Word and Song: The Paradox of Romanticism

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WORD AND SONG: THE PARADOX OF ROMANTICISM

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Catherine Allison Ingram
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WORD AND SONG: THE PARADOX OF ROMANTICISM

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WORD AND SONG: THE PARADOX OF ROMANTICISM

Catherine A. Ingram December 1996 66 pages

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Among the various outcomes of the Romantic period, an interest in the relationship of the arts remains a widely recognized yet rarely examined field of study. Music and literature seemed to develop a particular kinship, yet to identify the exact relationship is as difficult as defining Romanticism itself. In this study, I attempt to do both.

In exploring the concept of Romanticism, its paradoxical development from Classicism is examined through the comparison of six great composers and poets of the period. By tracing the similarities and differences in style of Beethoven/Wordsworth, Schumann/Keats, and Brahms/Tennyson, hopefully a clearer understanding of the evolution of Romanticism is achieved. These artists, although creating through different mediums, address the apparent rejection of Neoclassicism, the apex of Romanticism, and the realization of its limitations.

The result is the revelation of the paradox of Romanticism. For each artist, the realization of the Romantic spirit presents contrasts. Ultimately, the rejection of Neoclassic thought becomes as important to Romanticism as its dependence on Neoclassic form. These six artists achieved success not only because of their talents but also because of their acknowledgement of this fact. In this study, I trace their development through the rise and fall of Romanticism as more than instances of shared techniques or borrowed texts; the similarities in thought, poetic vision, and style shared by these artists are explored as well. The paradox of Romanticism is revealed through the interrelationship of poetry and music.
Introduction: The Foundation of Romanticism

To study "Romanticism" is to delve into a world of contrasts. The term denotes a period in history in which the natural and the supernatural, the intellectual and the intuitive, and the reactionary and revolutionary aspects of human nature were celebrated. Several of the artists whom today we casually refer to as "Romantics" would either object to the terminology or possibly even be unfamiliar with such a term. From its Germanic and English literary strands of the late eighteenth century, Romanticism emerged as a concept that, perhaps because of its very nature, is more difficult to define than it is to recognize. For this reason, analyzing Romanticism from multiple perspectives proves helpful in understanding not only its origins but also its products.

One of the more obvious outcomes of the Romantic period was a renewed interest in the relationship of the arts, particularly music and literature. Whether intentionally or not, musicians created vivid and poetic music, while poets experimented with musical structures and concepts. The sense of "boundlessness," so characteristic of Romanticism, pervades the arts of the century. As a result, the kinship of the arts is, for the
first time, seriously explored in terms of the creation of new forms of expression.

Much has been written about the relationship of music and literature in Germany during the early years of the Romantic movement. German music was extremely receptive to the later eighteenth century writings of Goethe, Herder, and Schiller. Yet the foundation of both German Romantic literature and music was built upon English ideas—among these were the works of Shakespeare, considered the "ideal romantic artist" among German authors (Leichtentritt 199). This is not to say that English literature and European music have some mystical connections or ties that explain their influences upon each other throughout the ages; however, it does suggest that, at any given historical moment, an art which is experiencing changes which lift it to a new level will influence another art experiencing similar changes, regardless of the countries from which the changes originate. I will examine the zenith of these two branches of Romanticism, nineteenth century English literature and European music, in order to show that the similarities in conception and expression between the two are not merely coincidental but inevitable developments of Neoclassicism.

To understand the "Romantic" qualities of the two arts and their ties to Neoclassic thought, one must first attempt to define Romanticism. This feat proves as difficult for modern scholars as it did for the artists of
the nineteenth century. One of the more obvious characteristics of Romanticism is the rebellious spirit that underscored the music and literature of the period. Romantic writers, sometimes characterized as self-absorbed or disengaged from reality, were in fact immersed in the concept of political revolution; during the early years of the French Revolution, Burns, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Mary Wollstonecraft were its dedicated supporters (Abrams, "The Romantic Period" 4). Revolution is an element in both the personal and literary lives of these Romantic poets. Byron actively joined in the Greek struggle for freedom from Turkish oppression, partly out of a sense of responsibility since his writings had helped create European sympathy for the Greek cause (Abrams, "George Gordon, Lord Byron" 483). Perhaps no other writer, however, is as associated with the concept of revolution as Wordsworth.

Mark Van Doren, in his introduction to William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry, observes that Wordsworth was immersed in the French Revolution. During the early years in which he lived in France, the idea of revolution must have seemed a natural and obvious development for one who was himself a "free spirit" (xv). Wordsworth soon turned from allegiance to despair, as he observed that "Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence/ For one of conquest, losing sight of all/ Which they had struggled for" (The Prelude 11:207-09). His growing disillusionment led him
to the study of abstract political theories, culminating in depression and despair:

So I fared,

Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours; now believing,
Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of obligation, what the rule and whence
The sanction; till, demanding formal proof,
And seeking it in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

(The Prelude 11:293-305)

This quotation suggests the true paradox of Romanticism. Wordsworth's struggle to understand the questions of the soul through rational, Neoclassic means ("calling the mind," "plain day," "proof") is destined to end in psychological and spiritual "despair." This drama of Neoclassic/Romantic conflict, which will be explored more specifically through certain artists, is the guiding force behind the development of Romanticism and a key to its ultimate understanding.

Romantic composers were no less affected by the concept of revolution. Many composers became "free
artists" because aristocrats could no longer support them or maintain private opera houses and orchestras. Thus the Romantic composer was forced to sell his creations to a growing middle-class audience (Kamien 285). The European revolutions of 1848 affected the personal lives of many composers, among them Wagner, who participated in the Dresden insurrection and consequently was forced to leave Germany (Kamien 382). Adding a spark of nationalism to the reactionary mood of the period was Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies (Siegmeister 487). Features common to the revolutionary movement in literature and music include a desire for liberty, the realization of the potential of the individual, and an opposition to academic rules, most notably the Neoclassic tradition.

