for once I was not just an ordinary poet! God help it.)

38 Walker, 291. (Letter to Grohe on 8th May 1891)

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.
During his time in Bayreuth, Wolf wrote ruefully lamenting letters to Melanie Köchert in which he describes the conflict between his wishes and his reality with biblical allusion to the clash between the forces of God and the Devil. On 19 July, he recounted having slept through part of the first and third acts of Parsifal—his favorite opera:

I am eating almost nothing . . . I no longer have a clear conception of what sleep means . . . Can’t tell you much about the performance of Parsifal, as I only participated with half ears and ditto eyes. It is asserted that it was very fine and probably it was too. Tristan today. God keep me awake! Now thank God that you aren’t at Bayreuth. Soon I shall be able to be human again and enjoy eating, drinking, and sleeping—ah, sleeping! To the Devil with all intellectual pleasures, when the body is knocked up.41

He continued the next day in the same vein, also returning to his allusion to Christ’s struggle between sin and redemption to describe his own torment:

It was the voice of a good angel which most pressingly whispered to me not to go to Bayreuth. Had I only listened to this exhortation—how many trials and tribulations would have been spared me! . . . As I took my way back home . . . there was still light and quite lively activity in the beer-house in the lowest part of building . . . But scarcely had I lain down in bed when in the first storey beneath me a small child began to howl atrociously . . . All my knocking, calling, and shouting for the housekeepers was in vain . . . I hardly slept at all, I need scarcely mention . . . God permit the bitter cup of the joys of Bayreuth to pass from me! This is my only wish.42

This long letter to his intimate friend demonstrates Wolf’s characteristic multi-layered separation between his deep anxiety and his outward presentation. The combination here of biblical allusion, wit, and sarcasm is typical.

Particularly in his mature period, Wolf often expressed his suffering and despair with religious nuance. While he once, in a letter to his mother, labeled himself an ‘Ungläubiger’

---

41 Walker, 292.

42 Ibid.
(unbeliever), he harshly asserted the providence of God in his response to Grohe’s remark about composing in the letter on 8 February 1893:


Wolf’s letter to Kauffmann on 26 April 1893 reflects despondency and bitterness concerning the standstill of his creativity with richly layered ironic symbolism, expressing his frustration with a line from Mörike’s poem “Im Frühling” (In Spring) and counting himself as completely forsaken by God and outcast from the rest of creation, even in his humility:

> What I suffer from this continuous idleness I am quite unable to describe. I would like most to hang myself on the nearest branch of the cherry-tree standing now in full bloom. This wonderful spring with its secret life and movement troubles me unspeakably . . . this “ich sehne mich und weiss nicht recht nach was” makes me frantic . . . Everywhere this bewildering urge for life, fruitfulness, creation—and only I, although like the humblest grass of the fields one of God’s creatures, may not take part in this festival of resurrection...45

Wolf ends the letter with, “Gott weiß, wie und wann das enden wird!”46

During this period, the memory of his fruitful work a year earlier made Wolf yearn for Perchtoldsdorf, where he hoped to end the painful sterility of his creativity. Finally, in

November, Wolf moved to Perchtoldsdorf, hoping for the inspiration that it had previously

---

43 Lindner, 38. (29 April 1892)

44 Wolf, *Briebe an Oskar Grohe*, ed. Heinrich Werner (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1905), 100–101. (How carelessly you drop the word ‘diligent.’ Let me be in peace once and for all from your accursed ‘diligent’ composing! Art, my friend, is not allotted by day. The hours of the consecration are holidays, and—as you know well—every day is not Sunday. I cannot say, “the time has come.” If it comes, there will still be time to say something right. Such loquacity is practiced by those who do not have time to wait for ideas.)

45 Walker, 322.

46 Lindner, 81. (God knows how and when this will end.)
afforded him, but it was in vain. Instead, on 28 December 1894, Wolf met Engelbert Humperdinck and attended a performance of Hänsel und Gretel by this new friend. This experience brought to the fore his strong desire for opera that was instilled years before by his revered Wagner.

Regarding Wolf’s unremitting desire to compose opera, Andrea Dorschel explains, “Bereits in die konzentrierte Arbeit an den großen Liederzyklen hatte sich immer wieder der Traum vor der Oper gedrängt.” Wolf screamed in his letter to Kauffmann, “Die Oper und immer wieder die Oper!” After the completion of the twenty-five Goethe settings, Wolf wrote to his mother, “Was wird das Jahr 1889 bringen? In diesem Jahre muß die Oper.” As he finished his theatrical incidental music Fest auf Solhaug in the end of 1890, he proclaimed, “Ich glaube nun mehr denn je, daß ich zum Openkomponisten berufen bin.”

On 18 January 1895 Wolf wrote to Grohe, “A miracle, a miracle, an unheard-of miracle has taken place. The long desired opera text is found; it lies before me quite complete, and I am burning with eagerness to get on with the musical treatment.” Finally, Wolf was able to compose intensely again on his first opera, Der Corregidor. Walker describes his regained

---

47 Lindner, 86 – 7.
48 Ibid. 87.
49 Dorschel, 88. (Already in his concentrated work on major Lieder cycles, he repeatedly had the urgent dream of [composing] an Opera.)
50 Wolf, Hugo Wolf: Vom Sinn der Töne, 134. Written on 1 June 1891. (The opera and always the opera again!!)
51 Wolf, Hugo Wolf: Ein Persönlichkeit in Briefen. Familienbriefe, 80. Written on 30 December 1888. (What will the year 1889 bring? It must be the year of the opera.)
52 Wolf, Vom Sinn der Töne, 155. Letter to Grohe. (I believe more than ever that I am called to the profession of opera composer.)
53 Walker, 372.
creativity, “On 1 April Wolf moved out to Perchtoldsdorf again and threw himself ‘like a madman,’ as he himself said, into the task of composing his opera.” In a series of letters to Melanie Köchert, Wolf expressed at once his enthusiasm for his work and his anxiety about his life, alluding again to the metaphor of the resurrection and the providence of God:

I begin almost to be afraid of myself, for it seems to me as though in the short period of my being here I am become another man. A better one, let us hope . . . I am still too confused by the first intoxicating impressions of this sudden change. Tomorrow I shall be more collected and, God willing, write something fine and beautiful.

I suppose you are surprised that I write letters at all, but except to my sister I have not yet written to anyone from here. It wouldn’t be possible, for I work now without pause from seven in the morning (I get up at six) until darkness sets in and often also far into the night . . . Tomorrow, God willing, it’s the turn of the conclusion of the second act.

Wolf continued his work on the opera, and on 13 April voiced his hopeful belief in his music as well as in himself: “But now a most happy idea has occurred to me and I believe the piece will be quite magnificent.”

There is little direct evidence from extra-musical sources that such comments had meaning for Wolf beyond literary symbolism, but one interesting anecdote from the twilight of Wolf’s creative years stands out. In fact, it stands out so abruptly that most Wolf scholars dismiss it based on questions about the reliability of the source. The anecdote, however, is plausible in the light of other evidence presented here, and is worthy of examination in this context. In 1896, Wolf had a brief relationship with Margarete Klinckerfuss, who later represented him as a religious person in her book, Aufklänge aus versunkener Zeit:

54 Walker, 375.
55 Ibid. (1 April 1895)
56 Ibid., 376. (8 April 1895)
57 Ibid.
Doch als wir das erstmal, vom Fangelsbach-Friedhof kommend, an der Marienkirche vorbeikamen, sah er mich ernste an und meinte: “Es ist doch eine schöne Sitte, dass die katholischen Kirchen stets geöffnet sind.” . . . Wir gingen hinein und Hugo Wolf kniete lange, inbrünstig betend, nieder . . . Hugo Wolf würde sein geistlichen Lieder und manches andere Lied nie komponiert haben, wäre er nicht tief religiös gewesen.58

To further support her position that Wolf’s religious beliefs were critically tied to his song writing, she adds, “Der allzu früh verstorbene Herman Hefele,59 der in seinem überragenden Werk ‘Das Gesetz der Form’ (Brief an Tote) einen seiner geistvollen Briefe an Hugo Wolf richtete und die Absicht hatte, ihm ein Buch zu widmen, wollte darin Wolfs tiefer Frömmigkeit ein besonderes Kapitel weihen.”60

Indeed, in his book, Das Gesetz der Form, Hefele expressed his great admiration of Wolf, who he included as one of twelve personalities selected for the book from cultural history, including Petrarch, Goethe, Schiller, Michelangelo and Dante. He writes, “Mit dem Instinkt des genialen Künstlers wandten Sie sich zur vokalen Musik und suchten sich zu Stoffen Ihres musikalischen Gestaltens Texte von Gehalt und stärkstem geistigen Gewicht.”61

58 Margarete Klinckerfuss, Aufklänge aus versunkener Zeit (Port Verlag zu Urach, 1948), 115–16. (But when we went from the Fangelsbach cemetery and passed St. Mary’s, he gave me a serious look and said, “It is a beautiful custom that the Catholic churches are always open.” We went in, and Hugo Wolf knelt long, praying ardently. . . . Hugo Wolf would never compose spiritual songs and many other songs if he were not deeply religious.)

59 Herman Hefele (1885–1936) was a German Romanist, historian, literary historian, culture critic and Professor of History.

60 Herman Hefele, Das Gesetz der Form (Eugen Diederichs in Jena, 1928), 47 – 57. (The too-early-deceased Herman Hefele, who wrote in his distinguished work “The Law of the Form” (Letter to the Dead) one of his witty letters to Hugo Wolf, had intended to dedicate a book to him, and wanted to dedicate a specific chapter to his deep devotion.)

61 Ibid., 56. (With the instinct of the brilliant artist you turned to vocal music and sought to fill your musical designs with texts of the strongest intellectual content and spiritual weight.)
On the subject of Wolf’s career, Franz Grasberger said, “the most significant accomplishments were compressed into the short span of a decade.”\textsuperscript{62} During this time, Wolf’s creativity blossomed in spurts of obsessive intensity. After his culmination of five major songbooks— the “Mörike, Eichendorff, Goethe Songbooks,” \textit{Spanisches Liederbuch} and \textit{Italienisches Liederbuch  I} —his psychological problems became more apparent and he slid into a deeper depression after the failure of his only completed opera, \textit{Der Corregidor}, in 1897.\textsuperscript{63} Despite several remarkable works including \textit{Italienisches Liederbuch II} (completed in 1896) and three Michelangelo Lieder (March 1897), Wolf was committed to a hospital in September 1897 in the midst of fervently composing his second opera, \textit{Manuel Venegas}. Despite a brief phase of recovery, he had to reenter the mental institution and remained there until 22 February 1903, when he died after having suffered a five-year drought in his musical creativity.\textsuperscript{64} Heinrich Werner, Wolf’s close friend and admirer, who accompanied Wolf on his last visit to Perchtoldsdorf in July 1898, remembers, “Es schien, als ob der Arme hier in der Freiheit für einen Augenblick sich selbst wiedergefunden hätt.”\textsuperscript{65} It was his last happy moment, being a composer once again in the place where, almost ten years earlier, his creative powers came to maturity with the remarkable achievement of the Mörike volume.

These and other excerpts from Wolf’s letters reveal a pattern of adaptation of the language and symbolism of his native faith. Under scrutiny, these instances appear not to be merely manneristic phrases, but sophisticated expressions of self-identification. Most of these


\textsuperscript{63} Newman, 133–40.

\textsuperscript{64} Dorschel, 120–25.

\textsuperscript{65} Willi Reich, \textit{Hugo Wolf—Rapsodie; aus Briefen und Schriften} (Zürich: W. Classen, 1947), 69. (It seemed as if the poor man, here for a moment in freedom, might have been able to find himself again.)
can be divided into two related categories. First, there are invocations of the providence of God that accompany Wolf’s writings from both extremes of his experience, seeming to hold God responsible for both his successes and his failures. In these examples, the way he speaks about God is similar to the way one might speak about fate, but with an important distinction: when Wolf portrays himself as forsaken and outcast, he avoids language along the lines of God having conspired against him. He laments his existence outside the realm of God’s blessing without suggesting a reason for his fate. Since the penitent person will experience God’s mercy, Wolf’s choice of this metaphor highlights his tendency to self-loathing.

The second category is his use of the language and symbolism of the Passion of Christ, with which he positions himself in the place of Christ, suffering in the wilderness with God having removed his mercy, and bearing the weight of sin (again, implying his underlying feelings of guilt and doubt). This language implies redemption to come, but in Wolf’s personal reflections, it remains an implication, a distant hope. Wolf’s letters contain other religious references, including allusions to biblical characters and themes, and particularly those that contrast evil and good, sin and penitence. In consideration of the extent to which Wolf cast his significant inner turmoil in terms of his religious understanding, the anecdote from Margarete Klinckerfuss is not only plausible, it is also unsurprising.

**Significant Features of Wolf’s Compositional Style**

Carner aptly describes Wolf’s compositional style as one whose intense creativity enthusiastically burst through a notably short span of time (less than a decade), along with sporadic barren periods:
Wolf was a Stauungskomponist, that is, the creative impulse did not come to him (as they do with most great composers) in a steady, more or less continual stream, but were dammed up for months and even years on end; until the inner pressure grew so strong as to burst the dam and release those impulses in a sudden tremendous flood.66

Besides Wolf’s insightful poetic sensitivity and extraordinary attention to poets and poetry, Paul Boylan states, “An interesting feature of the song collections composed between 1888 and 1891 is the individuality of each collection.”67 Although there are stylistic features that are associated with Wolf’s Lieder in general, the individuality of Wolf’s compositional style, particularly of his mature period, is strongly evident in both the Mörike Lieder and the Spanisches Liederbuch collections. The most conspicuous representative features of Wolf’s mature style in these collections are declamation, chromaticism, treatment of dissonance, and the shift in the role of the piano part.

The Centrality of the Poetic Text

According to Wolf’s motto, “Prima le parole e poi la musica,” (first the words and then the music) words are the essence of his Lieder.68 Unlike other Lieder composers, Wolf absorbed the essence of the poet’s verses before attempting to realize any musical setting, placing himself as a servant of the poet’s intentions. While Wagner, being his own poet, “sometimes thought of his melody first and then wrote words that would fit it,” Wolf’s practice was to “bring out into


68 Carner, 5.
high relief the significant words of each line, and yet not permit this process to interfere with the purely musical interest of the phrase."  

The “Mörike Lieder” settings initiated the process by which Wolf became known as “The Poet’s Composer.” Susan Youens writes that he “cared more about poetry, served it more faithfully, and delved into it more deeply than other Lieder composers.” Amanda Glauert explains, “‘Wolf the musician’ became in his turn an almost hypothetical person, since one of the most common ways of describing the success of his songs was ‘Wolf became the poet.’”  

Newman describes poet-composer characterization:

> It goes without saying that the musician who lives again the life the poet has lived in writing the lines will unconsciously reproduce the same variety of forms and moods as there are in the poems. This is what Wolf did. When he set Goethe he was Goethe, not Mörike or Geibel, - and Goethe not in one aspect only but in all.

One of the significant biographers of Wolf, Ernst Decsey, explains it from another point of view:

> Hiermit kommen wir zum obersten Gesetz der Wolfischen Kunst: es ist die Textempfindlichkeit der Musik. . . . Er will nicht mit einer schönen Melodie ein besseres Dasein vortäuschen. Das Gesetz der Textempfindlichkeit ist nichts als das der Wahrheit.

Eric Sams explains that a typical Wolf setting “contains a musical equivalent for the prevailing mood of a poem, or more than one if that mood changes.” He adds that Wolf’s approach “defines the whole Lied art-form; musical ideas suggested by words are embodied in a setting of those words for voice and piano, both to provide overall unity and to enhance details,

---

69 Newman, 160.

70 Susan Youens, Hugo Wolf and his Mörike Songs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), X.


72 Newman, 187.

73 Decsey, Hugo Wolf, Das Leben und das Lied (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921), 132–33. (Hereby we come to the supreme law of Wolfian art: it is the text-sensitivity of the music. . . . He will not feign better existence with a beautiful melody. The law of the text-sensitivity is nothing but the truth.)
e.g. when particular words or phrases are thrown into relief by musical means for particular
effect. The total impression is thus one of diversity within unity.”

As Siegfried Schmalzriedt explains, “Wolf hat seine Mörike-Vertonungen selbst nicht als
Lieder bezeichnet, sondern absichtsvoll als ‘Gedichte von Eduard Mörike für eine Singstimme
und Klavier’.” Wolf subtitled his various volumes, “Poems of . . . for voice and piano” instead
of “Songs,” highlighting both the importance of the role of the poet and his verses in the settings,
and the elevation of the role of the piano as a force equal to the voice in the expression of the
setting. Wolf articulated his musical ideas in subordination to the words in order to achieve the
complete expression of the poem, or, as he wrote to Humperdinck in 1890, “To show, above all
that poetry is the true source of my music.”

Role of the Piano Part

Wolf’s manner of labeling his various volumes “Poems of . . . for voice and piano” is an
obvious declaration of the equal partnership between the voice and piano parts. The role of the
piano became more significant in Wolf’s mature Lieder along with an increasing synthesis of
words and music. About Wolf’s piano writing, Carner observes, “It is certainly not unpianistic,
as it has often been described, but highly idiosyncratic, frequently intricate and difficult. Yet,

---

74 Sams, 3.

75 Siegfried Schmalzriedt, “Hugo Wolfs Vertonung von Mörikes Gedicht “Karwoche” Realistische Züge im
(Wolf indicated his Mörike-settings not as songs, but intentionally as "poems by Eduard Mörike for voice and
piano.")

76 Carner, 7.

77 Romain Rolland, Romain Rolland’s Essays on Music. ed. David Ewen (New York: Dover Publications,
Inc, 1948), 357.
with the exception of some quasi-orchestral passages, it always springs from the nature of the keyboard.”

Distinguished pianist-coach Martin Katz states:

Wolf’s name on a program strikes simultaneous chords of joy and terror in any accompanist. Joy, because of Wolf’s ability to synthesize music and text in a way that allows both to emerge, not merely uncorrupted, but enhanced. Terror, because, if one is thorough, the technical execution of even his simplest measures is a formidable task. . . . As a pianist, I must rise to his complexity and try to enter the labyrinthine world of his mind—sometimes attempting to portray four characters, three forces of nature, and a keenly observant narrator . . . all in one song! 79

Carner draws a comparison that traces Wolf’s artistic development in this area: “. . . in his early period, Wolf shows a predilection for hand crossings and a virtuoso style in the manner of Liszt or Chopin whom he admired and with the mature songs, the musical substance of a song mostly resides in the piano part which follows the formal principle of absolute music.”

Declamation

Wolf’s art embodies the principle of accurate declamatory style. Gerald Moore highlights Wolf’s approach to setting a text: “Wolf gives us more (than music) to think about. . . . He was never interested in setting words which did not inspire him . . . his music was the inevitable vehicle for them.” 81 Wolf adopted a declamatory technique that allows portions of text to be clearly and accurately represented often in suspension from the rest of the musical texture. Some of the hallmarks of Wolf’s mature style, particularly in the “Geistliche Lieder” settings, are

---

78 Carner, 10.


80 Ibid., 8–10.

extraordinary attention to poets and poetry, scrupulous prosody, and the post-Wagnerian flexibility of psychologically deep vocal declamation.  

Wolf used declamatory melody and rhythm rather than a more pictorial style to allow for clear presentation of the words of the poetry and to allow the singer to express the emotionalism of the text. More importantly, Wolf’s declamatory style of vocal composition preserves the poetic language with minimal verbal breakage and emphasizes the rhythmic, melodic, and expressive discontinuities between the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. This style created a more independent and soloistic accompaniment rather than the subservient role the piano had in other nineteenth-century Lieder.

Chromaticism and Dissonance

Another basic element of Wolf’s musical vocabulary is heightened chromaticism, which he used in the embellishment of melody and as part of the functional tonality. It is necessary to recognize his method of using chromaticism to understand his settings in the mature period, beginning with the “Mörike Lieder,” and especially in the “Geistliche Lieder” of the Spanisches Liederbuch. In particular, Wolf explored and manipulated Wagner’s theories of chromaticism in his declamatory treatment of Lieder. Wolf’s application of chromaticism is not only as an expressive device but to serve the purely musical need for reinforcing poetic structure.

---


85 Carner, 7.

86 Boylan, 10.
Regarding his treatment of ‘dissonance’ Wolf commented, “Der Vorwurf: ungelöste Dissonanzenreihen zu begehen, konnte mir nichts anhaben, und zwar aus dem einfachen Grunde, weil ich im Stande bin nachzuweisen, wie nach der strengsten Regel der Harmonielehre jede meiner noch so kühnen Dissonanzen zu rechtfertigen ist.”87 (The fact that I have been reproached for perpetrating chains of unresolved discords leaves me wholly unmoved, for I am in a position to demonstrate how each of my discords, however bold, can be justified by the most severe criteria of the theory of harmony.)88 In contrast with other contemporary composers, Wolf invariably applied his arsenal of harmonic resources to suit the mood of the poem, a trait that was truly vital to his artistic integrity.89 Indeed, part of the originality of Wolf’s musical articulation of these texts is his deeply intuitive use of chromaticism and dissonance.