The common assumption that Romanticism is a reaction against eighteenth-century tradition epitomized in the works of Pope, Dryden, and Johnson is too much of an oversimplification to serve as a starting position in defining Romanticism. However, the concept of revolution remains important in the political and artistic development of both English and German Romanticism. In "The Enthusiast" (1744), Joseph Wharton sets forth the ideas of the English strand. Wharton directly rebels against neoclassic aesthetics in art and writing. This rebellion is occasioned by his ardent love of Shakespeare, whom he regards as a natural genius, and his rejection of Pope, therefore proclaiming
an independence from rules. Wharton also suggests that nature is superior to art, in that art is artificial while nature is spontaneous, wild, and instinctive.

The Germanic strand of Romanticism, as defined by Schiller and Schlegel, supports two English concepts: a revolt against Neoclassical confinements, and a fervent admiration for Shakespeare as an artist not bound by rules are ideas common to both strands. However, the Germanic strand denied any opposition between the natural and art. Furthermore, civilized cultures, not primitive ones, are viewed as superior in terms of creative art; Shakespeare's genius is a result of his creation of rules, not a lack of rules. The Germanic school also tended to value complexity rather than simplicity in writing (Lovejoy 48-49).

The powerful influence of these early Romantic theories was, of course, not limited to literature. As M.H. Abrams notes in The Mirror and the Lamp, music also was subjected to an aesthetic reinterpretation. While the earliest "criticism" of music and literature can be traced to Plato and Aristotle, scholarly theory on this subject is more modern. As Steven P. Scher states in his essay "Literature and Music," the concept of musico-literary theory emerged during the eighteenth century as an offspring of "general aesthetics" (238). Scher asserts that these first comparisons view literature and music as "separate but parallel 'sister arts.'" A hierarchy, based on the Aristotelian mimetic principle, was established
whereby poetry was the ranked as the highest art, followed by painting and music. By mid-century, this ranking was challenged. Charles Avison, in An Essay on Music Expression (1752), argued that the emotive aspect of music negates the mimetic principle (Scher 238-39). Purely instrumental music was viewed as devoid of any set association and "imitative only in the trivial passages in which it simulates the cries of birds and the gurgle of running water..." (Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp 92). Abrams argues that music was the first of the arts to be disassociated from the theory of imitation. Later, British and German aestheticians, such as John Brown, Daniel Webb, Johann Georg Sulzer, and Johann Gottfried von Herder, proposed that literature and music, not literature and art, were the supreme allied arts. This proposal naturally led to Romanticists, such as E.T.A. Hoffman, who asserted that music, not poetry, was first among the arts (Scher 239).

With the weakening of the theory of imitation, artists instead focused on the expressiveness of the arts, most notably the effects of the arts on the listener (Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp 92). Abrams notes that in England the lyric poem seemed to be the origin of the idea that "all art is emotional expression," while music was regarded as the "most purely expressive" art in Germany (93). Yet the differences in German and English criticism were not limited to form. English critics asserted that purely instrumental music lacked a clear
meaning and required the addition of poetry to achieve full emotional import. On the other hand, German critics, among them Tieck, Wackenroder, and Hoffman, argued that instrumental music was superior because of the indefinite quality of its music, which created an atmosphere that is "imprecisely suggestive" (Abrams 94). German writers experimented with musical forms in literature as specific as a symphonic pattern or as general as thematic organization. These ideas were also explored in England by Keats, Shelley, De Quincey, and Coleridge, although their attempts were "casual," without a defined theory. Despite these differences in aesthetic interpretation, both German and English reinterpretation of music and literature served as a break from Neoclassic theory as well as an introduction to the Romantic focus on expression and the artist (Abrams 94).

One need only read the essays of the nineteenth century to see that the artists themselves were not only aware of the growing dichotomy between Neoclassicism and Romanticism but also of the influence of social and political changes upon art. For example, Karl August Timotheus Kahlert, a historian with a particular interest in the study of fine arts, published in 1864 an important article in Allgemeine musicalische Zeitung. "Ueber den Begriff der klassischen und romantischen Musik" was the first article of any importance to analyze Neoclassicism and Romanticism in music; the forms and artists mentioned
are the same that today are used to define the two movements. Kahlert notes that, while aestheticians have carefully outlined the principles of classical and romantic art, the application of these principles to specific arts proves at best to be difficult (559). While Kahlert suggests that this problem is more linguistic than aesthetic, i.e. the "loose" usage of the terms romantic and classical, it is his later examination of the differences in the two forms that seems to better define the difficulties.

Interestingly enough, Kahlert argues that the "antithesis between classical and romantic" music originated in poetry (560). Kahlert notes several causes of this disparity. First, all European nations have produced poets who have drawn upon ancient Greece as well as those who have turned to their own national culture; the struggles between the two have at times been intense. For example, Germany's history was all but ignored by those who upheld the ideals of Greek culture, while the romantics turned attention to Germany's past. As mentioned earlier, the romantics also "reached for the infinite," while classicists remained in self-established boundaries (560).

Kahlert maintains that music, as it developed during the beginning of the nineteenth century, experienced a similar struggle. Eighteenth century composers catered to either German or Italian tastes. Germans, however, broke
from this tradition and achieved an "intimate fusion of Italian and German styles" that not only received universal praise but also indicated a significant contribution to European music:

The Germans did much to shape the course of instrumental music, once they had learned to make their music sing in the Italian manner and to implant in their instrumental compositions a melodic quality that was quite new. Instrumental music was emancipated from its purely contrapuntal and ornamental roles; it developed enormous versatility. (Kahlert 561)

Yet what is most revealing is Kahlert's next assertion: the composer who led the way in this achievement was Mozart. Kahlert describes him as the "most truly classical of all composers" (561), yet the statements describing his contributions could also be attributed to many great Romantic composers. Kahlert calls his music "imaginative," balanced in form, possessing "lightness and yet the greatest depth and skill," and admirable both for its "simplicity" as well as its "ineffable profundity" (561). While Mozart would not be classified as a "Romantic," the terms used by Kahlert to describe his work suggest that Mozart laid the framework for Romantic composers, most notably Beethoven. Thus the concept of Romanticism as a natural progression from Neoclassicism emerges.
Kahlert's final comments on Romanticism and Classicism are somewhat vague in terms of the future of the two forms. He identifies a "feverish restlessness" that exists not only in music but in all aspects of life, a reference no doubt to the political turmoil of his time (564). Yet he views this restlessness as necessary:

...this formlessness promises more for the future than does a sterile adherence to outdated procedures, soulless formality, born of a study, not of the living emotions, but of classical works of art, which had after all originally been inspired by genuine feelings. Musical forms, both strict and free, will continually reshape themselves. (564)

Kahlert argues that not only will the contrasts between the classical and the romantic surface in terms of form versus expression, but that these two will continue to be an important factor in future individuals, nations, and time periods (564). Finally, Kahlert asserts that, in terms of music, those who are aware of the boundaries of the "natural laws of sound" will prevail, while others will "lose themselves in chaos or insipid sentimentality as they drift along" (565), suggesting that successful artists will recognize the limitations as well as the similarities between Romanticism and Classicism.

The examination of these "successful artists" and their individual works is the next step in understanding
the relationship between Romantic poetry and music. Three "generations" will be examined: Wordsworth/Beethoven, Keats/Schumann, and Tennyson/Brahms. Each of these artists must deal with the possibilities and limitations of Romanticism. More importantly, each must resolve in some way the apparent antithesis of Neoclassic/Romantic thought without sacrificing craft or inspiration.
Chapter 1
Wordsworth and Beethoven: From Classic to Romantic

The assertion that Romanticism is a logical and necessary development of Neoclassicism is somewhat difficult to maintain in the face of obvious differences between the two. Walter Bate observes that "Classicism assumed that the ideal or universal that comprises the absolute standard of taste may be known by the direct use of man's ethical reason..." (27). Neoclassic art emphasizes balance, symmetry, and order. The ideal in Neoclassic literature is the imitation of the ancients. Yet, one way in which Marion Bauer and Ethel Peyser attempt to "define" Neoclassic music is in terms of its ending: "its termination is found in the strivings of Beethoven, Schubert and their colleagues toward a new aesthetic ideal" (329), which is, of course, Romanticism. Neoclassicism glorifies tradition, form, reason, and logic, while Romanticism rebels against the formal orthodoxy of the age, replacing it with emotion, intuition, and feeling.

The problem with such generalizations, however, is that they ignore the individual achievements of the artists grouped under the terms "Romantic" or "Classic"; for example, a poet such as Keats utilizes Neoclassic form to explore ideas and emotions that are very much "Romantic." Such is the case with the two "giants" of
"Romantic." Such is the case with the two "giants" of literature and music: Wordsworth and Beethoven. Each appears to be neatly "classified" under Romanticism and Neoclassicism, respectively. Yet each artist brings a unique contribution to Romanticism that could not exist without Neoclassic influences.

Wordsworth's contributions to modern poetry are vast; his status as the greatest of the Romantic poets could easily be overshadowed by his rank among the great poets of all time. Yet the qualities which make his poetry so universally admired--its tranquility, descriptive ease, and sublimity--are also the qualities of his Romanticism. Just as it is difficult to imagine Wordsworth composing without his beloved lake country of Northwest England, it is impossible to imagine any of his poems reaching the universal heights or personal depths they achieved outside the realm of Romanticism.

Yet Wordsworth's earliest poems contain many Neoclassic elements. The following excerpt from "An Evening Walk" demonstrates that, at least in form, the poem is a conventional eighteenth century work:

Fair scenes, erewhile, I taught, a happy child,
The echoes of your rocks my carols wild:
The spirit sought not then, in cherished sadness,
A cloudy substitute for failing gladness.
In youth's keen eye the livelong day was bright,
The sun at morning, and the stars at night,
Alike, when first the bittern's hollow bill
Was heard, or woodcocks roamed the moonlight hill.

(3, lines 13-20)

In terms of structure, the poem possesses several Neoclassic qualities. Wordsworth includes a summary of the topics covered in the poem beneath its title, a product of the Neoclassic desire for clear, rational thought. The use of heroic couplets as well as the regularity of the ten syllable lines are also common eighteenth century elements. Parallel phrases and balanced lines, as in line 18, are intentional Neoclassic devices, as well as the classical allusions and personification scattered throughout the poem. Wordsworth's use of poetic diction, something he will replace with the "language really used by men," demonstrates an aesthetic theory of the age that poetry should have a special language that elevates it above prose. Examples include the use of "erewhile" in line 13 and the use of "wain," "meads," and "swains" throughout the poem.

Yet even in this early work, Romantic tendencies exist. The striking examples of specific, concrete detail and imagery (lines 19-20) and the sympathy for the plight of the poor as depicted in the female beggar section are clearly Romantic elements. In this particular section of the poem, the discussion of beauty and strangeness in nature and the reminiscence of childhood foreshadow later
works such as "Tintern Abbey" and The Prelude. One could argue, then, that just as Wordsworth laid the groundwork for Romantic poetry, Neoclassic theory served as a foundation upon which Wordsworth built his greatest work.

Beethoven, although usually included among artists of the Classic period, is considered the composer who ushers Romanticism into the world of music. In his examination of music and aesthetics during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Kahlert recognizes Beethoven as the composer who explored the paths leading to the Romantic movement. Kahlert notes that, beginning with J.S. Bach, instrumental music "possessed a greater spiritual potential" than vocal music. This phenomenon is due not only to the inherent limitations of the human voice but also to the greater variety of harmony, texture, and sounds possible in instrumental music. Beethoven recognized and utilized this fact in ways that earlier Neoclassicists had not (561). Yet Kahlert does not suggest that Beethoven completely rejected the forms used by his predecessors:

The creative mind, however, will conquer nature as long as nature's powers are respected. It expands forms; it seems to play with them; but it knows that without them it is nothing, and that if it severs its earthly ties in the process of reaching out for the infinite it will perish. The primeval form that underlies all musical structure was constantly in
Beethoven's heaven-storming, Titanic mind. (561)

What Beethoven achieved, then, is not a break from Neoclassicism, but an expansion. His creativity with sound and color may at first seem quite different, but the basic laws of music that make it accessible and enjoyable to others are always present.