The Status of Wolf’s Lieder in its Genre

Because of their presentation of a highly refined sense of style and intellectual concentration, Wolf’s Lieder have been characterized as the “caviar of Lieder literature.”90 Wolf was an ardent admirer of Wagnerian style, which had a remarkable impact on his music, but he went beyond simply incorporating Wagnerian techniques into his own style and developed them into the more condensed miniature form that is distinctive to his own style. With Wolf’s Lieder,

87 Wolf, Hugo Wolf: Vom Sinn der Töne, 130.
88 Sams, 9. This is excerpted from the letter to his friend, Emil Kauffmann, written 21 May 1890.
89 Ibid.
the German Lied reached the ultimate synthesis of poetry and music, a complete fusion of music and text.\textsuperscript{91}

Wolf’s unquestionable achievement was “the compression of large-scale dramatic music within the miniature frame of German lyric verse, thus creating new springs of expressive power in the song form.” \textsuperscript{92} Sams representatively defines Wolf’s Lieder:

Just as Schubert had distilled the essence of classical opera and oratorio (Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn) into the first Romantic Lieder, thus creating a new genre, so Wolf in his turn condensed the dramatic intensity of modern (i.e. Wagnerian) music-drama into voice and keyboard, lending fresh life and force to the Lied form and enhancing its expressive vocabulary to a pitch never since surpassed.\textsuperscript{93}

A year after Wolf’s death, Max Reger wrote in the \textit{Süddeutschen Monatshefte} (1904) about “Hugo Wolf’s künstlerischen Nachlaß” (Hugo Wolf’s artistic legacy):

Die Schätze, die dieser gottbegnadete Musiker uns hinterlassen hat, liegen da und brauchen nur mit Begeisterung und freudigster Bewunderung gehoben zu werden. Doch vergesse man dabei nicht, daß wir nicht nur kostbare Lieder und Gesänge von ihm besitzen, sondern, daß er uns fast auf jedem Gebiet der musikalischen Produktion wertvollste Schöpfungen geschenkt hat. Diesen fast gänzlich unbekannten Werken, die erst seit dem Tode ihres Autors der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich sind, wird sicher ein besseres Los beschieden sein, als es im Anfang seiner Lyrik vergönnt war. Denn er, der Schöpfer, ist hinübergegangen, und damit die Hauptbedingung, daß man diese Werke aufführe, beklatsche und bejubel, erfüllt.\textsuperscript{94}

(The treasures that this divinely favored musician has left us are just lying there; we need only to pick them up with joyful enthusiasm and admiration. But we must not forget that we are holding not only precious Lieder and songs, but that he has also given us valuable creations in nearly every area of musical enterprise. The almost completely unknown works that have, since his death, become accessible to the public, are sure to be granted a better fate than his poetry at first. For he, the creator, is gone over, therefore the main condition for performance—applause and acclamation—is met.)


\textsuperscript{92} Sams, 2.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{94} Grasberger, 32.
CHAPTER 2

MÖRIKE LIEDER

Formation of the “Mörike Lieder”

Eduard Mörike and the Poems

In current literary circles, scholars consider Eduard Mörike (1804–75), born in Ludwigsburg, in Schwabia, one of the greatest German poets, along with Wolfgang von Goethe and Rainer Maria Rilke. Highly influenced by Goethe and German folk poetry, he produced a posthumously recognized body of poetry. Sams describes Mörike’s poetry:

His poetry offers a quiet and seemingly passive quality which is easy to perceive but hard to describe. Imagination, religious devotion, realism and humour in the content of the verses, folk-song and the classical tradition in their forms, are some of the more evident components of this quality.96

Parallel to his responsibility as a pastor, Mörike was a poet and his drawings and sketches are full of affectionate insights into human feelings. These often express in enthusiastic and plain images the form of daily life and the natural scene.97 Profoundly responsive to the moods of nature, Mörike’s poetry depicts a multifaceted expression of natural lyricism. He lived indeed in his own poet’s heart in the spirit of simplicity.

On 30 March 1831 Mörike told his fiancée, Luise Rau, “I will never be able to find happiness as a theologian.”98 This statement represents his conflict with his profession as well as his own faith. In addition, Mörike struggled with poor health throughout his lifetime. It was not

---

95 Sams, 59.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Youens, Hugo Wolf and His Mörike Songs, 141.
until 1834 that he was appointed to his first vicarage in the little village of Cleversulzbach. By then he had written many of his finest poems and his only novel, *Maler Nolten*. Udo Quak describes Mörike’s unfavorable circumstances during this period:

> Auch in Cleversulzbach hatte Mörike trotz anfänglicher Begeisterung öfter Zweifel an seiner Eignung zum Kirchendienst, auch hier zwangen ihn Krankheiten und Kuraufenthalte zu Unterbrechungen, auch hier wurde seine unstete amsführung beanstandet. (Also in Cleversulzbach Mörike often had doubts despite initial enthusiasm about his service to the church; here also his illnesses and curative stays forced him to interrupt his work and his unsteady management was criticized.)

Despite Mörike’s unhappiness as a pastor and in his private life (his youth marked by the deaths of family members, a catastrophic love affair, and his unhappy marriage) and despite a diagnosis of clinical depression that influenced the serious themes in his poetry, he was an eloquent religious poet. After his resignation from the church, Mörike continued to write poems and lived a bohemian existence in extreme depression until his death in 1875 at the age of seventy-one. He died without ever having heard a note of Hugo Wolf’s music.

Mörike’s poetry offers a quiet and apparently passive quality and his quasi-pictorial expression illuminates the vocabulary and imagery of his poetry and prose like the typically bright-colored depictions in his paintings and drawings. In his lyricism, Mörike’s poetry represents a peculiar charm of naïve grace in a perfect truth and simplicity in which the restrained emotions penetrate into the secret hopes and longings of the soul. Mörike’s poems first

---

99 Youens, 174.


101 Quak, 94 – 99.

102 Sams, 61.

103 Ibid., 59.
appeared in his *Gedichte* (Poetry) of 1838 and its sixth edition of 1876 was Wolf’s constant companion, as he once told a friend, “He could not bear to part from it, even for an hour.”

Wolf’s Composition of the “Mörike Lieder”

A booklet of Mörike’s poetry, now preserved in the Vienna municipal library, contains Wolf’s name and the date 1878. This was apparently in Wolf’s possession and shows his acquaintance with Mörike’s work a decade before the inspired composition of the fifty-three “Mörike Lieder” in 1888. This awareness of Mörike’s poetry might have come from hearing some new “Mörike Lieder” set by Schumann, or perhaps through his friend, Goldschmidt, who was well-educated in literature. Wolf himself stated in 1888, “Eventually, after a lot of groping around, the button came undone,” referring to the fact that it took a decade to reach the remarkable outburst of composition that resulted in the “Mörike Lieder.” The first Lied, “Suchens Vogel” (Bird Search), was composed in 1880 in the style of Wolf’s earlier songs, and the next one, “Mausfallensprüchlein” (Mouse Catching Rhyme), appeared two years later, composed in his well-known characteristic style. In 1884, Wolf set “Die Tochter der Heide” (The Daughter of the Heath), a poem from Mörike’s last creative phase, in Ballad form. One and one-half years later Wolf returned to Mörike’s poetry with “Der König bei der Krönung” (The King at the Coronation), and on 16 February 1888 he set the poem “Der Tambour” (The Drummer Boy), the first that would become part of his masterpiece collection of “Mörike Lieder.”

---

104 Sams, 62.


106 Sams, 2.

107 Baum, 648.
In his article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Günther Baum explains:

So lange also mußten Mörikes Gedichte in seinem Unterbewußtsein bei ständiger Beschäftigung mit ihnen wirken—sein überaus gründlicher Biograph Frank Walker meint, er sei 1886 in der ländlichen Stille von Schwager Strassers Wohnsitz wohl “zum tausendsten Male in die Lektüre von Mörikes Gedichten versunken.” Es mußte sich aber auch die Einzigartigkeit seines gerade zu diesem Dichter kongenialen Kompositionsstils so lange im Stillen entwickeln, daß nun nach den voraufgegangenen ersten Versuchen kein Tasten, kein unsicheres Suchen und allmähliches Finden der adäquaten Tonsprache mehr notwendig war.  

To his own amazement and with an unexpected inspired impulse, Wolf fervently composed forty-two Lieder between 22 February and 18 May 1888, sometimes completing two or three songs in a day. After moving out in May from his friend’s country house in Perchtoldsdorf, Wolf resumed his work and set nine more Mörike poems, mainly with religious or serious subject matter. This followed his setting of thirteen poems by Eichendorff in the previous two months. Wolf finished this frenzy of creativity with the song, “Auf eine Christblume II” (To a Christmas Rose), the fifty-third Lied of the “Mörike Lieder” on 27 October. For the publication of the songbook in 1889, Wolf divided it into ten volumes and changed the order of the songs from the chronological origin of the setting. Eric Sams states, “Wolf often sounds as if Mörike had been reborn as a musician,” and continues, “Thus the particulars of poetry are, in the 1888 Mörike songbook, memorably subsumed into the universals...”
of music . . . This songbook as a whole is unique for its absorption of the essence of one great poet’s work into music of comparable quality."^{110}

**Wolf’s Settings of the Religious-Themed Poetry in the Mörike Lieder**

**Wolf’s Motivation**

As the “Poet’s Composer,”^{111} Wolf’s setting of the “Geistliche Lieder” selected from Mörike’s poetry allows one to make assumptions concerning his particular relationship with his personal beliefs. For example, the song “Der Genesene an die Hoffnung” (To Hope, on recovering from illness), which seems to reflect Wolf’s personal hope, was published at the head of the Mörike Lieder songbook. Mosco Carner asserts that, “It was a symbolic act, indicating that, like the convalescent of the poem, he had through Mörike been cured of his doubts about himself as a serious composer, and that his hope of achieving great lasting things in his art had now become reality.”^{112}

One of Wolf’s acquaintances, Dr. Franz Zweybrück, related a scene in which Wolf was deeply moved at a performance of *Parsifal* in Bayreuth on 22 August 1888:


---

^{110} Sams, 62.

^{111} Youens, x.

^{112} Carner, 22.

^{113} Decsey, 20. The translated information of this incident is on page 209 from Walker’s *Hugo Wolf: A biography*. 'An acquaintance afterwards saw him sitting on a bench in the grounds of the theatre, quite lost to the world, supporting his head in his hands and sobbing as though he were heart-broken.'
According to Wolf’s letter to Eckstein on 8 October, this personal experience seemed to inspire his song settings thereafter, particularly of the religious-themed poems of his favorite poet. Wolf wrote, “I have in recent days once again industriously ‘Möriked’ [‘gemörikelt’], and what is more, nothing but poems that you especially adore: ‘An den Schlaf,’ ‘Neue Liebe’ (both on 4 October), ‘Zum neuen Jahre’ (5 October), ‘Schlafendes Jesuskind,’ ‘Wo find ich Trost?’ (both on 6 October). Just now I am working on ‘Karwoche,’ which will be magnificent beyond all bounds.” He continued:

All the songs are truly shatteringly composed. Often enough the tears rolled down my cheeks as I wrote. They surpass in depth of conception all the other settings of Mörike. God only grant that I succeed with the “Feuerreiter,” for only then will the fifty be complete.”

Instead of finishing with fifty songs, Wolf composed two more—he added “Feuerreiter,” and after a short pause finally completed the set with “Auf eine Christblume II” on 26 November.

Wolf’s Relationship to the Religious Poetry

Kurt Honolka classifies twelve of Wolf’s settings of Mörike’s poems as “Geistliche Lieder,” while Carner includes only ten in this category. Honolka includes two “geistlich getönten Lieder” (spiritually tinted songs), “Auf eine Christblume I and II” (Nos. 20 and 21), as an introduction for the following ten songs. Carner excludes those two and states:

---

114 Walker, 212.

To judge from their central positions in the volume (Nos. 22 to 31), Mörike’s religious verses must have had a special significance for Wolf. He was, as we said, not a believer but may have been attracted to some by their lambency and the beauty of their imagery; while to others, the theme of which is mortal sin and punishment, he may have been driven by his own feelings of guilt.\(^{116}\)

Wolf’s reorganization of the order of the songs for publication reflects his personal thought process by putting the hopeful poem (“Der Genesene an die Hoffnung”) as the first song of the volume. There are a number of hypotheses concerning Wolf’s reason for placing the “Geistliche Lieder” in the central position, as Nos. 20 through 31 of the fifty-three, but it might well be taken as a direct reflection of his sense of their personal and musical significance.

Based on Wolf’s ambiguous religious attitude, previously discussed in Chapter one, Honolka suggests the following motive for the setting of the religious verses:

Wolfs religiöse Bedürfnisse waren sicher geringer, von tiefer Anteilname am kirchlichen Leben ist nichts bekannt. Dennoch wählte er ganz bewußt so viele geistliche Gedichte aus Mörikes Lyrik aus und rückte sie in den innersten Bereich seiner Meisterlieder (so wie später im Spanischen Liederbuch). Wie ist das zu erklären?\(^{117}\)

(Wolf’s religious needs were certainly less; of his deep participation in church life nothing is known. Nevertheless, he deliberately chose so many spiritual poems from Mörike’s lyrics and placed them in the innermost part of his Masterlieder (as he later did in his Spanish Songbook). How is that to be explained?)

In a similar manner Youens wonders, “What did Wolf find composable in these poems, and can one speculate why? Is it a possibility that his own religious background and speculative spiritual yearnings influenced his compositional decisions for certain passages in the Mörike songs?”\(^{118}\)

Another example of Wolf’s choice of religious-based texts for his musical compositions is his “Sechs geistliche Lieder nach Gedichten von Eichendorff” (Six Spiritual Songs on Poems of

---

\(^{116}\) Carner, 25.

\(^{117}\) Honolka, 137.

\(^{118}\) Youens, 140.
Eichendorff) for unaccompanied mixed chorus. Following an agonizing separation from his first love, Vally Franck, Wolf composed these songs for unaccompanied mixed chorus in 1881.\textsuperscript{119} Walker explains:

Ignorance of the precise time of Wolf’s rejection by Vally Franck makes it impossible to decide definitely whether the creation of these remarkable works had any close connection with the emotional upheaval which the composer endured at about the same time. It seems at least possible, however, that they may have been the artistic product and sublimation of his sufferings in this crisis.\textsuperscript{120}

Walker also reasons that Wolf’s deep grief over the loss of his father in 1887 must have had an impact on his setting of Mörike’s religious-themed verses during the following year. In addition, Wolf composed Mörike’s “Geistliche Lieder” in October 1888 after his emotional experience at the performance of Wagner’s \textit{Parsifal} in Bayreuth on 22 August.\textsuperscript{121} All these circumstances are noteworthy of consideration as reasons for Wolf’s choice in the setting of religious verses.

\textbf{Significance of the “Geistliche Lieder” from the Mörike Volume}

Whereas Wolf’s religious attitude appeared ambiguous and he was mostly regarded by others as an unbeliever, the grouping of the “Geistliche Lieder” in the center of the Mörike volume remarkably represents his empathy with the feelings implicit in the religious poems. This empathy seems to reveal his personal spiritual inclination. In addition, his musical response to the “Geistliche Lieder” exhibits not only the growing maturity of his compositional process but

\textsuperscript{119} Walker, 113.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 209.
also demonstrates a crucial seeding phase in his personal perspective that later aided him in the musically and dramatically intense composition of the *Spanisches Liederbuch*.

The fact that Wolf placed a group of the “Geistliche Lieder” at the heart of the Mörike volume reflects his respect for the poet’s literary expression of religious subject matter. Indeed, it is highly notable that Wolf’s musical expression of religious texts continuously emerges throughout his career, from his early compositional period in 1881 with the “Sechs geistliche Lieder nach Gedichten von Eichendorff,” the “Geistliche Lieder” of the Mörike volume during his maturing phase; and culminating in the sacred songs of the *Spanisches Liederbuch*. For example, Wolf’s musical setting of the anguished appeal for divine grace and mercy in “Ergebung” (Submission), the fifth song of the sacred choral pieces by Eichendorff, foreshadows the significant expression of religious subject matter that appears in the songs “Seufzer” (Sighs) and “Wo find’ ich Trost?” (Where shall I find solace?) from the “Mörike Lieder,” and later with overpowering intensity of expression in “Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen” (Full of cares and weighed down I come), a masterpiece of the “Geistliche Lieder” from the *Spanisches Liederbuch*.122

**Wolf’s Musical Language and its Articulation in the Selected Lieder**

From the twelve “Geistliche Lieder” (Nos. 20 – 31) seven songs are selected to be discussed: “Seufzer” (No. 22), “Auf ein altes Bild” (No. 23), “In der Frühe” (No. 24), “Schlafendes Jesuskind” (No. 25), “Gebet” (No. 28), “Neue Liebe” (No. 30), and “Wo find’ ich Trost” (No. 31). These songs with religious-themed texts representatively illustrate Wolf’s

122 Walker, 234.
musical language and multifaceted artistry. The selected songs are generally through-composed. However, they are unified by rhythmic or melodic motives, or both, as well as by recurring figurations in the piano part. Despite such common features, each of these “Geistliche Lieder” exhibits Wolf’s artistic and insightful musical language in its individuality.

According to the compositional trend of the late nineteenth century, motifs were used in Lieder as a connection between poetic and musical meaning; these motifs “drew upon some specific poetic image and helped the development of musical form.” 123 In his book, The Songs of Hugo Wolf, Sams provides analytic suggestions to decipher Wolf’s musical choices as found in the selected Lieder. 124

**Seufzer (No. 22, Sighs) 12 April 1888**

Dein Liebesfeuer,  
Ach Herr! wie teuer  
Wollt' ich es hegen,  
Wollt' ich es pflegen!  
Hab's nicht geheget  
Und nicht gepfleget,  
bin tot im Herzen —  
O Höllenschmerzen!

Your love’s-fire,  
Oh Lord! how dearly  
I wanted to tend it and  
Wanted to cherish it!  
I have not tended it  
And I have not cherished it,  
I am dead in my heart —  
Oh pains of hell!

Mörike articulates keen regret in his own mood with a heartfelt sigh, while Wolf’s response begins more as a tormented groan through a chromatic voice exchange within a dominant-seventh sonority as an expression of regretful anguish. This short piece sounds remarkably like heavy, masochistic guilt through its intense dissonant harmonic and musical texture. According to Sams’ analysis, the idea of penance in the poem is solidified within the rigid constraints of Wolf’s musical framework, in order to express the central ideal of the poem:

---

123 Glauert, 51.
124 Sams, 7 – 22.
“I longed to...; I have failed to...”¹²⁵ The penance is performed in the voice, in a piano solo, and again together; and these three components are linked together in the frame of thirty-one measures as Sams observes, “This constructional equivalent for a poetic idea, here derived from the syntactical structure of the verses, is a striking anticipation of the style of the Spanish volume, particularly the sacred songs in a penitential vein, e.g. “Mühvoll komm ich und beladen.”¹²⁶

The prelude has poignant dissonances with stress on the second beat to express a regretful sigh with a pang in the heart. There follows a four-measure sequence of chromatically-rising octaves leading to the entrance of the voice, which laments over a dissonant accompaniment.

Figure 1. *Seufzer* mm. 1 – 9

¹²⁵ Sams, 99.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 100.
At “wollt’ ich es hegen, wollt’ ich es pflegen” in mm. 12 – 16, Sams notes the repetition of the opening chords of the piano prelude, which act as a “foretelling [of] the failure of faith.” In mm. 17 – 20 at the text, “Hab’s nicht geheget,” the piano repeats the chromatic ascending octaves, while the vocal line moves toward a climax of penance in mm. 21 – 22, “bin tot im Herzen,” with its ascending-descending motive to express agonized confession.

After the high point of guilt at “bin tot im Herzen,” the voice repeats the rhythmic motive with the crying of “O Höllenschmerzen!” In the final vocal phrase the piano part

---

127 Sams, 99.
underscores the text by reaching a higher pitch over the voice line at a louder dynamic level of *fortissimo*. The postlude continues to illustrate the pangs of hell by increased dynamic expressions of *fortissimo* and *sforzando* and moves to the closing with a *pianissimo* G minor chord.

![Musical notation](image)

**Figure 4. Seufzer mm. 23 – 31**

**Auf ein altes Bild (No. 23, Inspired by an Old Picture) 14 April 1888**

In grüner Landschaft Sommerflor,  
Bei kühlem Wasser, Schilf und Rohr,  
Schau, wie das Knäblein Sündelos  
Frei spielt auf der Jungfrau Schoss!  
Und dort im Walde wonnesam,  
Ach, grünet schon des Kreuzes Stamm!

In the green landscape of blossoming summer,  
By cool water, reeds, and rushes,  
Behold, how the little Child, born without sin,  
Plays freely on the Virgin’s lap!  
And there growing blissfully in the woods,  
Alas, already green, is the tree of the Cross!

While “Schlafendes Jesuskind” (The Child Jesus, Sleeping) specifies an identifiable painting, “Auf ein altes Bild” does not reference any particular artwork. Dietrich Fischer-
Dieskau suggests, “Es macht Halt vor einem alten Gemälde, das Maria mit dem spielenden Jesuskind auf den Knien zeigt.” (This piece creates the moment of standing in front of an old painting, which shows Mary with the Child Jesus playing on her knees.) Wolf depicts the pictorial serene mood in his refined musical language within a modal tonality and uses slow rhythms and melodies in stepwise contrary motion for the voice and piano. Sams suggests that this musical depiction evokes the timelessness of painting “a motionless summery haze within which the vision is concentrated from a whole landscape to one tree.” This statement references a quote by Wolf as reported by Carner:

Wolf declared that, after finishing the song, he was still in the grip of the enchantment of its mood and, evidently referring to its opening line, ‘In grüner Landschaft Sommerflor’ (‘in green, summerlike meadow’), said that there was still a green summery haze around him. The ancient (medieval?) painting seems to be suggested by the four-bar theme of the prelude, with its modal harmonies and organum-like progression in the treble. This theme occurs altogether six times and on its penultimate statement, at the words ‘des Kreuzes Stamm’ (‘the cross’s stem’), Wolf introduces a mild dissonance – a gentle hint at Christ’s later suffering.