Although the later works of Beethoven are generally considered most Romantic, the early works, like those of Wordsworth, indicate a tension between Neoclassic style and Romantic art. Kramer cites the last movement of the String Quartet in B flat, Op. 18, no. 6, as a prime example. The conflict between the Romantic and the Classic is symbolized in the Adagio and Allegro sections: "the one harmonically problematical, the other straight-forward; the one combining block chordal writing with fugato, the other dancelike; the one fragmented, the other continuous" (179). Beethoven's contribution, like Wordsworth's, is the addition of drama and feeling to eighteenth century form.

Beethoven's works may be divided into three periods: an early phase from 1782 to 1800, a middle phase from 1800 to 1815, and a final phase from 1815 to his death in 1827 (Bauer and Peyser 379). As the previous example suggests, the early works are imitative and Neoclassic, much like the works of Wordsworth. These pieces include marches, somewhat "clumsy" sonatas and piano quartets, and
piano trios resulting from study with Haydn (Bauer and Peyser 379). The importance of these works, however, is not limited to the development of the artist, nor does the later abandonment of this period's style signify a total abandonment of Neoclassicism. Rather, Beethoven, like Wordsworth, brings feeling, beauty, and the range of human emotions to eighteenth century form; the result is a natural evolution from Neoclassicism to Romanticism.

For both artists, the middle period of composition was the greatest. As Van Doren notes, the decade of 1797-1807 marks Wordsworth's greatest poems; it is the period of collaboration with Coleridge as well as his personal struggle with the French Revolution (xiii). The period contains the "Lucy" poems, "Tintern Abbey," The Prelude, and the "Intimations of Immortality" ode. These represent Wordsworth at his best, tracing in various degrees the development of a "poet's mind" from experience to feeling.

Beethoven's middle phase was a time of increase--economically and artistically--and loss. The deafness which he attempted to deny for so long drastically affected the composer personally and creatively. It is surely no coincidence, then, that the works of this period become increasingly darker and more personal. Bauer and Peyser go so far as to assert that the deafness indirectly contributed to the development of Romanticism in music: "[the deafness] was so calamitous that it drove Beethoven
to find solace in expressing his feelings in more personal and emotional music than any composer had ever before attempted" (374). That Beethoven was aware of this innovation in his music is apparent in a note he sent to his publishers. Regarding the E flat Major Piano Sonata, Op. 31, no. 3 and two sets of variations, Op. 34 and Op. 35, Beethoven wrote "both are handled in an entirely new manner—usually I hardly realize when my ideas are new, and hear of it first from others; but in this instance I can myself assure you that I have done nothing in the same manner before" (Bauer and Peyser 379-80).

During their productive periods, various ideas common to Romanticism were explored by each artist; among these was the natural world. For Wordsworth nature could be an excellent teacher (as in "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned") or simply a source of pleasure. Usually, however, nature is much more influential, as in "Tintern Abbey." In this poem Wordsworth comments on the moral influence of nature, in that memories of a pleasant scene give the viewer pleasure, which in turn may produce ethical conduct. The viewer of a beautiful natural scene can experience a deep understanding or mystical insight into the nature of existence. Beethoven expresses a similar sentiment in a letter to Therese von Malfatti:

I rejoice like a child at the thought of wandering among woods, copse, trees, grass, rocks. No man loves the country more than I do; for woods,
trees, and rocks echo the thing man yearns for. Every tree seems to speak to me saying, "Holy! Holy!"

(Bauer and Peyser 378)

Wordsworth and Beethoven were keenly aware of the presence of a mystery in the natural world. It is perhaps this sense of the mysterious in Beethoven's later music that alienated many of his contemporaries. At least one, however, recognized the relationship of Beethoven's work to the spirit of the age. Kahlert describes Beethoven's music as "tense with expectation," filled with grand themes and ideas, combinations of pauses and sound that achieved the miraculous, all of which come together in a period when "people were plumbing the depths of nature's profoundest secrets" (562).

The awesome natural world was an even more important subject for Wordsworth. In the first book of The Prelude, Wordsworth explores this setting. He describes a moment from his childhood in which he stole a boat and experienced firsthand nature's mystery:

... my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head.... (188, lines 375-80)
...I left my bark,--
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

(189, lines 388-400)

In stealing the boat and rowing across the lake,
Wordsworth had violated nature's moral code. More
importantly, he became aware of the duality of nature.
Wordsworth expressed in words the very feelings Kahlert
recognized in Beethoven's music.

Like all great artists of their period, Beethoven and
Wordsworth were greatly affected by the French
Revolution. The events of the time certainly colored all
aspects of life, and the arts were not immune. A specific
example of the effect upon Beethoven may be found in the
dedication of the "Eroica" symphony. As Bauer and Peyser
observe, the third symphony has always been surrounded by
intrigue and mystery; originally it was dedicated to
Napoleon. With Napoleon's declaration of himself as
emperor, however, and the increasing acts of terror,
Beethoven changed the inscription: "to celebrate the memory of a great man" (381). What is most significant about the work is the heroic sense of power which imbues the piece; the very triumph and pain of the revolution is captured in music.

The French Revolution had an equal impact on Wordsworth. Books 9-11 of *The Prelude* chronicle Wordsworth's mammoth struggle with the initial thrill, attempts to rationalize, and ultimate disillusionment with the revolution. Wordsworth, like Beethoven, recognizes Napoleon's quest for imperialism:

But now, become oppressors in their turn,
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
For one of conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for...

(355, lines 206-09)

Obviously one would not wish to trivialize the impact of the French Revolution on those whose lives were affected by it. Yet once again the parallels between music and literature, particularly in the works and ideas of Beethoven and Wordsworth, are apparent. The triumph and terror of the time finds expression in music and poetry, and music and poetry are, in a sense, strengthened by the experience.

The final period for each artist seems anticlimactic to the previous achievements. While Beethoven's late works have a decidedly devoted audience today, many of
Beethoven's contemporaries rejected the work of his final period, attributing to his deafness what they considered meaningless music (Bauer and Peyser 375). Wordsworth's later poems, however, suffered not so much from a lack of acceptance as a lack of inspiration. Van Doren notes that the youth and energy of his greatest poems are missing from these works: "The 'years that bring the philosophic mind'...brought him no access of poetic power; and 'natural piety' [became] indistinguishable from piety in its ordinary form" (xxi). Such observations suggest that the concept of paradox is important to these artists on an even more personal level.

Beethoven and Wordsworth constantly struggled with conflicting themes and ideas. Melnick notes that the idea of paradox is inherent in Beethoven's contribution to both nineteenth and twentieth century music. The conflict between inner and outer self, the subjective and the conventional, and creation and death represents the "Romantic tension" of all nineteenth century artists as well as the composer who in deafness found freedom (21-22). The Hammerklavier sonata, a work created between Beethoven's middle and late periods, best exemplifies this paradox (Melnick 22). This work blends the restructuring of the sonata form with a dissonance which, in itself, embodies the Romantic spirit. Melnick's description of the conflicts in the sonata suggests not only "Romantic
tension" but the transformation of Neoclassicism into Romanticism as well:
The listener to the Hammerklavier sonata confronts such "controlled paradoxes" in each movement--in the final fugue's hammered trills and apocalyptic climaxes unifying strict counterpoint and violence, or in the exploratory freedom embodied by the fugue's introductory Largo and in the Adagio sostenuto itself, and above all in the development section when we hear its leaping chords modulated with a continuous abruptness--these rhythmic explosions of modulation embody simultaneously an unleashed freedom and a climax of the controlling idea of sonata development itself. (23)

Ironically, the greatest challenge for Beethoven may not have been deafness, but the position as the "bridge" between Neoclassic and Romantic thought. It is a conflict that transcends the question of form versus feeling in a work or in the personal life of a composer; it addresses the very nature of Romanticism itself.

Paradox is certainly no stranger to the works of Wordsworth. The lament of the loss of childhood and the resulting exchange of innocence for experience are common conflicts explored in his greatest poems. The "Intimations of Immortality" ode embodies this theme in combination with Wordsworth's greatest subject, nature:
There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;--
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.  

(541, lines 1-9)

In the poem, Wordsworth consoles himself for the
loss of childhood vision through memory and the
development of the philosophic mind. While a child is
limited to lyrical experiences and reactions to a moment, the adult has the power to see connections. Beethoven's
loss of hearing is not unlike Wordsworth's loss of
childlike understanding; yet Beethoven, like Wordsworth, must surely have found "strength in what remains behind" (line 181). The ultimate paradox for each lies in the
concept that an awareness of death brings an increased
capacity for life.

Wordsworth's and Beethoven's unique positions as the
transitional figures from Neoclassic to Romantic art must
have provided them with as many obstacles as
opportunities. Each artist's struggle to embrace the new
without sacrificing quality produced some of the greatest
poetry and music ever created. Yet the observations made thus far suggest a new question. Are the similarities in their works merely products of the age? Or are the creative processes of the two similar as well?

In the introduction to *Word Like a Bell*, John Minahan directly addresses the process used by the two artists. Minahan quotes Beethoven's process:

I carry my thoughts about with me for a long time, sometimes a very long time, before I set them down. At the same time my memory is so faithful to me that I am sure not to forget a theme which I have once conceived, even after years have passed. I make many changes, reject and reattempt until I am satisfied. Then the working out in breadth, length, height and depth begins in my head, and since I am conscious of what I want, the basic idea never leaves me. It rises, grows upward, and I hear and see the picture as a whole shape and stand forth before me as though cast in a single piece....(13)

Minahan then quotes the following excerpt from the "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*":

...poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that
which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins....(13)

Beethoven's emphasis on the concept and idea and Wordsworth's emphasis on emotion indicate yet another Neoclassic-Romantic dichotomy. Yet the end result for each artist is the same: the artist has an experience, but only with memory, time, and "recollection" does the experience gain full significance. Once the original feeling returns, this time bringing new insight, composition may begin. As Rosen observes, Beethoven is in fact the first composer to recognize the relationship between composition and memory: "not merely the sense of loss and regret that accompanies visions of the past, but the physical experience of calling up the past within the present" (166).

As a final point of comparison, we once again turn to Wordsworth's "Preface" for the definition of "poet":

--He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him.... (684)
Such a description may be clearly applied to either Beethoven or Wordsworth. The fact that their writings "spoke to men" sets them apart from their Neoclassic predecessors as well as explains their popularity today. The final statement --the "spirit of life"-- touches upon the very conditions that make them truly Romantic. Once the reader or listener realizes this phenomenon, then a true appreciation for Romantic literature and music is possible.

It is perhaps these elements shared by Wordsworth and Beethoven that truly connect the two fathers of Romanticism. All aspects of their work are affected by their process of composition as well as their awareness of their role as "creator." These, combined with other similarities, contribute to a comparison between the two which adds to our appreciation for their poetry and music. Their most significant contribution, however, will be the legacy they leave to later Romantic artists. Romanticism is, in part, defined by each artist's attempt to resolve the Romantic/Neoclassic dichotomy. In addition, these artists will explore more actively and intentionally the musical-literary relationship than their predecessors. We must examine their contributions also, because just as feeling and emotion are subject to change, so is the concept of Romanticism.
Chapter 2
Keats and Schumann: High Romanticism

As Romanticism continued into the nineteenth century, various artists emerged with different styles and philosophies, all grouped loosely under the term "Romantic." The period witnessed the revolutionary spirit of Byron, the delicate nocturnes of Chopin, and the bold virtuosity of Liszt. Two artists of the period, however, seem to follow the course begun by Wordsworth and Beethoven: John Keats and Robert Schumann. Through these artists we see not only a more meaningful relationship between literature and music but also the continuing influence of Neoclassicism upon Romanticism.

Among the second generation of British Romantics, Keats emerges as the sensuous poet of beauty whose work necessarily reinterprets Romanticism. While he is often described as the most "musical" of the Romantic poets, this description is rather vague, especially in light of the influence of music upon Romantic thought in general. Certainly his poetry is full of musical allusions; Charles Cowden Clarke, the friend who revealed the literary world to Keats, also introduced him to music through great works for the piano (Minahan vii). Even the casual reader,
however, senses that music is more than merely a powerful sensory image in Keats' poetry.