Figure 5. Auf ein altes Bild mm. 1 – 6

---

128 Fischer-Dieskau, 423.
129 Sams, 101.
Regarding the contrary motion of the phrase Youens points out in the chapter, “Believers and doubters: case-studies in the geistliche Lieder” from her book:

One of the most striking aspects of “Auf ein altes Bild” is the fact that the top and bottom voices in the piano accompaniment are mirrors in contrary motion of one another for much of the song. The mirroring is blatant, accordion-like, throughout almost all of each two-bar phrase in the introduction and is even more noticeable when the vocal line doubles the bass line in mm. 5 – 6. Such contrary motion is absent from only a few places in the song, impelling one to wonder why Wolf chose to harp on this compositional device in this context. One reason could be that Wolf calls attention in this way to linear motion, to the contrapuntal relationship of different melodic lines, within a homorhythmic texture and hence, evokes olden music at a modern remove.\(^{131}\)

In his setting of this simple but profound poem Wolf’s music reflects his literary insight. For example, regarding the ending of each two- or four-bar phrase with a cadential progression such as in mm. 3 – 4 and mm. 7 – 8, Youens observes:

The fact that “Auf ein altes Bild” consists, in one summation, of a string of Picardy-third cadences in close proximity tells of endings, of enthronement in Bach’s cantatas and Passions. Mörike’s poem shudders to a halt at the thought of the Child’s future (= past) death on the Cross, but Wolf pushed the poet-painter’s prophecy even farther, to the enactment of that death and beyond, to the culmination of Christian myth in human salvation.\(^{132}\)

---

\(^{131}\) Youens, 162.

\(^{132}\) Ibid., 163.
In mm. 15 – 16 “im Walde wonnesam” Wolf’s imagination creates tonal symbolism with the use of large intervals in the vocal line, as Youens analyzes here, “We hear two successive, neighboring parallel leaps upward of a perfect fourth, the “perfection” of the interval perhaps meaning. . . . the sequential leaps a symbol for wonders both light and dark, for life and death.”

![Musical notation of “im Walde wonnesam”](image)

Figure 7. *Auf ein altes Bild* mm. 15 – 16

The central object of the painting appears in the last two words, “Kreuzes Stamm.” Here Wolf uses the active dissonance of a dynamically stressed semitonal clash to hint at Christ’s later suffering, using harmonic language to exemplify this pain in a *torment* motif as described by Sams.

---

133 Youes, 163.

134 Sams, 33. Torment motif: Literal pain, or spiritual anguish, are expressed by the active dissonance of semitonal clash. The dissonance occurs within a diminished or dominant-seventh chord and is closely resolved downward.
The piano postlude moves in a timeless, meditative, and tranquil atmosphere of eternal summer with the flow of the repeated figures. In m. 23 a sforzando diminished-seventh chord on the weakest beat of the measure breaks off the repeated figure and the dissonance resolves in a long pp F♯ Major chord.

**In der Frühe (No. 24, In the early hours) 5 May 1888**

Kein Schlaf noch kühlt das Auge mir,  
Dort geht schon der Tag herfür  
An meinem Kammerfenster.  
Es wühlet mein verstörter Sinn  
Noch zwischen Zweifeln her und hin  
Und schaffet Nachtgespenster.  
Ängste, quäle

No sleep yet cools my eyes,  
The day’s already dawning there  
At my chamber window.  
My troubled mind still races on,  
Here and there among my doubts,  
Creating the phantoms of the night.  
Frighten, torment
Dich nicht länger, meine Seele!  
Freu dich! Schon sind da und dorten  
Morgenglocken wach geworden.  

Yourself no longer, my soul!  
Be glad! Already here and there  
Morning bells have awakened.

In the Mörike volume this short but very intense song is placed as religious in its inspiration within the “Geistliche Lieder” group. Although there is nothing in the poem itself to indicate a specifically religious meaning, Wolf interpreted it in that sense.\textsuperscript{135} The first part of the song illustrates with somber tension the mental anguish and the suffering of insomnia and the second part, the picture of wakefulness accepted and finally welcomed through symbolic morning bells in certain hope. Carner compares this particular song with Wolf’s own suffering, “[without rest of sleep] which must have struck a familiar note in Wolf, who suffered from nerve-wracking sleeplessness himself.”\textsuperscript{136}

The first part of the song vividly creates an intermittently and painfully tense mind by means of a persistent throbbing rhythm in the left hand with the repeated \textit{ostinato} figures and the right hand written low in the bass clef.\textsuperscript{137} Then at “Ängste, quäle dich nicht länger” in m. 11 the tormented mood is transformed to one of relief, with lighter tonalities and harmonies which illustrate Wolf’s concept of increasing brightness through the tonality changing in ascending order.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{135} Carner, 26.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{137} Sams., 101 – 2.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 102.
The insistent varied repetition of a single motif in the piano accompaniment, as observed in mm. 1–2, unifies the song in a stunning continuity. In the second section from m. 11 at the word “Ängste” (Fig. 10) the alleviated intensity in the text is illustrated by shifting this motif to a higher register and to the major mode. In particular, the chain of mediant modulations in mm. 11–12, 14–15, 16–17, 18–22 (EM-GM-B♭M -DM), a motif used by Wolf to signify an increasing intensity of light, propels the song to its climax in m. 14 at the words “Freu’ dich!” and onward to the end of the song. Here the feeling of relief as symbolized by the ringing morning bells in mm. 19-22 at the phrase “wach geworden” (have awakened) is accompanied by the persistent bass rhythm \( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}} \frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}} \) in the worship motif of the piano part.

---


140 Sams, 30. This motif is called the Light I motif. It is an enlargement of the tones of the augmented fifth chord. Instead of the notes C, E, G♯ together, passages in the tonalities of C major, E major, G♯ (♭A) major are heard consecutively in ascending order which is typically associated with the idea of mounting excitement or aspiration in contexts of increasing intensity of light.

141 Sams, 18. Worship motif: A syncopated rhythm \( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}} \frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}} \) often appears, usually in open fifths in the left-hand piano part, in songs in which the words express the idea of worship, whether of God or of the loved one. These persistent figures somehow seem to convey the impression of submission or self-surrender; it is as if the tonic stress had taken refuge by hiding away within the bar-line.
Sams describes the voice singing with jubilant faith at this point in the song, “with sustained high notes welcoming the morning, as light comes welling into words and music, bringing the longed-for peace of mind at last.”\textsuperscript{142} Fischer-Dieskau summarizes:

Nach der Seelenpein und den quälenden Nachtgedanken, die die Stimme des sich schlaflos Wälzenden mit hartem Akzent einsetzen lässt, »Kein Schlaf noch küht das Auge mir«, wandelt sich der trübe Mollcharakter eines unregelmäßigen Herzschlags und bedrängender Zweifel zum Dur des zart synkopierten Glockenklangs, der sich in kleiner Terzerhöhung von E-Dur nach G-Dur und B-Dur bewegt, um bei D-Dur befreit zu halten. Die Glocken läuteten schon zu Anfang, aber versteckt und dumpf. Immer werden die Tonarten ohne Übergang wie Farbwerte nebeneinander gesetzt, bis das erlösende D-Dur erreicht ist.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{142} Sams, 102.

\textsuperscript{143} Fischer-Dieskau, 424.

((After the soul-suffering and harrowing thoughts of the night, as the voice of sleepless torment describes with a hard accent "No sleep yet cools my eyes," the gloomy minor mode of an irregular heartbeat and pressing doubt
Schlafendes Jesuskind (No. 25, The child Jesus, Sleeping) 6 October 1888

Sohn der Jungfrau, Himmelskind! Am Boden,  
Asleep on the ground, on the wood of suffering,
Auf dem Holz der Schmerzen eingeschlafen,  
which the pious painter, in meaningful play,
Das der fromme Meister, sinnvoll spielend,  
has laid beneath thy gentle dreams;
Deinen leichten Träumen unterlegte;  
O flower, the Father’s glory,
Blume du, noch in der Knospe dämmern  
though still hidden in the dark bud!
Eingehüllt, die Herrlichkeit des Vaters!  
Oh, if one could see what images,
O wer sehen könnte, welche Bilder  
behind this brow and these dark
Hinter dieser Stirne, diesen schwarzen  
lashes, are reflected in gentle succession!
Wimpern sich in sanftem Wechsel malen!

This poem is based on a painting by Italian painter Francesco Albani (1578–1660).\textsuperscript{144} In a letter to his friend Wilhelm Hartlaub, Mörike describes the picture he had seen: “The child Jesus in an agreeably shady spot in the open air asleep on a small and, as it were, decorative cross.”\textsuperscript{145} For understanding of the “Holz der Schmerzen” (wood of suffering), a similar descriptive passage can be found in Goethe’s\textit{ Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre} (Years of Travel), Chapter II:

\small

\textbf{... a wondrously beautiful picture. We see a wide variety of timberwork, which is about to be assembled, and by chance two of the pieces form a cross. The child has fallen asleep on the cross. The mother sits nearby and looks at him lovingly, the foster-father stops work so not to disturb his sleep.}\textsuperscript{146}

The clear tonality, the meditative mood and hymn-like prelude of the piano, place this as one of Wolf’s representative devotional songs.

\textsuperscript{144} Honolka, 104.
\textsuperscript{145} Sams, 103–4.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 103.
The same poignant harmony found in the torment motif\textsuperscript{147} at the final word “Stamm” in Auf ein altes Bild also appears in m. 8 at the word “Eingeschlafen” (asleep); this is possibly an intended reference to the cross, as Sams suggests.\textsuperscript{148}

Figure 12. Schlafendes Jesuskind m. 8.

The culmination of the song begins with the text “Blume du” (you flower) in m. 14, continued from the piano’s interlude with the composer’s direction of “sehr ausdrucksvoll” (very expressive). Dynamic stress in m. 16 on the word “Herrlichkeit” (Glory) elevates the emotional level and leads to “O wer sehen könnte” in m.18, notated “sehr innig” (very fervently).

Figure 13. Schlafendes Jesuskind mm. 15 – 18.

\textsuperscript{147} Sams, 33.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 104.
The rising semitones that characterize hope emerge in the piano at mm. 19 – 20 in a reverential manner that appears in other songs with a similar character such as “Auf eine Christblume I” (To a Christmas rose I).

![Figure 14. Schlafendes Jesuskind mm. 19 – 20](image)

At mm. 21 – 22, the meaningful use of dynamic levels from pp to ppp creates an inwardly contemplative mood.

![Figure 15. Schlafendes Jesuskind mm. 21 – 22](image)

Wolf repeats the chorale prelude, followed by the opening words and accompaniment, and concludes with the repetition of the first verse notated “wie in tiefes Sinnen verloren” (as if
lost in deep contemplation) at a dynamic level of *pppp*. The ending of the song is described by Walker as follows:

Particularly beautiful is the effect of the postlude, in which Wolf, instead of leaving the summing-up wholly to the piano, instructs the singer to repeat the first line of the poem, to the original melodic phrase, very softly, ‘as though lost in deep thought.’

![Figure 16. Schlafendes Jesuskind mm. 27 – 30](image)

**Gebet (No. 28, Prayer) 13 March 1888**

Herr! Schicke was du willst, Lord! Send what Thou wilt,
Ein Liebes oder Leides; Delight or pain;
Ich bin vergnügt, daß beides I am content that both
Aus deinen Händen quillt. flow from Thy hands.

Wollest mit Freuden Do not, I beseech Thee,
Und wollest mit Leiden Overwhelm me
Mich nicht überschütten! With joy or suffering!
Doch in der Mitten For midway between
Liegt holdes Bescheiden. Lies blessed moderation.

Of all Mörike’s poems, “Gebet” was one of the most popular with nineteenth-century composers before Wolf. Although at that time 132 settings of “Gebet” existed, they were mostly by composers now long-forgotten. Wolf’s setting is still one of the most frequently-performed songs from his Mörike volume.

---

149 Walker, 233.

150 Youens, 152.
In the poem, there are discrepancies within the religious point of view because of two different sources of the poem. From Youens’ research we learn that this poem’s two stanzas (lines 1–4, “Herr! . . . Händen quilt” and 5–9, “Wollest mit Freuden . . . Liegt holdes Bescheiden”) are derived from two different origins.\(^{152}\) The ideas in the first stanza of the poem might be from a letter from Flad, Mörike’s spiritual advisor. Many of Flad’s words and phrases in his letter seem premonitory of “Gebet,” from the verb “vergnügt sein” to the polarities at the end, reminiscent of Mörike’s “Liebes oder Leides.”\(^{153}\)

The second stanza comes from the novel, *Maler Nolten*, uttered by Nolten’s love Agnes shortly before her suicide, “Who is mad? No one is mad. Providence is merciful. That is what I said in my morning prayer today; ‘Do not overwhelm me with joys and with sorrow! In the middle lies gentle moderation.’”\(^{154}\) Eleven years after the publication of the novel, 21 April 1843, Mörike separated this one stanza from its prose and copied it out with the new title “In Demuth” (In Humility). Three years later he added an equally small prayer to precede it, the two stanzas numbered as “Gebet 1, and 2.”\(^{155}\)

The protagonist tries to pray The Lord’s Prayer at the beginning, “Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” however, it arouses doubt. Here, Youens curiously asks whether Wolf knew *Maler Nolten* and therefore knew lines 5–9 in another context.\(^{156}\) The imperative form of

---

\(^{151}\) Ibid.

\(^{152}\) Youens, 153–5.

\(^{153}\) Ibid., 153–4. The letter from Mörike’s friend Rudolf Flad was written on 31 July 1827.

\(^{154}\) Ibid., 154.

\(^{155}\) Ibid. 155.

\(^{156}\) Ibid.
“Wollest” (will) beginning in the second stanza, the divine and human will at cross-purposes, is placed and repeated in the next line, culminating in the plea “Mich nicht überschütten”157 (not to overwhelm me). Remarkably Wolf stresses the word “mich” (me) by marking it sforzando. Here he seems to have put emphasis on human will confronting God’s will.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 17. *Gebet* mm. 20 – 21

The piano part at “überschütten” (overwhelmed) transforms the free bass line from the chorale pattern, joined by the right-hand in the next measure “Doch in der Mitten,” which develops toward the violin-like melodic line marked “zart und ausdrucksvoll” (delicately and expressively). The phrase “in der Mitten” with the word “Mitten” set each time as an appoggiatura “sighing” figure, a traditional musical motive, represents that the “middle” is an object of longing.158

---

157 Youens, 155.

158 Ibid., 160.
About Wolf’s repetition of “Doch in der Mitten,” Sams states:

It is for this idea of the balanced mid-point that Wolf adds the repetition of ‘Doch in der Mitten.’ Perhaps this slightly disturbs the balance of the poem, the famous and untranslatable final phrase of which, ‘holdes Bescheiden,’ connotes clemency in the assignment of our joys and sorrows as well as equality in their distribution.\(^{159}\)

The violin-like cantilena of the piano melody in the postlude demonstrates Wolf’s intention. The Chopin-like right-hand ascends into the treble range in mm. 27 – 29 and is followed in the postlude by a descent back to earth over a long-drawn-out *ppp* plagal cadence.

\[\text{Figure 19. Gebet mm. 26 – 34}\]

**Neue Liebe (No. 30, New love) 4 October 1888**

Kann auch ein Mensch des andern auf der Erde Can one ever belong to anyone here on earth

\(^{159}\) Sams, 107.
ganz, wie er möchte, sein? 
—In langer Nacht bedacht ich mir’s 
Und mußte sagen, nein!

Wholly, as one would wish to be?
—Long I pondered this night
And had to say no!

So kann ich niemands heißen auf der Erde,
Und niemand wäre mein? 
—Aus Finsternissen hell 
In mir aufzückt ein Freudenschein:

So can I belong to no one here on earth,
And can no one be mine?
— Out of the darkness
A flame of joy flashes within me:

Sollt ich mit Gott nicht können sein, 
So wie ich möchte, mein und dein?
Was hielte mich, daß ich’s nicht heute werde?

Could I not be with God,
Just as I would like to, mine and Thine?
What could keep me from becoming so, today?

Ein süßes Schrecken geht durch mein Gebein! 
Mich wundert, daß es mir ein Wunder wollte sein 
Gott selbst zu eigen haben auf der Erde!

A sweet tremor pervades my very frame!
I marvel that it should have ever seemed a marvel
To have God for one’s own on earth!

This piece, based on Mörike’s poem of fiery revelation and devotion, illustrates the perfect union between music and poetry which characterizes Wolf’s insightful musical articulation at its highest and most representative.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps this poem might be a reflection of Wolf’s desperation in his mania or venereal disease, or of his long-term struggle as a less-recognized composer with sporadic paralysis of his creativity. Here Wolf seems to seek healing and consolation through union with God rather than through human relationships, because of his doubt of worldly love, similar to Mörike’s perspective throughout his life.

The poem’s question-and-answer pattern matches the loud-soft dynamics in mm. 3 – 6: “Kann auch ein Mensch des andern auf der Erde ganz, wie er möchte, sein?” The recitative follows with the pessimistic answer: “in langer Nacht bedacht’ ich mir’s und musste sagen: nein!” That is the central issue of this poem, and the poem, as well as its musical setting, ends with the related triumphant acknowledgement in mm. 25 – 30: “Ein süßes Schrecken geht durch

¹⁶⁰ Sams, 109.
mein Gebein! Mich wundert, dass es mir ein Wunder wollte sein, Gott selbst zu eigen haben auf

der Erde!”

After the first verse, at “so kann ich niemands heissen,” Sams describes the vocal line
becoming a “quiet, separate melody developed from the pessimistic inflections of the
pride.” At “Aus Finsternissen,” (out of the darkness) in mm. 17 – 18, voice and piano both
rise toward “Freudenschein” (flame of joy) with a dramatic tremolo at the first triumphant
moment.

Figure 20. Neue Liebe mm. 18 – 19

The next verse, “Sollt’ ich mit Gott nicht können sein, so wie ich möchte, Mein und
Dein?” continues toward a questioning II motif of a dominant seventh at “Dein?” that implies
an enhanced sense of questioning, sharpened to the point of pleading or yearning, as Sams

161 Ibid..

162 Sams, 32. Questioning II motif: the textual question-mark invests with implied dominant harmony. An
added seventh serves to increase the intensity of interrogation, by seeming to insist on the need for an answering and
resolving tonic chord. The dominant seventh implies an enhanced sense of questioning, sharpened to the point of
pleading or yearning. The further nuances of meaning are achieved by the relation of those dominant sevenths to the
home tonic key of the song.
suggests. The same motif appears for the persistent inflexions of “sein?” and “mein?” in m. 6 and m. 16 respectively.

Sams says of the last verse, “the great chords and rolling tremolandi seem more like a passionate Wagnerian love-duet than a mystic revelation of union with God. In its own terms however the music remains admirably impressive.”163 The song concludes with a sweeping crescendo from the ppp of “Ein süßes Schrecken” to the fff of “Gott selbst” that is made to relive a moment of great joy, with the long final vocal phrase falling an octave and a half in pitch. The descending melody corresponds with a wide dynamic range until it merges into the solemn, majestic postlude in symphonic texture in the tempo of “feierlich, gemessen” (solemnly, measured).

163 Sams, 110.
Eine Liebe kenn ich, die ist treu,  
War getreu, solang ich sie gefunden,  
Hat mit tiefem Seufzen immer neu,  
Stets versöhnlich, sich mit mir verbunden.  

Welcher einst mit himmlischem Gedulden  
Bitter bittern Todestropfen trank,  
Hing am Kreuz und büßte mein Verschulden,  
Bis er in ein Meer von Gnade sank.  

Und was ist’s nun, daß ich traurig bin,  
Daß ich angstvoll mich am Boden winde?  
Frage: »Hüter, ist die Nacht bald hin?«  
Und: »Was rettet mich von Tod und Sünde?«  

Arges Herze! Ja gesteh es nur,  
Du hast wieder böse Lust empfunden;  
Frommer Liebe, frommer Treue Spur,  
Ach, das ist auf lange nun vergangen.  

Ja, das ist’s auch, daß ich traurig bin,  
Daß ich angstvoll mich am Boden winde!  
Hüter, Hüter, ist die Nacht bald hin?  
Und was rettet mich von Tod und Sünde?  

I know a love that is true,  
And has been since I first found it,  
It has with deep sighs ever new,  
Always forgivingly, bound itself to me.  

He it was who once, with heavenly forbearance,  
Drank death’s bitter, bitter drops,  
Hung on the cross and atoned for my sins,  
Until they sank in a sea of mercy.  

And why is it now that I am sad,  
That I writhe in terror on the ground?  
That I ask: ‘Watchman, is the night soon gone?‘  
And: ‘What shall save me from death and sin?’  

Evil heart! Yes, confess it,  
Once more you have felt wicked desires;  
All trace of pious love, of pious faith,  
Has vanished, alas, long ago.  

Yes, that is why I am sad,  
why I writhe on the ground!  
Watchman, watchman, is the night soon gone?  
And what shall save me from death and sin?
This dramatic and powerful song is unified by recurring motifs in a Wagnerian-influenced style. The basic framework of the song is a modified strophic form in which the first strophe (mm.1-20) serves an introductory function. After a short prelude, the story of the Passion is told. Betty Campbell notes that the remembrance of Christ’s suffering, death, atonement of man’s sins, and love, are expressed in the text until “ein Meer von Gnade sank” in the first strophe in m. 20.164 This first strophe divides into two halves. The first half poignantly expresses the great sorrow that exists even in the truth of atonement. Harmonic passages which heighten stress and tension and project the mood of sorrow are found especially at “Seufzen” (sigh) and “versöhnlich” (forgivingly) in mm. 9–11.

![Figure 23. Wo find' ich Trost? mm. 9 – 11](image)

The drama is more apparent in the second half, beginning at m. 13 with the text, “Welcher einst mit himmlischem Gedulden . . .” and continuing until the poem speaks of the “remembrance of the bitter cup of death, the Cross, and the atoning mercy” at m. 20.165 Sams

---


165 Campbell, 62.
defines the concept of the *unease motif*\(^{166}\) in the piano part, m. 12, in which a sharply rising semitone appears and becomes significant in conveying an entirely different idea.\(^{167}\) Sams observes that “The repeated sustained octaves and rising phrases from bar 12 onwards recall the music of Tannhäuser as unworthy pilgrim in Act III scene 3; the rising phrases also have something of the repentant Parsifal in Act II.”\(^{168}\) The reiterated motifs of the rising octaves in the piano illustrate the sense of guilt and condemnation of the judged soul and emerge in the second part of strophes 1 and 2 at mm.12-19 and mm. 34-41 respectively.

---

Figure 24. *Wo fin’d ich Trost?* mm. 10 – 15

\(^{166}\) Sams, 20.

Unrest, unease motif: in other contexts, the inclusion of a sharply rising semitone conveys an entirely different idea.

\(^{167}\) Ibid..

\(^{168}\) Ibid., 111.
At m. 17, “hing am Kreuz,” the mystery motif\textsuperscript{169} appears in both voice and piano along with a repeated unease motif in the left hand of the piano part. Here the voice begins with an eighth-note rest that leads toward a more intense pulse. The left hand part is emphasized with the recurring rising-octave motif that creates a climax over the span of the three final measures of the first strophe.

Figure 25. \textit{Wo find’ ich Trost?} mm. 16 – 18.

The second strophe of the song (mm. 21 – 42) begins with a short piano interlude that repeats the introduction to the first strophe, followed by the text, “Und was ist’s nun, dass ich traurig bin.” From such depth of recognition of Christ’s Passion for man’s sins the text leads into pleading for that ever-faithful love, and the piano recalls the opening words “Eine Liebe . . .” (A love…) until the voice reaches its intense, doubtful questioning and writhing on the ground at “am Boden winde” (writhe on the ground) in m. 25.\textsuperscript{170} The piano interlude increases in activity

\textsuperscript{169} Sams, 28. Mystery motif: a chordal progression, often dominant sevenths, in slow time, involving a chromatic shift in which two unrelated tonalities are juxtaposed. The corresponding voice part often moves up and down by octaves or fifths. There are also many instances of a change of keyboard register to point out the contrast between the two tonalities.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 111.
through the use of octaves and syncopation, and progresses through a crescendo to a ff dynamic level. A dramatic outburst, in declamatory idiom, occurs at m. 27 with the text “Frage: Hüter, ist die Nacht bald hin?” Here Wolf uses the upper vocal register with octave leaps at “rettet mich” (save me) and “Sünde” (sins) to demonstrate the culminating moment of anxiety. In mm. 27–34 the piano part contains a repeated-note motif that imitates a trumpet call, first in the upper register and then moving downwards through two octaves. This trumpet motif leads into the recurring rising-octave motif at m. 34 and the vocal line begins with remorse and deep penitence at the words “Arges Herze” (evil heart) in m. 35. It is interesting to note that Wolf sets the words “Herze” (Heart), “Liebe” (Love), and “Treue” (Faith) in mm. 35–40 with downward intervals in the melodic line, perhaps as a lament for the protagonist’s failure of virtue. In contrast, Wolf uses an ascending interval at m. 38 for the words “Lust empfangen” (felt wicked desires), symbolizing his remorseful self-condemnation by the use of ascending motion.
The third strophe (mm. 43 – 60) begins with the same short piano interlude that began the second strophe and that was taken from the introduction to the song. In all three strophes this accompaniment figure continues during the first two measures of text, unifying the song. The text in mm. 45 – 47 recalls the text in mm. 23 – 25, with a slight variation at the beginning: “Und was ist’s nun, dass ich traurig bin” in the second strophe and “Ja, das ist’s auch, dass ich traurig bin” in the third strophe. Both lines are set to almost identical melodies, however, followed by nearly identical text and settings in mm. 27 – 30 and 49 – 52. Here the sinner repeats his dramatic plea for redemption with the question, “What shall deliver me from death and sin?” The piano responds to this moment of drama with full chords and trumpet calls in tonal imitation. After these trumpet calls, poignant self-condemnation and guilt appear again, portrayed by a
gradual descent of both voice and piano. The doubtful, questioning postlude dies away, returns to a grinding dissonance, and fades from \textit{ff} to \textit{ppp}, resulting in a DM chord which sounds unconvincing by leaving open the question of poetic persona's redemption.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 27. \textit{Wo find’ ich Trost?} mm. 48 – 60

In another description of the dramatic, forceful ending of the song Walker states:

Extraordinary is the effect of the widely spaced fortissimo chords that accompany the great cry: ‘Watchman, Watchman, is the night nearly over? What shall save me from death and sin?’ In the orchestral version of the song this passage is given to the brass instruments. Possibly the mind of the composer reverted to the song of the watchman on the Wartburg, with its brazen chorus, or a suggestion of the Day of Judgment may even have been intended. The effect is sufficiently awe-inspiring.\footnote{Walker, 234}

Furthermore, Fischer-Dieskau suggests interpreting the song as Wolf’s personal psychological reflection as follows:

(The expression of painful suffering due to the knowledge of sin that is found in WO FIND ICH TROST we may attribute to Wolf’s first consciousness of his disease. At the sounding of the "Dies irae” fanfare, twice rings out the question, "What saves me from death and sins?" Full of doubtful remorse and fear of damnation, they are heard ever louder until the SPANISH SONGBOOK. . . . Although Wolf did not compose any liturgical work, these songs [Geistliche Lieder] legitimize him as a religious musician.)

172 Fischer-Dieskau, 427.
Geibel and Heyse’s *Spanisches Liederbuch* Anthology

Youens introduces the *Spanisches Liederbuch* anthology of poetry as follows: “One of the most popular poetic sources for song composition in the second half of the century was the *Spanisches Liederbuch* of 1852, translations of Spanish poetry by the poets Emanuel Geibel and Paul Heyse.”¹⁷³ This anthology of the collaborative efforts of these two translators contains translations of various sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish and Portuguese poems. Most of these poems are of unknown origin, although some are by well-known Spanish authors including Cervantes, Camoens, and Lope de Vega, as well as some original poems by Geibel and Heyse under the pseudonyms Don Manuel de Rio and Don Luis el Chico respectively.”¹⁷⁴

Sams describes the trends of the time as follows:

The Romantic movement in Germany was insatiably avid for poetry of all kinds, from all lands…. As the German painters had craved the clear air and warm light of Italy, so German writers and musicians found their own native art-forms revivified and irradiated by Southern grace and lightness of rhyme and metre, melody and cadence. Further, the ideas of Spanish local colour and costume, pride and passion, guitar and castanets made a particular appeal to the lighter lyric poets such as Emanuel Geibel (1815 – 84) and through them to great song-writers such as Schumann,… among the very first to put Spain on the map of the Lied.¹⁷⁵

As one of the first who translated Spanish lyrics, Emanuel Geibel (1815 – 84), who had the reputation as a poet of patriotic and folkloric poetry, published his *Volkslieder und Romanzen der Spanier im Vermaß des Originals verdeutscht* (Spanish folk songs and romances translated


¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 205 – 207.

¹⁷⁵ Sams, 248.
into German in the original poetic meter) in 1843, from sources including George Borrow’s handbook on Spanish gypsy life and art, *The Zincali* (1841). After Geibel’s first volume appeared in 1840 with acclaim, he concentrated on a series of translations of Spanish lyrics and ballad poetry. There are 3679 musical settings of Geibel’s poems— a thousand more than those by Goethe. Concerning Geibel’s reputation, Fischer-Dieskau states that Geibel “galt als das Haupt der konservativen Münchner Schule um König Maximilian II.”

Paul Heyse (1830 – 1914), who was fifteen years younger than Geibel, acquired his interest in Spanish poetry at a meeting with Geibel in the late 1840s. This interest continued to develop during his study of Romance languages and literature and on into the 1860s. He was a prolific writer of lyric poems and short stories and also a compelling translator, whose later versions of Italian lyrics were to inspire Wolf in his *Italienisches Liederbuch*. After extensive travels through Italy, Heyse developed an intense enthusiasm for the Italian culture. He was the first German man to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1910.

According to C. T. Gaedertz, the idea of a collaboration between these two poets seems to have been conceived in the late 1840s when Geibel met Heyse in Berlin.

---

176 Sams, 248.
178 Ibid., 164.
179 Fischer-Dieskau, 484. (He was considered the leader of the conservative Munich school of King Maximilian II.)
180 Sleeman and Davies, 164.
181 Sams, 249.
183 Sleeman and Davies, 166.
1852 there was much correspondence between the two poets in which many details of the final stages of the *Spanisches Liederbuch* were discussed.\(^{184}\) The collaboration contains 112 poems including some of Geibel’s revised 1843 translations and some additional new ones. Based on a recent study by Margaret G. Sleeman and Gareth A. Davies, Youens explains, “The two men were not field ethnographers, and they relied on printed sources from England, Austria, Germany, France, and Spain— in particular, Nicolas Böhl von Faber’s *Floresta de rimas antiguas castellanas*, a three-volume set published in 1821 – 25.”\(^{185}\) With the advantage of their professional expertise and poetic craft, Geibel and Heyse undertook to translate the original poems into their own creative language, as Fischer-Dieskau states: “Nicht alle Gedichte sind im engeren Sinne “Übersetzungen,” wie es allgemein heißt. Vielmehr enthält der Band auch freie Nachdichtungen beider Übersetzer, drei Gedichte sind sogar ohne spanische Vorlage entstanden.”\(^{186}\)

Heyse suggested the original title of the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, and Geibel advised publishing the book nearer to Christmas because it was intended not for Fachleute (professionals) but for the general public, specifically for a female public that was expected to purchase it as a Christmas gift.\(^{187}\) Instead of being published during the Christmas season in 1851, however, the book appeared the following spring.\(^{188}\)

\(^{184}\) Sleeman and Davies, 167.


\(^{186}\) Fischer-Dieskau, 485.

(Not all of the poems are exactly "translations" in the usual sense of the word. Rather the book also includes free reformulation by both translators; three of the poems were created without Spanish originals.)

\(^{187}\) Ibid.

Contents of the Anthology

The anthology is divided between sacred and profane poetry: thirteen sacred (*Geistliche*) poems for the initial section and ninety-nine secular (*Weltliche*) poems which are grouped thematically, followed by fifty-five seguidillas (a popular poetic form) and thirty gypsy songs. 189 All of the poems share as a common theme the expression of love, either divine or human. The poems come from a wide variety of sources, including an anthology by the fourteenth-century poet Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita, and the previously-mentioned works of Lope de Vega and Camoens, 190 as well as those poems by Geibel and Heyse under the pseudonyms Don Manuel del Rio and Don Luis el Chico. 191

Referring to the question of the sources, authorship and correct text of the original Spanish poems, Sams explains that they “were perhaps designedly, left rather obscure.” 192 Sleeman and Davies, who have extensively researched the sources of the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, also point out:

> If the translators’ intention was in part to give their readers a better knowledge of Spanish poetry, their laconic bibliographical references made it difficult for even the most ardent reader to search out the original Spanish texts. Thus, typically, his attention is drawn to the fact that the original poem was ‘Quiero seguir. Erzpriester von Hita,’ not the most informative of indications. Doubtless this vagueness largely explains why music critics and the like have drawn attention to the fact that the Liederbuch contained translations of poems by well-known Spanish poets, yet never divulged what the original pieces were, nor where they were to be found. 193

---


190 Walker, 254.


192 Sams, 249.

193 Sleeman and Davies, 169.
Besides, Sleeman and Davies add, “The translators here and there added their own original 'translations' in order to give weight, or direction, to the anthology at that point.”\(^{194}\) About the collaboration for the anthology they observe:

> It is interesting that during the preparation of this dainty volume Geibel and Heyse should have maintained close contact with academic Hispanists in Germany, thus forming a link between the erudite and more popular interests in Spain…. Strangely enough, we do not have any record of formal reviews of the *Spanisches Liederbuch* which Tiemann would later call the ‘crowning achievement of the tradition of Spanish translation at that time,’ but it is evident that among the smaller circle of German Hispanists their work was appreciated by those who were most fit to judge.\(^{195}\)

Furthermore, both scholars conclude:

> During his lifetime Geibel was widely esteemed for his own poetry, but his *Volkslieder*, although well received by the initiated, were not so well known generally. The same can be said of the later *Spanisches Liederbuch* collaboration with Heyse. The years seem to have reversed this situation completely. The original poems now appear rather insipid and lacking in real character, and the best of the translations emerge as the truly creative contribution….From a different vantage point we can add that the vaunted fidelity to the Spanish would probably have been more apparent to a contemporary audience. To us, it is as much what the poets made of their models as what they preserved which commends their best work to us, and gives us some of the most striking translations from Spanish in the German language.\(^{196}\)

### The Formation of Wolf’s Spanish Volume

#### Wolf’s Motivation

Walker describes Wolf’s ardent interest in Spanish things and its effect on the writing of his Spanish volume:

> According to Marie Lang, Wolf was wholly occupied with the possibilities of making an opera libretto out of this novel [Alarcon’s *Three-cornered Hat*] at the time when he was

\(^{194}\) Sleeman and Davies, 175 – 76.

\(^{195}\) Ibid., 168.

\(^{196}\) Ibid., 216.
introduced to Geibel and Heyse’s Spanish Song Book. He had been diligently gathering knowledge of the Spanish people and their music but in the end had not been able to reduce the story itself to a form suitable for operatic treatment. All his accumulated enthusiasm for the subject was poured out in the music of the Spanish Song Book.\textsuperscript{197}

In her recent article, “Of Spain and Sin: A Glance at Wolf’s Spanisches Liederbuch,” Youens clarifies the current vogue of the “Cosas de España” (Things of Spain) as “a leitmotif of German Romanticism, evident in numerous dramas, novels, poems, operas, paintings, and songs,”\textsuperscript{198} and continues, “Spain’s successful defense of its country from Moors, Jews, and Protestants was long over by the time the nineteenth century made Spain an exotic realm of gypsies, guerillas, martyrs and monks.\textsuperscript{199} In a letter to Grohe on 23 July 1890, Wolf speaks of his interest in this “Cosas de España” and of his long-term desire to compose an opera:

\begin{quote}
…. Shall we then in our time never again be able to laugh heartily and be merry,….Let him [Wagner] redeem the world who feels in himself the redeemer’s calling; that is little to me…. I should much like to find…. in happy and original company, with strumming of guitars, sighs of love, moonlight nights, champagne carousals, etc. – in short in a comic opera….\textsuperscript{200}
\end{quote}

In addition, Wolf studied the works of Robert Schumann in depth, therefore he must have been familiar with those works of a Spanish idiom, such as Spanisches Liederspiel, Op. 74, and Spanische Liebeslieder, Op. 138, which predisposed him to explore and exploit such sources on his own account.\textsuperscript{201} Both Wolf’s ardent interest in Spanish things and the general popularity of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[197] Walker, 262.
\item[199] Ibid., 5.
\item[200] Walker, 268.
\item[201] Sams, 248.
\end{footnotes}
the “Cosas de España” are reflected in his works— in his Spanisches Liederbuch, his only opera, Der Corregidor, and his unfinished second opera, Manuel Venegas.

Wolf’s setting of the Spanish Anthology

Throughout the nineteenth century it was considered that “song composers were somehow second-class citizens until they could successfully apply their word-tone craftsmanship to the larger arena of opera.” In Wolf’s case, the setting of this Spanish anthology was actually meant to be a transitional phase from song composition to opera composition. Youens clarifies:

Rather, Wolf took pride in finding the musical gestures appropriate to a variety of poetic personas and sought the poetry appropriate to his gifts. “Put me down as an objective lyricist who can pipe in all keys, who knows how to come to terms with the departed glutton’s tune every bit as well as with the rainbow’s or the nightingale’s tune,” he told Engelbert Humperdinck in a letter of 12 March 1891, eleven months after completing the Spanisches Liederbuch. One notes the quotation from David’s catalog of modes in act 1 of Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg: Wolf the mastersinger of song claims status with Wagner. Indeed, he considered his Spanish songbook as the prelude to opera. Indeed, Wolf’s Spanish volume reflected his intent for these songs to be a preparatory stage for operatic

---

202 Youens, Hugo Wolf: The Vocal Music, 259.


205 Wolf, Briefe an Oskar Grohe, 34.

(Yesterday I played some of the Spanish songs for some art enthusiasts. What was the outcome of this endeavor? The opera. People want to see more operatic scenes in my lyrical productions and they all shout: too bad for the piece. That would have been something in an opera.)
composition. The fact that he adapted some of them in his two operatic works – *Der Corregidor* and *Manuel Venegas* – whose texts were both based on Spanish sources, reinforces the truth of this primary idea.

From the enthusiasm based on his growing reputation and compositional productivity, Wolf expressed his eager hope for the year 1889 in a letter written to his mother on 30 December 1888, “.... und ich habe alle Ursache, das Jahr 1889 ein glückverheissendes zu nennen.”

Full of hopeful anticipation, Wolf was continuously in a highly-inspired momentum as he began to work on his third large collection of songs, the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, within one week after completing the fifty-one “Goethe Lieder” volume on 21 October 1889. Dolf Lindner describes the unique impulse of Wolf’s inspiration, “Doch Wolf wußte genau, wann es für ihn Zeit wurde – neue Einfälle kündigten sich an. Er fuhr unverzüglich nach Wien und von hier gleich weiter in das stille Haus in Perchtoldsdorf,” as Walker clarifies, “a certain indication to all who knew him that the fever of creation had seized him again.” In a state of burning inspiration akin to that of his writing of the *Mörike* and *Goethe* volumes, Wolf composed forty-four songs, including ten sacred and thirty-four secular, over a period of six months between October 1889 and April 1890. In fact, Lindner states that for several days during this period, Wolf

---

206 Wolf, Hugo Wolf: Eine Persönlichkeit in Briefen, 81.  
(... and I have great reason to call the year 1889 a promising one.)

207 Linder, 67.  
(Wolf knew exactly when the time was right for him – new ideas occurred to him. He immediately traveled to Vienna and from there promptly continued further to the quiet house in Perchtoldsdorf.)

208 Walker, 222.

209 Hilmar, 416 – 17.
miraculously achieved a *Doppelschöpfungen an einem Tag*\(^{210}\) (double creation – two songs on one day).

In a letter to his friend and fellow composer Eckstein on 5 November 1889, written on the day following his composition of “Nun wandre, Maria,” Wolf wrote, “If you wish to experience his event [the flight into Egypt], then you must hear my music,” and on 23 March 1890 to his brother-in-law Josef Strasser, “These are masterworks.”\(^{211}\) In the particular letter to Grohe that was mentioned in Chapter One, Wolf vividly describes his enthusiastic creative impulse as well as his highly confident mood with the Spanish volume, “Sie werden in diesen Gesängen mich von einer ganz neuen Feder kennenlernen; dürfte auch das bester sein, was bis jetzt aus meiner Feder geflossen.”\(^{212}\)

In addition, there are some notable letters to Melanie Köchert which portray a similar excitement to that which he felt while composing his “Mörike Lieder.” On 26 November 1889 he wrote, “[1] Am in good spirit,” on 28 February 1890, “…. please bring with you *everything* “Spanish” deposited in the “archive,” and continued on 31 March, “Have just composed the crown jewel of all the Spanish. [I] Am in a fantastically good mood.”\(^{213}\) Furthermore he described his joy and strong confidence in a letter on 13 May 1890, “I was tremendously happy

\(^{210}\) Lindner, 67.

\(^{211}\) Walker, 256.

\(^{212}\) Dorschel, 82.

(You will get to know an entirely new side of me in these songs; it should be the best so far that has flowed from my pen.)

yesterday. I succeeded in writing another new song, but good heavens, what [a piece]…. By this
time, I’m starting to think I can do just about anything.”\footnote{14}

In her article “Of Spain and Sin: A Glance at Wolf’s Spanisches Liederbuch,” Youens
accounts that Wolf was introduced to the Spanisches Liederbuch poetry through his close friend
Friedrich Eckstein, who asked an Austrian writer, Franz Zweybrück, for a collection of good
lyrics for Wolf which had not yet been set to music.\footnote{15} Youens also describes Wolf’s fondness
for the lyrics, “He (Wolf) wanted poems that had not been set to music by the great song
composers before him and disliked contemporary poetry with a passion.”\footnote{16} Through this
incident Wolf was shown translations of both Spanish and Italian poems, which later became the
sources for the composition of his Spanisches Liederbuch and Italienisches Liederbuch.