References to music abound in Keats' works. In *Word Like a Bell*, John Minahan observes the following attitudes about music found through Keats' letters and poems:

...music can cause simple delight; it can warm so luxuriously that it seems divine; it can cause madness; or it can pierce and sadden so strongly that one feels the pain of another as if it were one's own, thus perhaps receiving an insight into what is essential and common in all human experience. (29)

Works such as "On the Grasshopper and Cricket" celebrate the simple delight found in nature's music, but other poems explore the pain that follows the natural experience and resulting insight. In "Ode to a Nightingale," the creature who "singest of summer in full-throated ease" leads the speaker to an escape through poetry. Here the bird's melody serves as the vehicle for a journey to the edge of ecstasy and a return to depression. Phrases such as "high requiem" and "plaintive anthem" provide more than a complex musical allusion. Keats, acutely aware of the dreamlike quality of music, uses this similarity to create a "waking dream."

A comparison of Keats' poetry with the work of composers further illustrates the musical connection. Frédéric Chopin, who incidentally was referred to as the
"poet of the piano," is perhaps best known for short pieces such as the nocturnes, preludes, and waltzes (Kamien 302). Chopin's longer works, though significant, lack the unique voice heard in his shorter pieces. Similarly, Keats' attempts at epic led to "brilliant failures," while lyric poems, especially the odes, allowed him more freedom to depart from the initial experience and return with a new insight (Minahan 190). This observation does not suggest that Keats' longer works lack musical expression; note this passage from *Endymion*:

> And as I sat, over the light blue hills
> There came a noise of revellers: the rills
> Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
> 'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
> The earnest trumpet spoke, and silver thrills
> From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
> 'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
> Like to a moving vintage down they came,
> Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;
> All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,
> To scare thee, Melancholy!

(112, lines 193-203)

The description of the dance, the pureness of tone, the Greek spirit, and the balance of classic and modern imagery are parallel to the expressionism found in Chopin's waltzes, ballads, scherzos, and polonaises (Smith 228).
As already illustrated with Wordsworth's poetry, the Romantics view time in terms of its passing. Keats' poetry is no exception, with one addition: music is often associated with the past or the mutability of the present (Minahan 11). A brief example of this idea is found in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." The work itself is a ballad of typical rhyme (abcb) and typical meter (lines of iambic tetrameter, trimeter, and dimeter). The reference to song in stanza six illustrates the symbolic power of music:

> I set her on my pacing steed,
> And nothing else saw all day long,
> For sidelong would she bend and sing
> A faery's song. (200, lines 21-24)

The entire poem is, of course, a flashback. The knight explains his present physical and mental state through past events, the "siren's" song. The phrase "faery's song" also conjures images of a past beyond the knight's present-day experiences. This past/present theme culminates in the final stanza:

> And this is why I sojourn here,
> Alone and palely loitering,
> Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
> And no birds sing. (202, lines 45-48)

The birds are now silent, the music has ceased, and the reader is now aware that the knight, too, will soon become a part of the past.
Another poem that beautifully explores the conflict between the present and past through musical allusion is "Ode on a Grecian Urn." In The Finer Tone, Earl Wasserman observes that the ode is a study in contrast that "deals with the human and mutable on the one hand, and the immortal and essential on the other" (14).

The opening lines of the first stanza boldly address the urn as three different entities, all of which suggest the past/present theme and its ultimate connection to music. Through an apostrophe, Keats establishes both the nature and role of the urn. The phrase "still unravish'd bride" suggests the first contrast. Wasserman notes that the urn literally exists in a world of mutability, yet it endures. The urn is also a "foster-child of silence and slow time"; time is irrelevant to its existence. While the phrase "still unravish'd" could suggest timelessness, Wasserman asserts the line implies the urn may be eventually altered. It exists in "slow time," not in a timeless dimension, and so it is not entirely safe from change (16-17). Finally, the urn is a "Sylvan historian," an indication that a lesson may be learned from its "flowery tale."

After the opening apostrophe, a series of questions regarding the scene on the urn is asked, suggesting a sense of urgency. The first stanza juxtaposes mortal and immortal, dynamic and static, and man and god (Wasserman 17):
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

(207, lines 9-10)

The words "quietness," "silence," and "slow time" of the first lines contrast with the figures, which are filled with music and the suggestion of, if not actual, motion. Lines nine and ten suggest this motion and noise with the terms "pursuit," "struggle," "pipes," timbrels," and "wild ecstasy."

The mention of pipes and timbrels in the first stanza leads to yet another contrast in the second:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

(207-08, lines 11-14)

Keats seems to suggest an impossibility with his "unheard" melodies, but the reader is no longer in the mortal world but the special world of the urn. Keats describes a music that transcends human senses. It is perceived only by the spirit, or the imagination.

George and Judy Cheatham offer a slightly different, if less "poetic," understanding of these lines. They explain in the essay "Soft Pipes, Still Music, and Keats's 'Ode'" that the terms "still music and soft pipes", though now archaic, were in Keats' lifetime common musical terms. "Still" and "soft" were synonyms for low, gentle music, such as the sound produced by recorders. They assert that Keats would have been familiar with these
terms; the phrase "still music" appears in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Furthermore, Keats' copy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains marginal notations which emphasize a particular stage direction that calls for still music (Cheatham and Cheatham 101-02). Regardless of whether the phrase has a practical or symbolic meaning (or perhaps both), Keats' use of music in the ode illustrates its importance in relaying a Romantic theme.

Keats' manipulation of form in his poetry also indicates strong musical influences. Rounded binary form, often described as A-B-A' pattern, was a common form of musical organization in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. General examples of rounded binary form include minuet/trio/minuet, melody/bridge/melody, rondo (theme/departure/return of theme), and sonata (exposition/development/recapitulation). As the letters of the pattern suggest, the melody, or main theme, is stated in the first section, a different section with a secondary theme is introduced, and a restatement of the first follows; an example is the introduction of the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata op. 26 (Apel and Daniel 32):
Sonate
Dem Fürsten Carl von Lichnowsky gewidmet

L. van Beethoven

Andante con Variazioni.