Highly inspired with “Wer sein holdes Lieb verloren,” Wolf began his Spanisches
Liederbuch volume on 28 October 1889. After a break of ca. two and one-half months he
finished the volume on 27 April 1890 with “Wehe, der die mir verstrickte”\footnote{17} in Perchtoldsdorf;
he often went to compose there, in his “musical birthplace.” Ten of the “Geistliche Lieder”
portray a distinctly Southern mystic atmosphere using verses such as those dedicated to the
Virgin, the Nativity and Christ’s infancy, and the rest contain anguished studies of the
consciousness of sin. The majority of the “Weltliche Lieder” express various moods of love such
as passion, mockery, suffering and particularly, courtly love.

\footnote{14} Ibid., 7.
\footnote{16} Ibid.
\footnote{17} Walker, 508 – 509.
Significance of the “Geistliche Lieder” from the *Spanisches Liederbuch*

In his *Hugo Wolf Enzyklopädie* Ernst Hilmar explains Wolf’s determined response in his letter to the publisher, Schott, which exemplifies how significantly Wolf regarded the placement of the songs for publication:

> Im Februar 1891 wurde Wolf darüber informiert, daß Schott beabsichtigte, die “spanischen” heftweise im Handel erscheinen” zu lassen, und zwar in einer vom Verlag festgelegten Reihenfolge. Wolf konterte, daß dies nicht beabsichtigt war, sonst hätte er sich veranlaßt gesehen, “die Reihenfolge dieser Lieder in andere Weise zu bestimmen, gewissermaßen systematischer vorzugehen.”

Wolf composed the songs of his Spanish volume in two sections, sacred and secular, working back and forth between both types according to his inspired mood. The final published order was, however, significant for him. Honolka clarifies, “Er stellte auch eine von der Entstehungszeit unabhängige Reihenfolge zusammen. Sie ist keinesfalls willkürlich, sondern folgt einem bestimmten Wirkungsplan, und deshalb soll sie auch für die Betrachtung des ganzen Zyklus maßgebend sein.” In addition, Fischer-Dieskau makes the following observation

---

218 Hillmar, 416.
(In February 1891 Wolf was informed about the intention of Schott to publish the "Spanish" [his *Spanisches Liederbuch*] in a series of booklets in an order the publishing company would decide. Wolf replied that this was not his original intention, otherwise he (Wolf) would have seen fit to determine the order of the songs in a different way, certainly more systematically.)

219 Honolka, 183.

220 Ibid.
(He also arranged an order independently from the time of origin. The order is not arbitrary, but follows a specific effective plan. And therefore they should be applicable also for the consideration of the entire cycle.)
concerning the particular sequence of the “Geistliche Lieder” in this volume: “Seine nachträglich vorgenommene Ordnung lässt bei den geistliche Gesängen eine einheitlich Qualität erkennen. Nirgendwo in der Geschichte des deutschen Liedes – nimmt man Lasso oder Schütz aus – kommen baroke Inbrunst und Ekstatik der Gegenreformation so stark zum Ausdruck wie hier.”

Sleeman and Davies also examine Wolf’s rearranged order of his songs for publication, “Wolf considered carefully the ordering of his songs in both the sacred and secular cycles. In the sacred group he followed fairly closely the translators’ arrangement of the poems, choosing the first ten, which express Man’s awareness of his sinfulness, and meditate on the meaning of the Incarnation and of Christ’s death upon the Cross.” Youens agrees, “The ten “geistliche Lieder” are well-placed at the beginning of Wolf’s Spanisches Liederbuch, and not just because Geibel, Heyse, and their predecessors did so: an announcement is being made at the outset about the tonal intensity of these works.”

The specific musical articulations of Wolf’s “Geistliche Lieder” include certain distinguishing characteristics such as the vocal line that is somewhat suggestive of ecclesiastical chant, intense grinding dissonance, the prominent use of chromatic chord progressions, vocal syncopations, and repetitive musical patterns with reiterated rhythmic figures. The chant-like vocal line is declaimed by the use of back and forth motion within a small musical interval, mounting painfully or wearily sinking back. Because Wolf’s songs are not based upon an interest

---

221 Fischer-Dieskau, 485. (The order that he later undertook allowed a uniform quality in the sacred songs to be recognized. Nowhere in the history of the German song, – excluding Lasso or Schütz – is Baroque fervency and ecstasy of the Counter-Reformation so strongly expressed as here.)

222 Sleeman and Davies, 221.

in folk music, folk poetry, or imitation-folk song, Wolf’s musical articulation of the Spanish element is barely existent, with the exception of some descriptive passages suggestive of guitar motives and dancing rhythmic figures for the “Weltliche Lieder.” Youens interprets Wolf’s compositional style as follows: “His [Wolf’s] Spain was a musical colony of late-Romantic Germany, fashioned in Wolf’s post-Wagnerian image, and its poetic personas speak in the language of extended tonality, with no pretensions to folklike simplicity.”

According to Wolf’s ambiguous religious attitude, which has already been discussed in previous chapters, his setting of ten “Geistliche Lieder” from the Spanisches Liederbuch leads to speculation that his personal motive is interrelated with these poems reflecting Southern Catholicism. As Youens indicates, “It may seem strange that an avowed anti-clerical fin-de-siècle composer with Nietzschean leanings (although Wolf did not by any means accept all of Nietzsche) should compose religious songs as exquisite as those in the Mörike and Spanish songbooks, but the oddity is more seeming than real.” Nevertheless, the fact that Igor Stravinsky rearranged two “Geistliche Lieder” from Wolf’s Spanish volume—“Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter” and “Herr, was trägt der Boden hier”—for chamber orchestra in 1967 leads one to ponder Wolf’s extraordinary artistry and profound expression of religious poetry in spite of his true religious attitude. Wolf was a composer who respected the poetry with insightful interpretation and strove to absorb the poem perfectly until he could empathize with the text. Regardless of Wolf’s religious attitude, his intuitive perspective is summed up by Youens:

There is perhaps a dual current at work in the “Geistliche Lieder,” an ebb-and-flow in both directions: by the feint of origins in Spain, the mythic land of mystical intensity, Wolf could safely convey what was au fond his own

---

224 Youens, Hugo Wolf: The Vocal Music, 208.

compound of anguish, sense of sinfulness, and longing for belief while engaging in a distant shadow-collaboration with the two poets to make what was formerly Spanish thoroughly Germanic.226

Wolf’s Musical Language and its Articulation in the Selected Lieder

The General Features of the “Geistliche Lieder”

One of the common traits in Wolf’s setting of the “Geistliche Lieder” in his Spanisches Liederbuch is his chant-like melodies which create a church-song mood alternating with unique declamatory vocal lines. In addition, all of the songs but one, No. 4 “Die ihr schwebet” (You who hover), have tempo markings of Langsam und sehr innig, ruhig or getragen (Slow and very fervently, serenely, or solemn); song No. 4 is marked ziemlich bewegt (with motion). Further, Wolf portrays the poetic meaning and its nuance not only by the use of contrasting dynamics but also by the use of remarkably bold harmonic contrast between chromatic dissonance and resolved consonance, demonstrating a Wagnerian influence on his harmonic progressions and its textural interrelation with the poems. Finally, the cyclical repetitive structure, rhythmic patterns, and metaphoric motifs often play a main role in creating the predominant framework of the “Geistliche Lieder.”

Glauert discusses the cyclical repetition that commonly appears in the “Geistliche Lieder” of Wolf’s Spanish volume as follows, “The Spanish lyrics’ obsession with experiences of passion and guilt reinforced the importance of cyclical repetition to their expression, binding their form and content together in immediately obvious ways.”227 The cycle is thematically divided into three groups. The first two songs — Nun bin ich dein (Now I am yours) and “Die du

---

226 Ibid., 18.
227 Glauert, 113.
Gott gebarst” (You who bore God) — represent the dedicatory praise and prayer of medieval hymns to the Virgin Mary and the sinner’s request for clemency. The following four songs — “Nun wandre, Maria” (Go on, Mary), “Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen” (You who hover about these palms), “Führ’ mich, Kind, nach Bethlehem!” (Lead me, child, to Bethlehem!), and “Ach, des Knaben Augen” (Ah, the Infant’s eyes) — portray the Nativity by means of different poetic personas’ descriptions. The remaining four Passionlieder228 (Passion Songs) — “Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen” (In toil I come, and heavy laden), “Ach, wie lang die Seele schlummert!” (Ah, how long the soul slumbers!), “Herr, was trägt der Boden hier” (Lord, what does the soil bear here), and “Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter” (Wounds you bear, my beloved) — depict the culmination of the penitent sinner’s pilgrimage and his profound search for redemption.

In contrast to the original poetic anthology by Geibel and Heyse, Wolf reorganized the order of the texts—the fifth and sixth (“Ach, des Knaben Augen” and “Führ’ mich, Kind”) and the ninth and tenth (“Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter” and “Herr, was trägt der Boden hier”) poems were changed when the volume was published in 1891. As was already discussed in Chapter Two concerning the Mörike Lieder volume, Wolf’s song order often represents his particular metaphorical intention. Regarding Wolf’s reordered sequence of the “Geistliche Lieder” in his Spanish volume, Honolka explains:


228 Leopold Spitzer, Hugo Wolf (Holzhausen Verlag GmbH, 2003), 137.

229 Honolka, 185.
In their recent research on Wolf’s *Spanisches Liederbuch*, Sleeman and Davies observe:

. . . Wolf changed Geibel and Heyse’s ordering of the poems in an interesting way. The poets placed next Heyse’s translation of a poem by López de Úbeda, ‘Ach des Knaben Augen sind’, intending it no doubt to be read both as the Virgin’s song of adoration and, in a more general sense, as the expression of Man’s love for, and need for, God. There followed ‘Führ’ mich, Kind, nach Bethlehem!’ a translation of an anonymous poem, in which the Christian begs for Grace to enable him, in spirit, to make the journey to Bethlehem. Wolf transposed these two pieces, thus providing a parallel to the two preceding songs. Wolf’s setting of the devotional poem ‘Führ’ mich, Kind, nach Bethlehem!’ suggests supplication, humility and purpose, and is perfectly complemented by ‘Ach, des Knaben Augen sind,’ for here the spiritual journey is over and the pilgrim is lost in love for the Christ Child…. He [Wolf] suggests by the serenity, almost immobility of his setting the mutual gaze of lover and beloved, the quiet union of the soul with God.²³⁰

Both scholars continue in agreement:

For his last two songs Wolf chose well. Both lyrics are fine translations of most moving originals. In ‘Herr, was trägt der Boden hier,’ the original of which is again anonymous, the underlying image is the biblical one of Christ the gardener after the Resurrection. From this basic image the poet develops a new idea: from Christ’s suffering in the garden of the world spring garlands of sorrow for Himself and of joy for Man. Wolf, however, reads the poem as a prediction of the Crucifixion, and places his song before ‘Wunden trägst du mein Geliebter,’ and not after it, as Geibel and Heyse had done. Wolf presumably linked the scene to Christ’s vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane.²³¹

In the opening two *Marialiedern*²³² (Songs for Mary) and four “Passionlieder” Wolf often illustrates a deep expression of the sinner’s torment and grief through the use of chromaticism. This includes successions of dark, dissonant chords with barely a harmonic resolution, or dissonant chords (representing the sinner) progressing to harmonic chords (representing the

---

²³⁰ Sleeman and Davies, 222.
²³¹ Ibid., 223.
²³² Spitzer, 137.
redeemer). In contrast, the Nativity songs are constructed with less chromaticism and more transparent harmony; here the contrast between dissonance and consonance is employed to highlight extraordinary moments of the composition. Particularly, the frequent use of chromatic harmony employing upward or downward movement by half-step, in addition to the appearance of a rhythmic pause at the beginning of the meter that creates a syncopated rhythmic pulse, reflect Wolf’s insightful musical articulation.

To examine the representative characteristics of Wolf’s artistry in this cycle in detail, six Lieder have been selected. They are: “Nun bin ich dein” (No. 1) from the two medieval Marian hymns; “Nun wandre Maria” (No. 3), “Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen” (No. 4), and “Ach, des Knaben Augen” (No. 6) from the Nativity group; and two songs from the “Passionlieder” — “Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen” (No. 7), as the climax of the cycle, and “Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter” (No. 10), the last song of the cycle.

Nun bin ich dein (No. 1, Now I am yours) 15 Jan. 1889

Nun bin ich dein,
Du aller Blumen Blume,
Und sing allein
allstund zu deinem Ruhme;
Will eifrig sein,
mich dir zu weihn
Und deinem Duldertume.

Frau, auserlesen,
Zu dir steht all mein Hoffen,
Mein innerst Wesen
Ist allezeit dir offen.
Komm, mich zu lösen
Vom Fluch des Bösen,
Der mich so hart betroffen!

Now I am yours
You flower of all the flowers,
and alone will sing
your praises at all times;
I shall be eager
to devote myself to you,
And to your suffering.

Lady, chosen one,
my hopes I place before you,
my innermost being
is forever open to you.
Come, set me free
from the curse of the Evil One
Who has so sore afflicted me!

Star of the Sea,
Haven of Delight,
through whom the afflicted
Die Wunden Heil gewonnen,
Eh ich vergeh,
Blick aus der Höh,
Du Königin der Sonnen!

Nie kann versiegen
Die Fülle deiner Gnaden;
Du hilfst zum Siegen
Dem, der mit Schmach beladen
An dich sich schmiegen,
Zu deinen Füssen liegen,
Heilt allen Harm und Schaden.

Ich leide schwer
Und wohlverdiente Strafen.
Mir bangt so sehr,
Bald Todesschlaf zu schlafen.
Tritt du einher,
Und durch das Meer
O führe mich zum Hafen!

in their sorrow have found salvation.
Before I die
look from on high,
Queen of Suns!

Never can fail
the fullness of your mercy;
You help to victory
he who is laden with shame
To cling to you,
to lie at your feet,
to heal all grief and pain.

I suffer heavy
And most deserved punishment.
I am so afraid,
Having soon to sleep the sleep of death.
Come forth,
And through the sea
O bring me to harbour!

This is the earliest poem in the anthology, *Quiero seguir*, in which the fourteenth-century Archpriest of Hita, Juan Ruiz, adapts some of the conventions of courtly love poetry to religious verse. Translated into German by Heyse, it opens the cycle along with “Die du Gott gebarst.” Both are dedicative medieval hymns in which praise is offered to the Virgin Mary as well as prayers asking her mercy for the sinner. Without directly mentioning the Virgin Mary, this poem describes her by the use of traditional devotional titles, such as “aller Blumen Blume,” “Frau, auserlesen,” “Du Stern der See,” “Port der Wonnen,” and “Königin der Sonnen.” These forms of address reflect the strong tradition of Marian devotion in Catholic Spain.

Based on a four-measure phrasing structure the rhythm and vocal melody throughout the song incorporate the prevailing rhythmic pattern $\overline{\downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \circ}$, which represents the persistent thought and mood of supplication. In addition, Georg Bieri explains the detail of this particular rhythm, which correlates with the development of the piano accompaniment and

---

233 Youens, *The Vocal Music*, 205
demonstrates Wolf’s intensive Einfühlen (empathy) toward the religious verse. He clarifies the basic rhythmic figure as the declamatory leitmotiv-like pattern which is derived from the beginning of the poem

\[ \begin{array}{c|c|c|c} \text{Nun} & \text{bin} & \text{ich} & \text{dein} \end{array} \]

Dieser Rhythmus ist vom Komponisten, abgesehen von wenigen Ausnahmenstellen, durchgehend auf den Klavierpart übertragen worden. Hier liegt einer der Fälle vor, wo der gedankliche Kern in seiner musikalischen Fassung bestimmend auf die Begleitung eingewirkt hat…. Der Hauptrhythmus, der leitmotivisch das ganze Lied durchzieht (\( \text{or} \) beherrscht auch die drei Schlußtakte…den Worten “Nun bin ich dein” auftauche, wieder, hier nicht nur als architektonische Abrundung, sondern als geistig Schlußbegründung des Einganges.234

Around that rhythmic pattern the harmonies and vocal line are sensitively inflected and as Sams observes, “…. despite the slow tempo and the insistent beat there is no monotony.”235 As stated earlier, chromatic harmonic progression illustrates a sinner’s prayer through the tempo of “Langsam und sehr innig” (slow and very fervently). In particular, mm. 5 – 6, 14 – 15, 23 – 4, and 39 – 40 are notable for their strong structural identity, while mm. 31 – 32 contrast with a softer and lighter texture at the words “An dich sich schmiegen, zu deinen Füssen liegen” (To cling to you, to lie at your feet).236

---

234 Georg Bieri, Die Lieder von Hugo Wolf (Bern und Leipzig: Akademische Buchhandlung vorm Max Drechsel, 1935), 196. (This rhythm is, with a few exceptions, transferred throughout the piano part by the composer. This is one of those cases where the ideology in his musical setting certainly influenced the accompaniment. The main rhythm, which continues throughout the entire song like a Leitmotiv is also found in the final three measures…the words, “Now I am yours” from the introduction repeat here not just as an architectural rounding off, but as a final spiritual strengthening of the beginning.)

235 Sams, 251.

236 Ibid.
Figure 1. *Nun bin ich dein* mm. 5 – 6, mm. 14 – 15, mm. 23 – 24, and mm. 39 – 40

Figure 2. *Nun bin ich dein* mm. 31 – 32

To illustrate the longing or yearning reflected in the text, Wolf uses the *longing or yearning* motif\(^{237}\) in the right-hand piano part in mm. 1 – 2 and 35 – 6. The latter measures contain heavy bass octaves for the text of “schwer und wohlverdiente Strafen” (severe and well-merited punishment), while the former illustrate the dedicatory statement, “Nun bin ich dein”\(^{238}\) with a less dense accompaniment and a *piano* dynamic marking.

---

\(^{237}\) Sams, 23. Longing or Yearning Motif: a recurring snatch of melody in the right hand piano part.

\(^{238}\) Ibid.
With the new tonality of F♯ (G♭) Major the song arrives at its emotional climax in m. 27 at the text “Nie kann versiegen die Fülle deiner Gnaden,” with the emphasis on the word “Nie” (never). The portrayal of the sinner’s hope for eternal life continues through the postlude with an F Major chord in its reposeful resonance, along with a pianissimo dynamic level.
Nun wandre, Maria (No. 3, Now onward, Mary) 2 Nov. 1889

Nun wandre, Maria,
Nun wandre nur fort.
Schon krähen die Hähne,
Und nah ist der Ort.

Nun wandre, Geliebte,
Du Kleinod mein,
Und bald wir werden
In Bethlehem sein.
Dann ruhest du fein
Und schlummerst dort.
Schon krähen die Hähne
Und nah ist der Ort.

Wohl seh ich, Herrin,
Die Kraft dir schwinden;
Kann deine Schmerzen,
Ach, kaum verwinden.
Getrost! Wohl finden
Wir Herberg dort.
Schon krähen die Hähne
Und nah ist der Ort.

Wär erst bestanden
Dein Stündlein, Marie,
Die gute Botschaft,
Gut lohnt ich sie.
Das Eselein hie
Gäb ich drum fort!
Schon krähen die Hähne,
Komm! Nah ist der Ort.

Now onward, Mary,
Onward still further.
Already the cocks are crowing,
And the village is near.

Now onward, Beloved,
Thou my treasure,
And soon we shall
be in Bethlehem.
Then thou shalt rest well
And slumber there.
Already the cocks are crowing,
And the village is near.

Well I see, Lady,
Thy strength is failing;
Your suffering
Alas, cannot be subdued.
Take comfort! We shall find
lodging there.
Already the cocks crow,
And the village is near.

Would it were over,
Your hour [to give birth], Mary,
The good tidings
would I reward well.
The donkey here
would I give for that!
Already the cocks crow,
Come! The village is near.
This song is titled “Der heilige Josef singt” (St. Joseph sings) and the poem begins with “Nun wandre, Maria…” which is translated by Heyse from the original poem by Francisco de Ocaña, found in the Cancionero para cantar la noche de Navidad y las fiestas de Pascua (published in Alcalá de Henares, 1603). In the poem, which portrays a sensitive vision of the Holy Family, St. Joseph offers gentle encouragement to the pregnant Mary, consoling her with the refrain of “Und nah ist der Ort.” Contrary to the first two songs, which portray the poetic persona’s supplication and dedication to Mary, this poem depicts her as a weary woman who is comforted and encouraged by her husband Joseph to continue their journey to Bethlehem. Sams observes about Wolf’s setting of this poem, “It is this human situation….with ineffable tenderness, as if the music were a soothing response to a cry of distress.”

The voice line mainly moves within the narrow interval between B₅ and E₅, often repeating the same notes within calm, restrained dynamic levels between pianissimo and mezzo forte. An excellent example of the companionship motif appears in the right hand piano part, as soft, slowly flowing parallel-third figures. These parallel-third figures, combined with the dotted ostinato figures of the left hand throughout the song, portray the journey of the Holy Family. In fact, these are the only two figures that Wolf uses throughout this song.

---

239 Sleeman and Davies, 176.
240 Sams, 253.
241 Ibid., 26. Companionship Motif: the idea of companionship or togetherness as expressed by the use of chains of parallel thirds in the piano right hand.
This stream of parallel-third figures also appears in portions of “Auf ein altes Bild” (discussed in Chapter Two), as well as in the following song, No. 5 “Führ’ mich, Kind nach Bethlehem” (Lead me, child, to Bethlehem!), designating it as one of Wolf’s emblematic musical articulations. Here, Walker adds, “The accompaniment suggests the rhythm of their footsteps and also, by the imagery of its thirds progressing together, the close companionship that support them in all the difficulties of the journey.”\(^{242}\) The journeying figure of thirds pauses on a half cadence in m. 10 with the text of “Bethlehem sein” (be in Bethlehem). A point of interest is that in m. 11 a few sixteenth notes are added to depict an extra effort before the piano resumes the steady plodding motion at “Dann ruhest du fein” (Then shall you rest well).

\(^{242}\) Walker, 256.
In mm. 17–18, “Wohl seh ich, Herrin, die Kraft dir schwinden,” the dissonant harmony, syncopated rhythmic pulse and the maximum dynamic level of the song (*mezzo forte*) reflect Joseph’s anxiety and thoughtfulness.

![Figure 9. Nun wandre, Maria mm. 17–8](image)

In m. 22, the troubled music showing Joseph’s concern at the text, “kann deine Schmerzen, ach, kaum verwinden” relaxes into the assurance of “Getrost!” (Take comfort!) in a brighter A Major color.

![Figure 10. Nun wandre, Maria mm. 21–22](image)

Beginning at m. 31, at “Das Eselein hie,” marked “sehr zart” (very tender), the journey continues in a more consonant context with the hopeful expectation of arriving soon in Bethlehem. At the word “Komm” (come), marked “wie aus weiter Ferne” (as from a far distance), the plodding
accompaniment figure of the left hand and the parallel-third figures of the right hand finally move downward in pitch toward the ending of the song, which Wolf presents by the use of a Picardy third, resolving in an E Major triad.

Figure 11. *Nun wandre, Maria* mm. 34 – 38

**Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen (No. 4, You Who Hover about these Palm Trees)**

5 Nov. 1889

Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen
in Nacht und Wind,
Ihr heilgen Engel, Stillet die Wipfel!
Es schlummert mein Kind.

Ihr Palmen von Bethlehem im Windesbrausen,
Wie mögt ihr heute so zornig sausen!
O rauscht nicht also!
Schweiget, neigt euch leis und lind;
Stillet die Wipfel!
Es schlummert mein Kind.

Der Himmelsknabe duldet Beschwerde,
Ach, wie so müd er ward vom Leid der Erde.

Ach nun im Schlaf ihm
Leise gesänftigt die Qual zerrint,
Stillet die Wipfel!
Es schlummert mein Kind.

Grimmige Kälte sauset hernieder,
Womit nur deck ich des Kindleins Glieder!
O all ihr Engel,
Die ihr geflügelt wandelt im Wind,

Ye who hover around these palm trees
in the night and the wind,
Ye holy angels, quiet the tree tops!
My child slumbers.

Ye palm trees of Bethlehem in the raging wind,
How angrily ye roar today!
O rustle no longer!
Be silent, sway quietly and gently.
Quiet the tree-tops!
My child is asleep.

The holy infant bears many burdens,
Ah, how tired he was with the sorrows of the earth.
Now gently soothed in sleep
his suffering is allayed.
Quiet the tree-tops!
My child is asleep.

The bitter cold wind comes rushing down,
With what may I cover the child’s limbs?
O all ye angels
who on wings are wandering in the wind,
Stillet die Wipfel!  
Es schlummert mein Kind.  

Quiet the tree-tops!  
My child is asleep.

The source of this song, a translation by Geibel of a poem by the great dramatist Lope de Vega Carpio (1562 – 1613) from the Nativity collection, Pastores de Belén (pub. 1612), represents Mary’s lullaby in which she is begging the blustering wind in the palm tree to be still for the sleeping Christ-child. Sleeman and Davies observe, “The wind’s fury, the frost’s severity, the Child’s nakedness emphasize the Saviour’s task in a world of sin, and Man’s helplessness except he be granted the aid of the ‘divine angels’ – the need for Grace is indeed a constant in the geistlich poems.” Inspired by the same text, Brahms also set this poem as a Geistliches Wiegenlied (sacred lullaby), Op. 91 no. 2 for contralto and piano with viola obligato. While Brahms’s setting is essentially a conventional German cradle-song, Wolf’s setting depicts a lively dramatic situation with the unconventional artistic mastery of his musical language.

The entire song contains the accompaniment figures that are presented in mm. 1 – 5, persisting throughout in a ceaseless flow.

---

243 Sleeman and Davies, 176.
244 Ibid.
245 Walker, 256.
246 Sams, 255.
A four-measure ostinato of sixteenth-note broken chords in the right hand portrays the fluttering of angels’ wings and a reiterative upward melody in the left hand creates the continuous rustling of the branches caused by the rushing of the wind in the trees. To underscore the significance of the changing effect of light, Wolf’s use of mediant modulations is persistent and formative (the Light I motif according to Sams),\textsuperscript{247} for example, from mm. 2 – 3 (E major) to G\# Major at mm. 6 – 7 and finally to C Major in mm. 10 – 12. Carner explains here, “Wolf most aptly employs median key-shifts and dynamic modifications to fit the Virgin’s changing mood.”\textsuperscript{248}

\textsuperscript{247} Sams, 30. Light I Motif: Instead of the notes C, E, G\# together, passages in the tonalities of C major, E major, G\# (=A\#) major are heard consecutively in ascending order. This effect is clearly associated in Wolf’s mind with the idea of increasing brightness.

\textsuperscript{248} Carner, 44.
Over the persistent rhythmic and melodic accompaniment pattern, dynamic contrasts aid intensely in depicting the dramatic scene. For instance, the melodic figures of blustering wind presented in the left hand are built up further by the forte dynamic marking in the bass octaves in mm. 14 – 16 at “Ihr Palmen von Bethlehem.” This strongly illustrates the tense scene with the blustering wind and Mary’s imploring cry.

The vocal line of each phrase moves mostly in a small range in ascending or descending chromatic movement correlated with the text. In particular, Wolf’s musical articulation of the extended voice line for the middle syllable of “geflügelt” (winged), in mm. 55 – 57 at “die ihr
geflügelt wandelt im Wind,” illustrates the emotional climax of Mary’s plea to the angels for their help in calming the wind.

Finally the winds abate by the last refrain at “stillet die Wipfel! Es schlummert mein Kind” in a descending voice line marked *pianissimo*. The piano postlude ends the song in E Major with the indication of “verklingend” (fading away) and a dynamic marking of *pianississimo*.

In contrast with the other *Geistliche Lieder* of the volume, Fischer-Dieskau writes about this song (one of only a few that are often performed), “Wolf unterstreicht den Zauber des Liedes
durch eine höchst unkonventionelle, in sich bewegte Wortausdeutung, die dem Glauben einen
dramatischen Impuls gibt.”

Ach, des Knaben Augen (No. 6, Ah, the Infant’s Eyes) 21 Dec.1889

Ach, des Knaben Augen sind
Mir so schön und klar erschienen,
Und ein Etwas strahlt aus ihnen,
Das mein ganzes Herz gewinnt.

Blickt er doch mit diesen süßen
Augen nach den meinen hin!
Sähe er dann sein Bild darin,
Würde er wohl mich liebend grüssen.

Und so geb’ ich ganz mich hin,
Seinen Augen nur zu dienen,
Denn ein Etwas strahlt aus ihnen,
Das mein ganzes Herz gewinnt.

In the anthology by Geibel and Heyse this poem is placed immediately after Mary’s
lullaby, “Die ihr schwebet,” and leads the reader to consider Mary as the poetic persona telling of
her love for the Christ-child. This poem, “Los ojos del niño son,” written by the late sixteenth-
century priest, López de Úbeda, and translated by Heyse implies the human sinner’s love and
need for God in Christ in the tradition of a lo divino, meaning that a secular subject has been
interpreted in a religious sense. Sleeman and Davies explain, “At one level the poem expresses a
girl’s love for a niño (child or young man), but we soon discover that the child is Christ, whose
love is sought.”

In Wolf’s rearranged order, however, “Ach des Knaben Augen” follows after “Die ihr
schwebet” and “Führ’ mich, Kind” (Lead me, child). Thus this poem can be freely interpreted

---

249 Fischer-Dieskau, 487.
(Wolf underlines the charm of the song by a highly unconventional word-interpretation which gives the faith [of
Mary] a dramatic momentum.)

250 Sleeman and Davies, 177.
from a different poetic persona’s view as the pilgrim sinner who seeks the grace of God, and not just as in a mother-to-son relationship. From this perspective, the scene describing the Holy Family’s journey to Bethlehem is complete within the two previous songs, “Nun wandre, Maria” and “Die ihr schwebet.” About the next two poems Sleeman and Davies observe, “‘Führ’ mich, kind nach Bethlehem’ suggests supplication, humility and purpose and is perfectly complemented by ‘Ach, des Knaben Augen sind,’ for here the spiritual journey is over, and the pilgrim is lost in love for the Christ Child.”

Among the ten “Geistliche Lieder” in the Spanisches Liederbuch this song is the most straightforward harmonically. Wolf’s musical language responds to Heyse’s translation of the poetry perfectly, with the plain thirds of the piano part in both hands complementing the steady flow of the repeated notes or stepwise motion of the vocal line. Honolka clarifies that this use of consecutive parallel thirds is adapted from “Nun wandre, Maria” to symbolize the existence of the “Kind” (Christ Child).

---

Figure 17. Ach, des Knaben Augen mm. 1 – 4

---

251 Sleeman and Davies, 222.

252 Honolka, 184.
This poem presents both the meter and the rhythmic scheme in a regular pattern of trochaic tetrameters.\textsuperscript{253} In her article, Youens describes the common use of trochaic tetrameter in seven poems of the ten “Geistliche Lieder” (nos. 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10) and observes, “All of the sin-obsessed songs are this laden with trochees, not as common in German or English poetry as are iambics, but perfect for this context because trochees create a heavier aural impression.”\textsuperscript{254} According to this observation, the subject matter of this sixth poem seems to agree with Wolf’s poetic interpretation of the speaker as the pilgrim sinner who reverently gazes at the Christ-child’s eyes, rather than the mother expressing love to her son as previously discussed.

In the first lines of the song the voice moves in a stepwise manner that is marked \textit{dolce} along with the gentle piano accompaniment to describe the persona’s adoration of the Child; the voice and piano rise together in mm. 5 – 6 with the words, “Ein Etwas strahlt aus ihnen” at a dynamic marking of \textit{forte}. While the vocal line flows in a descending motion to the end of the first section, the piano’s gentle chords continue in an upward motion to a high register, creating a chiming sound.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ach-des-knaben-augen-5-8.png}
\caption{\textit{Ach, des Knaben Augen} mm. 5 – 8}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{253} A trochaic tetrameter is a four-measure musical phrase in which the text has a pattern of a strong syllable followed by a weak syllable; this pattern of a strong and a weak syllable is called a trochee.

\textsuperscript{254} Youens, “Of Spain and Sin…,” 21. The term “iamb” refers to the pattern of a weak syllable followed by a strong one.
In contrast to the first section, the next two lines that begin the second section in m. 9 weave a gentle sonority with the rhythmic pulse on the downbeat. This section of the song, through m. 16, describes the adorable Child’s eyes. At “säh’ er dann” (if He saw) in m. 13, Wolf’s exquisite musical nuance appears with the modulation from the key of F Major to A♭ Major, giving a loving and delicate picture of the Child.

The voice part begins again in F Major at m. 18 with the text “Und so geb’ ich ganz mich hin.” Along with its declamatory linear motion the persistent parallel thirds of the piano part often proceed in contrary motion. After repeating the last two lines of the first section, “denn ein Etwas strahlt aus ihnen, das mein ganzes Herz gewinnt,” the song ends with a brief prayer-like postlude marked pianissimo.

Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen (No. 7, In Toil I Come and Laden) 10 Jan. 1890

Mühvoll komm ich und beladen, Sorrowladen and oppressed with care I come,  
Nimm mich an, du Hort der Gnaden! Take me to Thee, thou refuge of merrcy!  
Sieh, ich komm in Tränen heiss Behold, with burning tears I come,  
Mit demütiger Gebärde, with humble bearing,  
Dunkel ganz vom Staub der Erde. Dark with the dust of the earth.  
Du nur schaffest, dass ich weiss Thou alone can make me white  
Wie das Vliess der Lämmer werde. As the lamb’s fleece.  
Tilgen willst du ja den Schaden Thou wilt heal the wounds
Dem, der reuig dich umfasst;   of one who tums to Thee in penitence;  
Nimm denn, Herr, von mir die Last,   Take the burden from me, O Lord!  
Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen.   Sorrowladen and oppressed with care I come.

Lass mich flehend vor dir knie’n,   Let me kneel before Thee, pleading,  
Dass ich über deine Füsse   and anoint Thy feet  
Nardenduft und Tränen giesse,   with scent of nard,  
Gleich dem Weib, dem du verzieh’n,   like the woman whom Thou forgave,  
Bis die Schuld wie Rauch zerfliesse.   Until her sins melted away like smoke.  
Der den Schächter du geladen:   Thou who didst tell the thief:  
“Heute noch in Edens Bann   “Today in Paradise  
Wirst du sein!” O nimm mich an,   shall you be!” O take me to Thee,  
Nimm mich an, du Hort der Gnaden!   Take me to Thee, Thou refuge of mercy!

Under the pseudonym of Don Manuel del Río, Geibel introduced his own poem as “Vengo triste y lastimado,” which depicts the sinner’s direct plea for Christ’s forgiveness.

According to a description by Sleeman and Davies, “The sin-laden man, again on pilgrimage, comes not to the Infant Christ, but to Christ as Saviour: we see Him as the shepherd of the flock, as the one who purifies Mary Magdalen and the one who at the Crucifixion promises salvation to the good thief.”

A predominant feature of Wolf’s setting of this poem is an unrelenting, repetitive rhythmic motive throughout the entire song, particularly in the piano part, which indicates a characteristic obsession in one’s mind. Sams discusses Wolf’s superb technical articulation, “In 69 bars of slow ¾ the two-bar piano rhythm heard some thirty times.” In his recent article, “‘The Heaviest Weight’: Circularity and Repetition in a Song by Hugo Wolf,” Matthew Baileyshea focuses on the repetitive and circular rhythmic pattern of this song:

The metaphor of music-as-circle is a feature common to the analysis of nineteenth-century music. . . . These issues possess a special significance for the nineteenth-century

---

255 Sleeman and Davies, 177.
256 Sams, 258.
Lied, where musical recall often accompanies themes of repetition and circularity in a given poetic text. This song projects an obsessive degree of cyclic repetition, particularly with regard to representations of weight and spiritual burden. The impression of circularity conveyed by this song is both patently explicit and deliberately concealed, an effect that resonates deeply with the mood of desperation expressed by the song’s narrator.257

As discussed earlier, the framework of this poem consists of trochaic tetrameters which create a heavy aural impression. Trochees begin, most commonly in music, on the downbeat; instead Wolf articulates “Müh – [voll]” on the third beat in triple meter by sustaining the [ü] vowel, emphasizing the sinner’s weighty burden through the sustained note over the bar line. Here Youens observes, “When the pianist plays the root-position Neapolitan chord of E♭ [F♭ major as shown in Fig. 20] major on the downbeat of m. 3, the striking heaviness of the harmony – all the more a “surprise” to the ear because of the tonal deflection so soon after the beginning of the song – creates a “pulse” beneath the sustained syllable in the vocal line.”258

![Figure 20. Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen mm. 1 – 4](image)

The obsessive recurring rhythm leads the first section of the poem in a sinner’s plea for redemption to the first climax at m. 26, “nimm denn, Herr” and the weighty tensions are resolved


258 Baileyshea, 21.
in a more diatonic key of C Major. Youens here indicates, “Wolf was clearly struck by the word “umfasst,” (embraces); in the wide wing-span of those C-major chords . . . he conveys both the clarity, simplicity, and blazing light of longed-for purification in Christ and the difficulty of its mortal attainment.”

Figure 21. Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen mm. 23 – 30

While the second section portrays the scene of the penitential Maria Magdalena, the piano part persistently moves to the next bursting climax at mm. 56 – 57 “O nimm mich an” along with the recurring rhythmic motive, dynamic contrast, and intensely rich chromatic dissonance to portray the sinner’s obsessive anguish and urgent cry.

Figure 22. Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen mm. 56 – 57

---

In his book, *Hugo Wolf und seine Lieder* (Hugo Wolf and His Songs), Erik Werba clarifies the *Tongebilde*\(^{260}\) (sound formation) of Wolf’s ten “Geistliche Lieder” and describes this song as follows, “g-Moll, die Mozart-Tonart des Leides, kennzeichnet den erregendsten geistlichen Gesang: ‘Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen.’ Hier ist die Spannung fast unerträglich, bis sie sich in dem B-Dur-Schrei ‘O nimm mich an, Du Hort der Gnaden’ löst.” \(^{261}\)

Wolf’s setting of the poem begins in G minor and ends on its dominant, D Major, which reflects Wolf’s deliberate treatment of the poetic persona’s desire—the desperate sinner’s supplication and pleading for redemption—in his exquisite art. Here the persona’s desire for salvation has been fulfilled by cleansing through G minor and finally purified in the open-ended tonality of D Major.\(^{262}\) Indeed, this song represents one of the notable examples of Wolf’s psychological studies in his music.

![Figure 23. Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen mm. 61 – 69](image)

\(^{260}\) Eric Werba, *Hugo Wolf und seine Lieder* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1984), 259. (G minor, Mozart’s key for sorrow, characterizes the most stirring sacred song, “Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen.” Here the tension is almost unbearable, until it releases itself in the Bb-major cry “O take me to Thee, Thou Refuge of Mercy!”)

\(^{261}\) Ibid., 259.

\(^{262}\) Baileyshea, 290.
Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter (No. 10, Wounds You Bear, My Love)  
16 December 1889

Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter,  
Und sie schmerzen dich;  
Trüg ich sie statt deiner, ich!  

Herr, wer wagt es, so zu färben  
Deine Stirn mit Blut und Schweiss?  
“Diese Male sind der Preis,  
Dich, o Seele, zu erwerben.  
An den Wunden muss ich sterben,  
Weil ich dich geliebt so heiss.”

Könnst ich, Herr, für dich sie tragen,  
Da es Todeswunden sind.  
“Wenn dies Leid dich rührt, mein Kind,  
Magst du Lebenswunden sagen:  
Ihrer keine ward geschlagen,  
Draus für dich nicht Leben rinnt.”  
Ach, wie mir in Herz und Sinnen  
Deine Qual so wehe tut!  
“Härteres noch mit treuem Mut  
Trüg ich froh, dich zu gewinnen;  
Denn nur der weiss recht zu minnen,  
Der da stirbt vor Liebesglut.”

Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter,  
Und sie schmerzen dich;  
Trüg ich sie statt deiner, ich!

This is the final poem in Wolf’s setting of ten “Geistliche Lieder.” It is the translation by Geibel of a poem attributed to José de Valdivielso (1565 – 1638), “Feridas teneis mi vida” (My beloved, thou art wounded).263 In the form of a dialogue between Christ and a human sinner, the poem depicts Christ as the courtly lover who dies for love of the soul.264 Wolf indicates a tempo of “Langsam und mit tiefer Empfindung” (Slow and with deep emotion) for his setting that concludes the entire cycle in a “Passionsdialog” (Passion-dialogue).265 At the beginning, the

263 Youens, The Vocal Music, 206.
264 Sleeman and Davies, 177.
265 Fischer-Dieskau, 488.
chromatic, dissonant piano introduction portrays the sinner’s pain, agony, and sorrow which persistently occur in the “Geistliche Lieder” cycle. In addition, Wolf’s musical articulations represent thematically-connected features with former Lieder, such as distressful dissonances and the frequent absence of a first beat in the piano part with suspended harmony and time as well as dynamic contrast.

The poem is framed by a three-line refrain at the beginning and end, in mm. 1 – 10 and 47 – 60, which provides formal symmetry. Each section of the dialog ends with the dominant chord in a questioning motif, in mm. 22, 34, and 46.

---

266 Sams, 32. Questioning I Motif: The textual question-mark is presented by implied dominant harmony. Thus, a poetic question evokes a musical dominant, and conversely.
While the piano part accompanying the sinner’s voice often lies in a low range, the piano range for Christ’s voice lies higher and displays a brighter diatonic color, such as in mm. 11 – 13 and mm. 15 – 16.
As a whole, this final song musically completes the cycle by the use of returning features from the first two “Marialiedern”267 (Songs for Mary), such as chordal accompaniment in the piano and thick heavy texture. The key of the song is B minor, however, it concludes on the dominant, F# Major, at a pianississimo dynamic level. This use of the dominant chord to end the song leaves the listener without a sense of resolution, not only for the song but also for the entire cycle of “Geistliche Lieder” as a musical entity.