(Schenker 214)
The main theme is introduced in measures 1-16. Measures 17-26 suggest a change in tone achieved through a shift from the tonic to the dominant as well as subtle changes in chromaticism and harmonic modulation. The final section, measures 27-34, presents the original melody but with significantly different voicing. The main theme returns but is slightly changed both through alteration of the melody and a change in the listener's perception: it is a recovered idea (Minahan 12).

According to Minahan, this concept is paralleled in literature through what M.H. Abrams sees as the paradigm of "the Greater Romantic lyric." The idea has already been explored in Wordsworth's poetry: the poetic speaker describes a landscape. A memory of the scene, usually triggered by a change, will elicit a response. This response will lead to some insight regarding the change or sense of loss. The speaker then returns to the landscape, but this time his view is shaped by the new insight gained from the experience. Examples include "Frost at Midnight," "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," "Tintern Abbey," "Ode to the West Wind," and "Ode to a Nightingale" (Minahan 12).

"The Eve of St. Agnes" illustrates this parallel between literature and music. The opening stanzas reveal the cold, lifeless world of the Beadsman, contrasting sharply with the celebration. Stanza three first suggests the "experience-departure-return with a difference" theme regarding the Romantic concept of time:
Northward he turneth through a little door,
and scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor;
But no--already had his deathbell rung:
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

(184, lines 19-27)

Minahan observes that although the Beadsman hears "Music's golden tongue," it is not a comfort. He faces north toward coldness. The music recalls times past and brings tears to his eyes, but these times are all behind him. He returns to the present but "with the difference that he no longer gazes toward unusual experience" (Minahan 72). The Beadsman's experience serves as a model for what will happen later in the poem. While the Beadsman's recollection through music is a lifeless repetition, others' experiences later in the poem will be a return to consciousness through a "finer tone" (Minahan 72-3).

As the focus of the poem shifts to Porphyro and Madeline, Keats prepares the reader for the transition from experience to departure. The revelry, the old Dame, and even Madeline's plan to follow the St. Agnes' Eve tradition all seem earthly and somewhat base in contrast with the impending meeting of Porphyro and Madeline in her
chamber. Madeline's entrance into her chamber marks an entrance into the world of dreams and imagination and a departure from the music of the feast:

She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!

(190, lines 201-03)

Thus Madeline leaves the music and enters a temporary stage of silence which must remain unbroken. Minahan terms Madeline's departure as an entrance into "Special time" (76).

As Porphyro approaches Madeline's bedside, he is disturbed by the sound of the "boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,/ The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet," (191, lines 258-59) from downstairs. Minahan observes that Porphyro needlessly worries that the music from the feast hall will awaken Madeline. Although it led her to "Special time," it is now useless; a different music is required. Unlike Madeline, Porphyro has yet to reach "Special time" and will soon discover that only special music will awaken her (Minahan 78):

...he took her hollow lute,--
Tumultuous,--and, in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd, "La belle dame sans mercy:"
Close to her ear touching the melody;--
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceased--she panted quick--and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:  
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.  
(192, lines 289-97)

According to Minahan, both lovers have at this point entered Special time through the world of music. This time is extended through the sexual encounter, ending with the line "St. Agnes' moon hath set" (Minahan 81).

The lovers must now return to the initial world, but they may never experience it in the same way. They choose instead to leave with the hope of extending the Special time "if not infinitely, then indefinitely" in hopes of finding "the finer tone" (Minahan 83). Minahan notes that the poem is a musical experience in that music falls silent in the end, leaving the reader to interpret Madeline and Porphyro's experience as well as his own:

As in music, meaning arises out of falling-away-in-time. Interpretation arises out of loss, distance, absence, emptiness. In Romantic theory, an origin, to be an origin, must be left behind in time and returned to in memory. To know is to know what is gone. (Minahan 84)

Just as their roles must change because of the encounter, so must their lives change as a result of the experience. The reader is disturbed by the final stanza's description of the cold, lifeless fate of the revelers, the Beadsman, and the old Dame not only because of the contrast with the
lovers' escape, but also because of its significance to
the opening of the poem. We now understand from what the
lovers escaped, not only from the content and ultimate
meaning of the poem, but also from the form of the work.
Similar experiences occur in Romantic music: a change
brings new interpretation to the initial theme. Keats'
use of musical form strengthens the overall effect of the
work.

If Keats stands as the most musical of the high
Romantic poets, then Robert Schumann is the most literary
of the Romantic composers. Schumann's works are as
autobiographical as those of Wordsworth and as lyrical as
Keats' poems. His music is decidedly literary: often it
is based on a poem or filled with descriptive titles or
programs. Bauer and Peyser cite Schumann's knowledge of
German Romantic literature as the source for many of his
compositions as well as his musical characterizations of
his friends in journals such as Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik
(410-11).

Schumann's entrance into the world of music mirrors
Keats' in various ways. Just as Keats eventually chose
literature over medicine, Schumann originally studied
law. A poor law student, Schumann was eventually
permitted by his mother to pursue his music. Because his
quest to become a piano virtuoso came relatively late in
his life, Schumann attempted to speed his progress
through a device intended to strengthen individual
fingers. Unfortunately, his right hand was permanently crippled (Bauer and Peyser 411-12). Yet obstacles once again prove to lead to opportunities: just as Keats' tuberculosis gave his poetry a real sense of urgency, Schumann's injury led him to other avenues of expression: composition.

In a letter to his wife Clara, Schumann explores his process of composition:

I react to everything that happens in the world: politics, literature, people--whatever it is, I think in my own way about anything that may want to find an escape, an expression in music. This is why so many of my compositions are so difficult to grasp, because they are related to remote interests, interests, incidentally, which are often significant, since anything remarkable in our age seizes hold of me so that I have to give it musical expression....[my works] are the product of poetic self-awareness. I am totally unaware of this during the act of composition and I discover it only later....