Figure 27. Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter mm. 53 – 60

Sams suggests a final point of insight about the “Geistliche Lieder” as follows:

Wolf’s music also implies, by a concordance of thematic cross-reference, that the Saviour’s interlocutor in each song was also the pilgrim of Führ’ mich, Kind, nach Bethlehem [No. 5] who there beheld the eyes of the holy child, as in Ach, des Knaben

267 Spitzer, 137.
*Augen* [No. 6]. It further suggests, whether intentionally or not, that the sinner in question was Wolf himself, whose own guilt-feelings and craving for love and forgiveness were exceedingly deep and durable.\(^{268}\)

\(^{268}\) Sams, 262.
CHAPTER 4
COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Comparisons

Through the study of the musical concepts and articulation in Wolf’s settings of the religiously-oriented poetry of the selected “Geistliche Lieder” from his “Mörike Lieder” and Spanisches Liederbuch, Wolf’s keen empathy for the religious subject matter, regardless of his true religious attitude, can be discerned. Composing songs for this poetry was a primary vehicle for Wolf to discover himself and a channel for self-expression through the various poetic moods and representation of different personas. Whereas the in-depth study of Wolf’s “Geistliche Lieder” reveals a certain discrepancy concerning his religious attitude, the fact that he set the “Geistliche Lieder,” specifically during his mature period, leads to speculation about his personal reasons for composing these songs. In addition, examining his life and interrelated personal circumstances through extant correspondence gives a more enhanced view of Wolf’s inner thoughts, and particularly of his religious attitude. In this regard, Grasberger poses the following questions:

True creativity is much too complicated and ambiguous to be comprehended solely through the simple formulaic phrase “the person expressed in his work.” The relationship between the person, the artist, and the composition is subordinate to the divergent and compelling force of the total personality. The existential expression of this personality encompasses both person and artist, yet its essential message lies in the higher unity of music. To what extent does this relationship exist or can it be recognized? How strongly is the person’s character reflected in what is created? How much has the work been influenced by life itself?269

In answer to these questions Grasberger suggests, “In order to see the characteristics of the creative personality as a whole, one must examine the interdependence of human and artistic

events and establish a frame of reference for the inner life. . . Letters and diaries are the most important sources of immediate evidence of the personality’s nature and development.”

When he was asked to compare one of his symphonies with that of another contemporary composer, Mahler said, “He and I are like two miners who sink their shafts into the same mountain from two different sides.”

In examining Wolf’s ambiguous religious attitude, one could use a similar analogy. This study must be approached from several different viewpoints, including Wolf’s music itself, anecdotal evidence, and personal letters. Moreover, such an attempt offers a new look at the concept of Wolf’s artistic originality, particularly within his settings of religious subject matter.

Inspiration and Aspiration

Periods of Creativity

Wolf’s life is marked by sporadic creativity and manic intense composition during his periods of inspiration. In the span of three years from 1888 – 1891 Wolf’s outpouring of artistic creativity brought about his five monumental songbooks which contain the greatest number of his well-known songs. This three-year period was also the longest creative time span of his artistic life; in this period Wolf set the “Geistliche Lieder” of two of his main songbooks, the Mörike volume and the Spanisches Liederbuch, during the height of his artistic inspiration. Wolf’s intense style of writing his music as exhibited in both songbooks shows the compositional process that led others to regard him as a genius in the musical realm.

---

270 Hugo Wolf, Letters to Melanie Köchter, xxii.

271 Max Graf, “Gustav Mahler the Mystic,” Chord and Dischord II (1946), 51.
Glauert gives an account of Wolf’s typical composing style, “The stories abound from first-hand observers, such as Hermann Bahr and Friedrich Eckstein, of how the composer would immerse himself in particular poems, and then write his settings with lightning speed, as though ‘inspired’."

This frenzied intensity of composition resulted in the fact that it only took several months for him to complete the fifty-three and forty-four songs for the “Mörike Lieder” and the Spanisches Liederbuch respectively. Of particular note is the fact that his setting of religious poetry began with six sacred choral pieces in 1881, matured in the religious or spiritual songs of the “Mörike Lieder” and achieved its pinnacle with the ten “Geistliche Lieder” of the Spanisches Liederbuch.

Parsifal

Wagner’s last opera, Parsifal, which demonstrates Wagner’s exploration of German and Christian legends and presents an allegory based on the conflict between Christianity and paganism, good and evil, physical passion and spiritual abstinence, must have had a particular impact on Wolf’s setting of religious songs. The settings of Mörike’s religious poems—“An den Schlaf,” “Neue Liebe,” “Zum neuen Jahre,” “Schlafendes Jesuskind,” “Wo find’ ich Trost?” and “Karwoche”—were completed in October 1888, one and one-half months after he attended a performance of Parsifal in Bayreuth. Similarly, Wolf’s visit to Bayreuth again in mid-July 1889 to hear Parsifal for the fourth time perhaps inspired him to compose the ten “Geistliche Lieder” for his Spanisches Liederbuch three and one-half months later.

Lindner gives an anecdotal description of Wolf’s first experience with Parsifal on 12 August 1882, “Als Kulminationspunkt aber stand ihm noch die Reise nach Bayreuth bevor. Er

---

272 Glauert, 48.
had successfully applied for free tickets for students and his friends provided the funds for his travel and lodging. On 12 August the journey began. Twice he heard "Parsifal" and was completely enraptured."

Lindner further describes Wolf’s fanatical love of this particular opera, "Noch völlig im Banne des Wagner-Erlebnisses veranstaltete’ er am 30. August, dem Tag der letzten ‘Parsifal’-Aufführung, ein Wagner-Festspiel in Mayerling. Von 4 Uhr nachmittag bis gegen 22 Uhr spielte und sang er das ganze Werk für sich allein."

Regardless of the depth of the opera’s impact on Wolf’s motivation to compose both “Geistliche Lieder” groups, *Parsifal* played a significant role in his musical and artistic development, particularly within religiously-oriented songs. Here Wolf found his own musical language; as Walker states, "Wo find’ ich Trost?’ derives spiritually and musically from *Parsifal*, but Wolf has fused his material in the fires of his own creative imagination." Youens agrees, "Wolf was perhaps most strongly affected by *Parsifal*, and the enmeshing of music at the far end of attenuated chromaticism with a drama of spiritual awakening had to be part of its power over him. Art is more at issue in Wagner’s last opera than religion, of course, but there are

---

273 Lindner, 34.
(As the culminating point the trip to Bayreuth awaited him. He had successfully applied for free tickets for students and his friends provided the funds for his travel and lodging. On 12 August the journey began. Twice he heard "Parsifal" and was completely enraptured.)

274 Ibid.
(Still completely under the spell of his Wagner experience, he "organized" a Wagner-Festival in Mayerling on 30 August, the day of the last *Parsifal* performance. From 4:00 in the afternoon until nearly 10:00 in the evening he played and sang the entire work [Parsifal] for himself alone.)

275 Walker, 234.
reasons for using religious Stoff [material] for one’s artistic enterprises, and we can assume that Wolf too would have his own causes to do likewise.  

Desire for Opera

Carner describes Wolf’s large songbooks, including the “Mörike Lieder,” as “not cycles but collections, similar to a collection of paintings in a one-man exhibition.” Concerning Wolf’s unique style Eduard Hanslick once commented that Wolf composed entire poets instead of poems. In addition, Youens observes this aspect of Wolf’s composing style, “In this way, Wolf could “one-up” the large song cycles of Schubert and Schuman with something even bigger and could exercise his operatic dreams even within the sphere of lieder by devising music for a variety of poetic personae.” According to this scholar, one might state that if the Mörike volume could be regarded as a kind of preceding process for his operatic ambitions, the Spanisches Liederbuch would be considered as the prelude or overture of his opera. Indeed some songs of Wolf’s Spanish volume were later adapted for his opera, Der Corregidor. Sams and Youens clarify, “Wolf had believed his Spanish songs to be a preparatory stage for operatic composition,” and “He thought of his Spanish songs as paving the way for opera, as preparation for a kind of composition which meant more to him.” From Youens’ description of Wolf’s eager research about the dramatic material for his opera as found in Eckstein’s memoirs, “Wolf

---

277 Carner, 7.
278 Youens, Hugo Wolf and his Mörike Songs, 15.
279 Ibid.
loved Calderón’s religious dramas and read the Spanish mystics, it is likely that Wolf’s original idea for the Spanisches Liederbuch seemed rather to be the composition of a dramatic work than a song book. Whatever his reason was, Wolf’s desire for composing large dramatic works had obviously driven him to complete his main songbooks, such as both selected songbooks containing the “Geistliche Lieder.” Referring to the compositional style of Wolf’s only completed opera, Der Corregidor, Sams states, “The resulting genre is intermediate between what might be called the compressed opera of his songbooks and the expanded songbooks of his operas.”

Perchtoldsdorf: The Musical Birthplace

As described in Chapter 1, Carner defines Wolf as a “Stauungskomponist” and explains that his creative works came in great spurts interspersed with periods of inactivity. When these creative impulses came, it was like a dam breaking, and in the resulting flood, Wolf would sometimes write two or three songs in one day.” Wolf described his feeling just prior to that flood of writing in a letter to his friend Gustav Schur on 24 September 1891, “I feel ominous signs of composition in me, and await an explosion at any moment,” and his ominous feeling resulted immediately in resumed intense creativity—the very next day Wolf was able to write out the first song of the Italienisches Liederbuch I.

---

282 Sams, 15.
283 Carner, 12 – 13.
284 Walker, 270.
The town of Perchtoldsdorf played a significant role as Wolf’s personal place to create his music. Here Wolf resided in the Werner family’s house, and it was in this house that most of the “Mörike Lieder” were composed in 1888, and after that the whole of the *Spanisches Liederbuch* in the winter of 1889 – 1890, the first half of *Der Corregidor* in 1895 and the second part of the *Italienisches Liederbuch* in 1896.\(^{285}\) Perchtoldsdorf was a place that repeatedly inspired Wolf with its remarkable natural surroundings; there Wolf gave birth to his major works as if Perchtoldsdorf was Wolf’s own musical womb.

Wolf’s letter written during a standstill in his artistic creativity reflects his distinctive connection with Perchtoldsdorf. He wrote on 14 November 1894 to the Baroness, Frida von Lipperheide, one of his trusty friends from Berlin who introduced Wolf into the sophisticated society there in 1892:

> Since the 5\(^{\text{th}}\) of this month I have left my temporary quarters at my friend Eckstein and have moved once again to my beloved old Perchtoldsdorf, viz., Brunnengasse 26. I have the same beautiful large room where six years ago the Mörike Songs and four years ago the “Spanisches Liederbuch” were composed. What shall I achieve this time in these surroundings? If only some work is produced I shall be content. . . .\(^{286}\)

In the following letter on 25 March 1896 to the Baroness, when Wolf was able to resume his *Italienisches Liederbuch*, which had been interrupted since 23 December 1891, Wolf’s reawakened inspiration is obvious, “Since yesterday I am again in the old apartment in my dear and lovely Perchtoldsdorf. . . . I feel so blessed in this blessed solitude; I might almost be the envy of Emperors and Kings.”\(^{287}\) After that day, Wolf completed the remaining twenty-four


\(^{287}\) Ibid., 796.
songs in his last large collection, the *Italienisches Liederbuch*, and later in 1895 his only opera, *Der Corregidor*.

*Wolf’s Lieder in Different Sonorities*

A recent CD, titled “Hugo Wolf songs from Spanisches Liederbuch & Mörike-Lieder,” produced in Denmark in 2003, which includes the ten “Geistliche Lieder” from Wolf’s Spanish volume as well as four “Geistliche Lieder” from the Mörike volume, offers an interesting arrangement by Max Reger for voice and organ. The organist and producer of that CD, Ulrik Spang-Hanssen notes:

We do not know exactly what prompted the composer Max Reger (1873 – 1916) to transcribe the piano accompaniment of these songs for the organ, but we may guess that initially it was an urge to underline further the songs’ spiritual content that caused Reger to set to work. For this composer in particular it would have been an obvious project to take on, since not only was he a great admirer of Wolf, but he was of all people very well familiar with the organ’s expressive possibilities and in addition he was deeply engrossed in religious questions. . . . There can be no doubt that Wolf’s absorption in the dark-coloured and strongly subjective Spanish Catholicism of these songs must have appealed particularly strongly to Reger, and in order to supplement the ten songs from “Spanisches Liederbuch” in the publication of his transcriptions by Peters in 1908 . . . 288

Indeed, Reger’s arrangements of the “Geistliche Lieder” were published in 1898 (from the Mörike volume) and in 1908 (from the *Spanisches Liederbuch*) by Heckel. According to Werba, another notable arrangement of Wolf’s “Geistliche Lieder” was written—Igor Stravinsky’s arrangement of two sacred songs from Wolf’s Spanish volume for voice and chamber ensemble was composed in 1967, and was published the next year. The premiere followed on 2 October 1969 during the “Berliner Festwochen” (Berlin Festival Weeks).289

---


289 Werba, 159.
Wolf’s legacy — in particular his religious output—inspired prominent composers of the next generation to arrange some of his works in different sonorities. In 1889–1890 Wolf orchestrated twenty-nine of his songs himself (including fragmentary sketches): ten “Geistliche Lieder,” eight songs from the “Mörike Lieder,” and two songs from the Spanisches Liederbuch. Decsey called Wolf’s orchestration of these songs “Verzweiflungsarbeiten” (works of desperation) because they were occasional attempts to expand his Lieder into the enlarged form of the orchestral genre.290

“Geistliche Lieder” from Mörike Lieder and Spanisches Liederbuch

Compositional Aspects

Despite the similarity of their technical features, Wolf’s exceptional artistry preserves the individuality of both volumes. The most common representative features of Wolf’s mature Lieder are defined by Sams and Youens as follows:

He intensified the expressive vocabulary of the lied by means of extended tonality and post-Wagnerian declamation while retaining the defining elements of the song tradition he had inherited from Schubert and Schumann. Profoundly responsive to poetry, he incorporated detailed readings of his chosen poems in the compositional decisions he made about every aspect of song: harmonic nuances, tonal form, melodic design, vocal declamation, pianistic texture, the relationship of voice to piano, . . .291

As discussed in the previous two chapters, both sets of the selected “Geistliche Lieder” present Wolf’s mature compositional hallmarks—in particular a highly colorful and expressive harmonic palette including chromaticism and dissonance, vaguely retaining its tonal orientation;

290 Decsey, Hugo Wolf, das Leben und das Lied (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1919), 63.

an often through-composed structure; and a declamatory voice line which gives great freedom to the poetic vocal delivery. According to Carner’s study of Wolf’s harmonic language, Wolf’s diatonic writing expresses simplicity, directness, innocence and naivety; while his chromatic style is largely associated with complexity, many-layered feeling, arcane thought and the abnormal.\(^\text{292}\) The selected “Geistliche Lieder” exhibit harmonic language corresponding to this observation. “Gebet” and “Ach, des Knaben Augen” display mostly diatonic, beautiful simplicity and “Seufzer,” “Wo find’ ich Trost?” and “Mühvoll komm ich und beladen” show deep, complex psychological and tortured emotional expression in their highly chromatic settings.

In comparison with Wolf’s earlier, less-mature works in which the piano accompaniment played a traditional function, in Wolf’s more mature works the role of the piano accompaniment became more significant and equivalently essential to the voice part, often providing the basic structural framework which unifies the song as a whole. Wolf frequently creates the accompaniment for an entire song from one musical motif, which provides unity and coherence. Carner explains, “With the mature Wolf, the musical substance of a song mostly resides in the piano part, and in presenting it he follows the formal principle of absolute music, while his literary concern is concentrated in the vocal line. Yet, strangely Wolf shows a singular conservatism in his attitude towards instrumental phrase-structure.”\(^\text{293}\) Concerning Wolf’s general manner of constructing the selected songs, Deryck Cooke sums up, “A perpetual fascination of Wolf’s song is the way in which the tensely syncopated declamation and the overlapping vocal and piano phrases, together with the piano’s harmonic shifts and motivic

\(^{292}\) Carner, 9.

\(^{293}\) Ibid., 8.
fragmentation, combat the monotonous rhythmic periods, and usually make one unaware of them."

By comparing Geibel and Heyse’s translated poetry of the *Spanisches Liederbuch* with that of the Mörike volume, Carner suggests a keen point of view:

It is no longer the words as such, as in Mörike and Goethe, that provided the immediate inspiration, but rather the ideas, concepts and moods underlying the poems on which he now concentrated. This distancing from the verbal poetry of a lyric resulted in Wolf liberating himself from his previous faithful and scrupulous submission to the poet, and allowed him to give his purely musical impulses freer rein than before.

Indeed, it is likely that Wolf looked for something entirely different after his intense work on the successive settings of the prominent German poets—Mörike, Eichendorff, and Goethe—as Sams and Youens indicate:

With the Goethe songbook behind him, Wolf no longer looked to the best in the earlier generation of German poetry for verbal inspiration. It is a noteworthy aspect of his songwriting art that his most advanced musical techniques found no poetic concomitant in the poetry of his own day; while never freeing himself entirely from the intersection of words and music, he came increasingly to rely more on music first and foremost, rather than responses to the symbol-drenched words by the likes of Mörike and Goethe. Instead he next turned to Geibel and Heyse’s Spanish songbook, which contains a small amount of fine poetry in skillful German paraphrase (Lope de Vega, Camoens, Cervantes) and quite a lot of anonymous folk poetry which in the aggregate becomes a blank slate on which to inscribe an intense post-Wagnerian chromaticism.

Another similarity of the “Geistliche Lieder” in both songbooks is the reiterated theme of the penitent sinner’s pleading as illustrated in “Wo find’ ich Trost?” “Mühvoll komm’ ich und beladen,” and “Wunden trägst du, mein Geliebter.” Walker writes:

---


295 Carner, 44.

It is strange indeed how the materialistically minded Wolf reverts again and again to this theme of the remorseful sinner, fearful of damnation. We find these anguished appeals for divine grace and mercy in the choral Ergebung of 1881, in Seufzer and Wo find’ ich Trost? among the Mörike songs, and later, repeatedly, with overpowering intensity of expression, in the religious section of the Spanish Song Book.297

In addition, Glauert observes that particularly in the religious songs from the Spanish volume, “The Spanish lyric’s obsession with experiences of passion and guilt reinforced the importance of cyclical repetition to their expression, binding their form and content together in immediately obvious ways.” Another viewpoint comes from Youens, who interprets the poetry of the Spanish volume as reflected by Wolf’s Germanic articulations, comparing the textural features of both songbooks:

. . . Wolf uses the streams of parallel-third intervals found in 19th-century German anthologies of devotional songs for the third, fifth, and sixth songs in the quasi-cycle of the “Geistliche Lieder” (“Nun wandre, Maria,” “Führ mich, Kind, nach Bethlehem,” and “Ach, des Knaben Augen”); this is among the unifying elements one can trace throughout the section, and a carryover from the Mörike religious song, “Zum neuen Jahr.” Wolf’s first listeners in Germany and Austria would have recognized the device, would have known that it spoke of their homeland, not Spain.299

Despite the similarity and differences of the “Geistliche Lieder” from both songbooks, Carner’s description summarizes both religious song groups:

For Wolf, every new poem was a fresh challenge to his inventive powers and in meeting it he displayed an astounding adaptability. In a Pickwickian sense, no two songs of his are alike. The protean nature of his genius allowed him to change his musical personality and, hence, his musical style with each of his great song cycles…. Wolf may be said to respond to each in a different way, dependent on the poet’s manner of utterance, the music of his words, the metric peculiarities of his verse and qualities of a more imponderable spiritual

297 Walker, 234.

298 Glauert, 113.

character. But there are constants in his oeuvre – recurring traits or fingerprints that help us to identify his musical vocabulary with certain poetic ideas.\footnote{Carner, 11.}

Significance of Wolf’s “Geistliche Lieder”

Youens indicates, “It is noteworthy that Wolf’s attraction to Alarcón’s novel, El niño de la bola, of 1880, translated into German as Manuel Venegas, for his second opera, was its ‘dark purple ground of deepest religious feeling,’”\footnote{Youens, “Of Spain and Sin…,” 18.} revealing Wolf’s continued attraction to religious subject matter. The relationship between Wolf’s lifelong desire to compose an opera and the formation of both the Mörike volume and the Spanisches Liederbuch seems possibly to be interwoven with musical as well as personal circumstances. In addition, the fact that Wolf reordered the sequence of the “Geistliche Lieder” for publication, placing them literally at the center of the Mörike volume and at the beginning of the Spanish volume gives insight into Wolf’s personal attitude toward religious subjects.

A study of the choral cycle, Sechs geistliche Lieder nach Gedichten von Eichendorff (six sacred songs on the poetry of Eichendorff), composed in 1881, provides the opportunity to trace Wolf’s first musical response to religious subject matter. Composed during his early period, this particular work foreshadowed his notable musical individuality as Hillmar indicates:

Schon in jener Frühperiode, aus welcher diese Chöre stammen, hatte Wolf eine Vorliebe für zyklische Kompositionen bestätigt. . . . Erst jetzt ging einem ganz der mystische Zauber, die resigniert-schwermütige Stimmung, aus denen diese Chöre geboren, auf. . . . Auch musikalisch zeigen diese Jugendwerke ganz wundersamen Harmonien, die man am besten als echt wolfisch bezeichnen kann.\footnote{Hilmar, 59.}

\footnote{Already in the early period during which these choruses were created, Wolf had a penchant for cyclical compositions . . . Now a quite mystical magic arose in the resigned-elegiac mood, from which these were born. Also these early works show musically quite miraculous harmonies which can be termed genuine Wolfian style.)}
Since the placement of the songs takes on a symbolic significance for Wolf as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the allocated position of the “Geistliche Lieder” in both songbooks displays Wolf’s earnest, internal perception of the religious content of the poems despite his ambiguous religious attitude. In this manner, Wolf gives a picture of his struggle with his internal and external life circumstances and reveals his ability for sophisticated articulation of highly serious subject matter within his own musical language. These groupings of sacred songs also offer a new perspective of the aesthetic complexity of his lyrical reflection as well as his immediate expressive musical response.

Based on her case-studies of the “Geistliche Lieder” in Wolf’s Mörike volume, Youens arrives at the following questions:

What happens when a composer with one set of religious beliefs (and disbeliefs) sets to music religious verse by a poet whose spiritual sensibilities issue from a different dogmatic tradition? Are the differences encoded in the music, or does music’s conversion of the words into art obliterate theological concerns? Where both poet and composer were partial skeptics, where spiritual doubts or even negations enter the picture, the cross-currents are still more complicated. . . .\(^{303}\)

Her questions continue after exploring the ten “Geistliche Lieder” of the Spanisches Liederbuch, “What does it mean that Wolf was so drawn to Spanish themes and that expressions of religious fervor purportedly emanating from Spain had such meaning for him after his boyhood experience of the Catholic Church no longer did? . . .\(^{304}\)

---

\(^{303}\) Youens, Hugo Wolf and his Mörike Songs, 140.

A Human Being and an Artist

*Circumstance within Family and Friends*

Wolf was the third son in his family and his relationship with his father was very close and intense. In fact, Wolf often corresponded with his family members to share his excitement or frustration, mostly as related to his artistic career; these letters meant a great deal to him and influenced his artistic process tremendously. Most of all, the correspondence between Wolf and his father exhibited a very intimate relationship. This relationship was instrumental in guiding Wolf in his journey toward maturity. His father, Philipp, wrote to Wolf in 1887:

> My wishes are the same as your own – they culminate in your success. It is a task of Sisyphus in which you wear yourself out. Your striving is mirrored in your critical essays – but don’t despair, the sun of recognition will shine upon you yet. That I may witness it is my only wish, it would be the greatest joy in my wretched existence – but hush! Nothing shall disturb your name-day. Think only that you have a father who loves you and whose only joy and hope you are.305

This was one of his father’s last letters, congratulating his beloved son on Wolf’s name day.

When Wolf’s father passed away a year later, Wolf’s sorrow was indeed unbearable because he was not able to please his father with his success at all. Presumably Wolf’s deep feeling of loss was an important influence on his decision to set Mörike’s religious poetry.

In an earlier instance, after he broke up with his first love, Vally Frank, in 1881 Wolf chose for the first time to set six sacred songs for chorus (based on the poetry of Eichendorff). Fischer-Dieskau observes, “Wolf, der die Musik zeitweilig als Fluchtpunkt, als Mittel zur Überwindung seines Unglücks begreift, komponiert damals sechs Geistliche Lieder für gemischten Chor nach Eichendorff: Spiegel und Sublimation der seelischen

---

305 Walker, 196.
Erschütterung.\textsuperscript{306} Sams and Youens correspondingly state, “Some of his suffering is almost surely reflected in his six remarkable choruses on poems by Eichendorff, the \textit{Sechs geistliche Lieder} composed in April 1881.”\textsuperscript{307}

The creation of the \textit{Spanisches Liederbuch} seems to be more interrelated with developing circumstances. Through Joseph Schalk’s long and splendid article “Neue Lieder, neues Leben” (New songs, new life)\textsuperscript{308} in the Münchner Allgemeine Zeitung of 22 January 1890, Wolf achieved a flame of enthusiasm throughout southern Germany along with an expanded circle of domestic friends. His loyal friends included Emil Kauffmann (music director at the University of Tübingen) and Oskar Grohe (a judge of the lower court at Mannheim, who had at once begun to introduce Wolf’s music to his friends, including the music publisher, Karl Heckel, and Felix Weingartner, the Kapellmeister at the Mannheim Court Theatre).\textsuperscript{309} In addition, Grasberger writes:

\begin{quote}
He was self-assured and confident, but inwardly ill at ease in the big city, despite a large circle of friends. Unsteady and plagued by unresolved creative problems, he was poor and proud. . . . It was a particularly characteristic side of his nature that his tense, solitary planning and shaping needed to be shared, complemented by communication and animated with understanding of another. This led him to seek friendship throughout his life.\textsuperscript{310}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{306} Fischer-Dieskau, 119. (Wolf, who conceived the music temporarily as an escape-point, as a means of overcoming his misfortune, composed at that time six sacred songs for mixed chorus on poems by Eichendorff: [they were a] mirror and sublimation of psychological shock.)


\textsuperscript{308} “Neue Lieder, neues Leben” is also the title of a very famous poem by Goethe, set frequently by Lieder composers in the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{309} Walker, 225 – 26.

\textsuperscript{310} Wolf, \textit{Briefe an Melanie Köchert}, xxxiii.
\end{footnotes}
During the time in which he was composing the “Mörike Lieder,” Wolf often corresponded about his life struggles and concerns with his family and friends from his youth, such as Eckstein, and Edmund and Marie Lang. In contrast, Wolf completed his Spanish volume while his reputation was growing and among new German friends who contributed to him both materially and morally. Concerning their faithful friendship, which lasted beyond Wolf’s death in 1904, Grasberger writes, “In the history of the friendships of great men, Wolf’s friends must be given a special chapter. Without their help, which ranged from providing for basic needs to the promotion of his works, his life could have taken a different course.”\(^{311}\) Indeed, the relationships with his family and friends played a significant role in Wolf’s existence and his artistic work, and in them he also found comfort and encouragement, particularly during the period of his loss of creativity.

**Personal Circumstance**

Among Wolf’s internal struggles related to his personal issues, his utmost concerns besides his innate ambivalent personality seem to be his irregular periods of inspired creativity, his long-term intimate relationship with a married woman (Melanie Köchert), and his syphilis infection from the time of his youth. Currently some scholars investigating the reason for Wolf’s sporadic bursts of intense creativity and his manic composing style along with his preoccupied state regard this as due to his syphilis infection. Dietmar Langberg, the editor of the book “Hugo Wolf; Vom Sinn der Töne”—a collection of letters and criticism by Wolf—gives an insightful explanation of Wolf’s extraordinary personality based on the certain impact of his disease:

\(^{311}\) Wolf, *Briefe an Melanie Köchert*, xxxi.
In retrospect, it seems that some things in Wolf’s life prove the cited allegations about him. The alternation of phases of creative eruption, as from 1888 to 1891, with times in which nothing happened, for example from 1892 to 1894; ... Even his unadaptability to middle-class norms; his frequent loss of self-control in dealing with people – are these not clear evidence? Andreas Dorschel replied that it was not the influence of the power of a dark fate but the aftermath of the syphilis infection from 1877. And he specified further: “Ten years after the intoxication (and ten years before the outbreak of brain paralysis) the disease reached the prodromal phase and initiated Wolf’s manic release of his intellectual productive forces.”

312 Wolf, Hugo Wolf, Vom Sinn der Töne, 9.

313 Ibid., 10.
under severe psychological tensions, probably caused by the disparity existing between his soaring ambitions and his earth-bound accomplishments.314

In addition, Carner finds a connection between Wolf’s psychological reflections about his private concerns, such as his intimate relationship with Melanie Köchert, through analysis of some of the “Geistliche Lieder”:

Wolf seems to disappear behind words or, to put it differently, what the music has to say about the poem is said without the poem’s identity being in the slightest affected by the composer’s setting of it. True, from time to time, Wolf relapses into his erstwhile subjective manner, but this now takes place on a higher level of artistic realization. In such settings as ‘Wo find ich Trost,’ ‘Seufzer’ and some sacred and secular songs of the Spanish Song Book, we seem to sense a profound personal involvement on the composer’s part, particularly in songs about sin and redemption. Wolf’s close identification with a sinner writhing in an almost pathological torment and agony cannot have sprung from a doctrinal belief in mortal sin. I venture to suggest that in those settings Wolf projected his own agonized feeling of guilt at his syphilitic infection or at his adulterous relationship with Melanie Köchert or both.315

Furthermore, Youens describes Wolf’s musical response in particular to the religious poetry from the Spanisches Liederbuch:

We cannot know how Wolf felt on discovering that he had contracted syphilis in his later teenage years, but hints of anguish peer out from the scant accounts, and a Catholic boyhood would have taught him that the manner of its contraction constituted sin and that his love for Melanie Köchert was also sinful, although he rejected such dogmas in adulthood. That he thought deeply both about the complexities of erotic life and about the spiritual dimension of life is evident in hints from his letters, in the poetry he chose for musical setting, and in his treatment of that poetry.316


315 Carner, 12.

Conclusions

Doubt and Belief

As a significant component of Wolf’s essential artistic self-realization the “Geistliche Lieder” representatively demonstrate Wolf’s compositional output, providing an opportunity for research into his motivation for setting religious subject matter and consideration of his personal religious attitude. Wolf’s insightful relationship to his texts, in particular the religious-themed poems, and his profound use of musical language to set these texts leads one to deduce that he harbored a meaningful religious or spiritual perspective.

Current research regarding Wolf’s unique sporadic outbursts of artistic creativity, manic compositional impulses, and his ambivalent character combined with his eager struggle for his career correlates these issues more with his fatal disease than with any attempt to credit them to something such as mystic destination. Wolf’s private circumstances, such as his venereal disease and long-term secret, intimate and adulterous relationship with Melanie Köchert, certainly had an essential impact on his psychological as well as physical suffering as discussed in previous chapters. In light of these circumstances, Sams states, “His special concentration on the sacred songs however, with their heavy emphasis on guilt and redemption, may well have had some personal significance.”

On the other hand, Youens deliberately poses some questions about the methodology to deduce Wolf’s religious attitude from his setting of the “Geistliche Lieder” as follows:

One cannot, I have been told, draw conclusions about Wolf’s religious beliefs from his settings of other people’s poems as lieder: the words were not his, and a lied is not liturgical music. Wolf prided himself on his ability as a Protean shape-shifter, able to

317 Sams, 250.
assume varying characters at will, while nineteenth-century composers could and did write sacred works without necessarily believing in the religious content of the words they set to music. Nor is it unusual for Wolf to extend a poem’s scenario beyond the end of the words; . . . There is even a possibility that he wished to make evident the poet’s faith as the composer understood it from what was then available to him of Mörike’s poems and prose. But there is also the speculation that Wolf’s repeated attraction to spiritual poetry for musical setting (the six Eichendorff choruses, Morike’s poems on sacred subjects, the ten geistliche Lieder at the beginning of the Spanisches Liederbuch) and his compositional decisions in such songs as “Gebet” and “Auf ein altes Bild” tell of an inner life possibly influenced by the Catholicism in which he was reared, despite his adult rejection of its observances and the transferral of any putative spiritual yearnings into the artistic realm.318

Wolf’s letters and diaries are a splendid, reflective self-portrait and the most important sources of direct evidence of the development of his personal nature. In addition to the letters mentioned in the previous chapters, those letters written during his later life immediately before his collapse representatively reflect Wolf’s straightforward personality as related to a religious attitude, either due to his contentment or suffering, frustration or hopeful mind. A study of these letters and diaries aids in understanding Wolf’s deep cognitive character. For example, Wolf expressed his simple contentment and humble satisfaction to be a musician and even his gratefulness in a positive religious attitude as he wrote, “I thank God that I am only – as I say in my song, ‘Der Musikant’ – a poor vagabond with nothing but my song. . . .”319 Wolf could only find himself whenever he was able to compose under highly-inspired creativity and his ongoing wish and concern was finding this inspiration, as he expressed, “All that I need now is inspiration – and I shall be perfectly happy. All my friends envy me this delightful, bright, sunny flat with its monastery-like peacefulness.”320

318 Youens, Hugo wolf and his Mörike Songs, 167.


Despite Wolf’s agnostic standpoint, ambiguous attitude towards religion, and innate ambivalent character, many letters and anecdotes and most of all his “Geistliche Lieder” expose not only his spiritual depth but also his true personality. Music and inspired creativity were a core center of Wolf’s life and the meaningful reason for his existence. Consequently when his creativity began to wane and he entered into a compositional standstill Wolf’s suffering and despair were extreme. The torment he felt emerged in much of his correspondence in which he often depicted his distress in self-denial. Nevertheless, Wolf was still able to regain his optimistic attitude as represented in many of his letters. In the following example Wolf’s belief in hope is obvious. In January 1898, while recovering at an asylum, he wrote to his mother:

Möge Ihnen die Bürde des Alters nicht zu schwer fallen, und möchte Gott es geben, daß Sie meine Siege noch erleben. Bis heute waren Sie nur Zeuge meiner Kämpfe, meines Mißgeschickes, meiner Niederlagen, und doch wird die Zeit kommen, wo mir nebst der Palme der Erfolglosigkeit, die ich bisher geschwungen, auch der siegkrönende Lorbeer die Stirne schmücken wird. Möchten Sie diese Zeit noch erleben. Dies ist mein sehnlichster Wunsch.321

In his article, “Conversation with Hugo Wolf,” Walker recounts, “Wolf’s friends have told us in their reminiscences of his remarkable powers as a conversationalist. Thus Eckstein, in his ‘Alte unnenbare Tage’ (Vienna, 1936), refers to the many nocturnal debates they had together. Wagner or some aspect of his writings or his music, and Nietzsche were frequently the principal themes, from which the conversation developed in all directions.”322 Wolf’s views on religion and social concerns are also mentioned. In contrast to Wolf’s admiration of the Nietzschean

321 Familienbriefe, 124.

(I wish for you that the burden of age won’t be too difficult, and may God allow you to experience my victory. Until today, you have been a witness only to my struggles, my misfortunes, my defeats. But the time will come when the laurel wreaths of victory will decorate my brow, along with the palms of failure that I have brandished to date. May you only live to experience that time! This is my most fervent wish.)

perspective, his criticism of Nietzsche’s *The Antichrist* remarkably reveals Wolf’s confrontation with radical Nietzschean agnosticism.

Perhaps the most interesting of all are those few passages which reveal something of Wolf’s ideas on religion and conventional morality. Details are withheld of the particular affair among his friends which gave rise to the following remarks, but the general situation and Wolf’s attitude are clear enough: “But in general I like such women better than wholly insipid ones. However, the woman must naturally always preserve decorum. A love-affair, whether it is broken off or not, never harms a man, but the woman is always dependent on the world. She cannot, therefore, and may not, cut herself off from it altogether.” . . . Then we came to speak of Nietzsche. Wolf says that one allows oneself to be carried away so easily by this man because he makes everything so clear to one, explains so lucidly, speaks so winningly, but one must take everything with a pinch of salt. The last work of Nietzsche, ‘Der Antichrist’, is something downright annihilating of Christianity, nothingness. . . . But in every respect Nietzsche goes too far.”

The Believing Agnostic

**Ergebung (Submission)**

Dein Wille, Herr, geschehe!  
Verdunkelt schweigt das Land,  
Im Zug der Wetter sehe  
ich schauern, deine Hand.  
O mit uns Sündern gehe  
erbarmend ins Gericht!  
Ich beug im tiefsten Wehe  
zum Staub mein Angesicht.  
Dein Wille, Herr, geschehe!  

Thy will, O Lord, be done!  
Darkened now the land is mute,  
In the approaching storm I see  
and tremble at your hand.  
O go with us sinners  
mercifully into judgement!  
I bow in deepest sorrow,  
my face in the dust.  
Thy will, O Lord, be done!

This poem was set by Wolf in 1881 and was his first setting of the religious poetry from the “Sechs geistliche Lieder nach Gedichten von Eichendorff.” In a last inspired moment in 1899, before Wolf’s loss of his mental faculties, he tried to rewrite this meaningful piece, which became a foreshadowing of the end of his life’s journey. This last inspiration could only be realized as a five-measure fragment on the “Skizzblatt” (Sketch-sheet) as accounted by Walker,

---

“He was allowed a piano in his own room, of which he made good use. A few sheets of music written in 1899 are still in existence,” as well as being listed in the booklet from the 1960 Hugo Wolf exhibition celebrating the centennial anniversary of his birth. Whether by coincidence or fate it was one of the final musically-inspired moments for Wolf, whose self-concept was defined by his creativity. As Abel and Heckman observe, “He felt that life without music was futile. ‘When I can compose no more,’ he once declared in typically colorful fashion, ‘you can throw me on a dunghill.’” The fact that Wolf chose to work on a piece with religious subject matter in his final artistic moments leads to speculation about his inner desires and beliefs during his last period of consciousness. “Ergebung” was performed as a musical farewell at his funeral in 1904.

Langberg describes Wolf as a “religious free thinker” and wrote, “Unter dem Einfluß Friedrich Nietzsches entwickelte sich Wolf zum religiösen Freidenker und war zeitweise nach dem Vorbild Wagners Vegetarier, was damals als antibürgerliche Protesthaltung galt. Er interessierte sich auch für die Bestrebungen der Frauen nach Gleichberechtigung.” In addition, Youens states:

In a revealing letter written on 29 April 1892 on the occasion of her [Wolf’s mother] name day, Wolf characterized himself as an unbeliever and questioned whether the institution of a name day had any validity amidst the general irreligiosity of modern Christian civilization. “Who still thinks nowadays of saints? Who believes in them?” he tells his mother. So-called pious folk gabble their Our Fathers and rosaries meaninglessly,

324 Walker, Hugo Wolf, 460.


326 Abel and Don Heckman, 34.

327 Langberg, 19.

(Under the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche Wolf developed into a religious free-thinker and temporarily became a vegetarian like his model, Wagner, which was regarded as an attitude of anti-civil protest at that time. He was also interested in the aspirations of women for equal rights.)
like the ABCs recited by small schoolchildren, he says, and —this is the crux of the letter—twice states his own Nietzschean belief in godliness as the highest manifestation of pure humanity. “As a tree sinks its roots deep into the earth, the more strongly to reach to the heights, so too must the living word, the presentiment of godliness at the innermost core of human being, take root. Thus is the biblical proverb, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them,’ verified.” . . . If Wolf was not a ‘believer’ in the prescriptions and proscriptions of Catholicism, he was unquestionably someone for whom life had a spiritual dimension, beyond the realm of rituals and dogma. 328

Hilmar insightfully observes that Wolf’s beliefs were interrelated with his “Kunst” (art), “Sein Glaube galt einzig allein der Kunst und der Wahrhaftigkeit der Kunst, und das war seine Maxime. Nur aus seiner Situation heraus, in der er sich und seine Musik verstanden fühlte, legte er ein nahezu religiöses Bekenntnis ab.” 329 He describes Wolf’s letter to Melanie Köchert on 20 February 1894 which reflects the deepest consciousness of Wolf’s internal world, “Ich fühle es auch, wie ich nach u. nach ein besserer Mensch werde u. fange wieder an Glauben u. Zutrauen zu den Menschen zu gewinnen. Möge dieses erhebende Gefühl baldigst in einer künstlerischen Manifestation sich aussprechen.” 330

It appears that no one would be capable of discerning Wolf’s true attitude toward religion or even to clarify whether he was able to be aware of his own true religious feeling. However, due to the opinions expressed by scholars and in supportive sources, and from anecdotes concerning Wolf’s religious or spiritual attitude, it is apparent that Wolf was, at the least, a spiritual man if not a true believer. Moreover, Wolf’s confident declaration in a letter


329 Hilmar, 366.
(His faith was in art alone and in the truth of art, and that was his maxim. Only in a situation in which he felt himself and his music to be understood, did he make a nearly religious confession.)

(I sense, too, that I’m gradually becoming a better person and I’m starting again to acquire belief and trust in people. May this uplifting feeling soon express itself in artistic realization.)
dated 14 June 1891, during his temporary period of compositional stagnation, allows one to
glimpse his determined personality and the philosophy of life, and illuminates his religious
ambiguity.

Wolf declares, “Was ich bin, das bin ich durch mich, und danke es keinem andern. Wenn
ich aber durch mich zu nichts werde, dann mag die ganze Welt mir beweisen wollen, daß ich was
sei, so bin ich doch nichts. Mag man mich schmähen, zurücksetzen, verkennen, verschimpfen
nach Belieben, — ich weiß doch, daß ich etwas bin. . .”331 In this statement Wolf sounds
confident with himself, by himself, and in himself, independent of anyone else’s conclusions
about him or his religious attitude, either as a believer or an unbeliever. It is the study of Wolf’s
musical output, particularly his “Geistliche Lieder,” his life circumstances, his relationships, and
his attitude toward his faith that allows us to expand and deepen the horizon of understanding of
Hugo Wolf as an extraordinary artist and simultaneously as a human being.

331 Willi Reich, Hugo Wolf – Rapsodie; aus Briefen und Schriften (Zürich: W. Classen. 1947), 34.
(What I am as a person I have become by myself alone, and not by the help of any other. If I am not going to
succeed at anything in my life, I will be nothing—even if the whole world strives to prove that I have succeeded. I
might be maligned, might be neglected, and might be unrecognized or insulted, according to one’s pleasure—but I
do know that I am a person of value...)
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


_________. Briefe an Emil Kauffmann. Berlin, 1903.


Dissertations


Journal articles