(le Huray and Day 490-91)

Through this letter Schumann emerges as a composer of high Romanticism; ideas suggested in the letters and works of Wordsworth or Beethoven find full expression in Schumann. His "poetic self-awareness" is pure Wordsworth: the
influence of his environment on his music, the realization of the potential elusiveness of his compositions, and the very act of composition as an almost prophetic process. In addition, Schumann's admiration of Beethoven is well-documented. Not only did Schumann recognize Beethoven as the first of the Romantic composers, but he praised the lesser-appreciated late works, citing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as "the most important work in instrumental music of recent times" (Plantinga 183). Schumann, like Keats, explored much more intentionally the possibilities of literary/music relationships than did his predecessors.

Schumann's contributions to nineteenth century music are vast, and two of these contributions apply particularly to this study. The German art song or Lieder was truly a Romantic mode of expression. This form first emerged in the thirteenth century among the Minnesingers, a group of German poet-musicians (Apel and Daniel 178). The resurgence of the art song during the Romantic period seemed inevitable. Written for solo voice and piano, it combined poetry, melody, and harmony in such a way as to make them inseparable (Kamien 287). The use of the piano as the accompanying instrument served both a creative and practical purpose. Inspiration was, of course, of vital concern to Romantic poets and composers. A favorite image of poetic inspiration was the Aeolian harp. Romantic composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Schumann created the
blended, resounding effect of the Aeolian harp in their music through the piano, which best permitted prolonged sound. The pedal was the "soul of the piano," and it allowed composers to create a musical Rauschen, or interaction of tones in the air (Leichtentritt 212-13).

Composers were certainly at no loss for text for the Lieder. Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms often turned to poems in their native language. Favorite poets included Wolfgang von Goethe and Heinrich Heine. Music did not merely accompany poetry; composers sought to interpret the poem and capture its imagery and tone in music (Kamien 287). Schumann developed the piano accompaniment in his Lieder to the degree that the voice is almost secondary to the instrument. As Bauer and Peyser note, "Schumann's mastery of the poetic piano piece is beyond question" (417).

Schumann also experimented with program music, instrumental music based on a poetic idea or written in such a way as to suggest a poetic scene or mood (Bauer and Peyser 445). Although program music existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this mode first became a serious alternative to absolute music in the Romantic period. Program music was extremely popular in its orchestral form, the symphonic poem (Finney 456-57). Byron's poem Manfred was the inspiration for Schumann's Manfred Overture (1849), considered one of his finest orchestral works. The power of this musical form was
illustrated in Schumann's direction of the symphonic poem at Leipzig in 1852; listeners reported that Schumann appeared to become the "melancholy tortured hero" of the poem (Bauer and Peyser 415).

The Lieder and the symphonic poem use literature as a source and guiding force in musical creation. Just as Keats' poems exhibit a musical structure, however, Schumann's music often follows literary forms. In the essay "Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies," Anthony Newcomb explores Schumann's musical narrative strategies:

One can in fact make a documentary case that Schumann recognized as applicable to music certain narrative strategies in novels of his time, for he constantly described the music he liked best in terms of novels, and he explicitly acknowledged the inspiration that he took for his own compositions from the technique of his favorite novelists. (168)

While his essay is outside the scope of this particular study, Newcomb's analysis of the influence of such German Romantics as Novalis and E.T.A. Hoffmann on Schumann's musical structure reveals the strong connection between music and literature in the nineteenth century.

Thus in both Keats and Schumann we see a continuation of the ideas explored in Wordsworth and Beethoven as well as specific examples of the influence of literature and
music upon their individual arts. Whereas for Wordsworth and Beethoven one art was a somewhat nebulous influence upon their own, Keats and Schumann actively explored the structural possibilities of musico-literary relationships. While Wordsworth's and Beethoven's respective interests in music and literature were largely products of a growing Romantic collective consciousness, Keats and Schumann deliberately explored these areas beyond the level of mere interest. But how does this exploration relate to the development of Romanticism and its relation to Neoclassicism?

In the essay "Schumann's View of 'Romantic,'" Leon Plantinga addresses this issue. Based on Schumann's writings in various journals, Plantinga asserts that the view of German Romantic music as a revolt against Classicism, or specifically that Beethoven was "'the man who set music free' from the schackles of Mozartean classicism," is false. In fact, Schumann's writings indicate a respect among many Romantics for eighteenth century rules and musical conventions and a disdain for any contemporaries who ignored such conventions in favor of more "fashionable" music. Furthermore, while Schumann did not underestimate the power of inspiration, he did recognize that good music is often steeped in "traditional procedures and competent craftsmanship" (184). As for Keats, one need only read his works to see his respect for tradition and craftsmanship as well as his admiration of
Wordsworth, Milton, and Shakespeare. For each artist, then, Romanticism is not so much a break from Neoclassicism as it is an extension.

In Keats and Schumann we see a continuation of the work begun by Wordsworth and Beethoven. Yet we also sense the differences that are difficult to identify but inherent in their respective works. Just as the transition from Neo-classicism to Romanticism is not always clear, the later development of Romanticism is also a complex area of study.
Chapter 3
Tennyson and Brahms: The Late Romantics

The final period of Romanticism is a study in polarities. While great artists continued to produce great works, mediocrity flourished and threatened to suffocate the masses. Works became less intimate and more colossal: witness the creations of Berlioz or Wagner. The common man whom Wordsworth addressed in his poetry seemed beyond reach; in both music and poetry the gap widened between artist and audience. The movement seemed on the verge of disintegration due to the many divergent paths its artists followed.

These observations are not surprising. The momentum initiated by Beethoven and Wordsworth and continued by Schumann and Keats could hardly be sustained. Even early Romantics sensed a widening gulf between art and life. Schubert, in a letter written to his friend Schober in 1824, included this poem:

O youth of this our time, you fade and die!
And squandered is the strength of men
unnumbered,
Not one stands out, so by the crowd encumbered,
And signifying nothing, all pass by.
Too great the pain by which I am consumed,
And in me but one dying ember flashes;
This age has turned me, deedless, into ashes,
While every man to bootless deeds is doomed.

In sick old age the people creep along,
They judge but dreams their youthful deeds impassioned,
Yea, laugh to scorn the golden rhymes once fashioned,
Attending not these verses' message strong.

To thee 'tis given, holy Art and great,
To figure forth an age when deeds could flourish,
To still the pain, the dying hope to nourish,
Which never reconciles that age with fate.

(Einstein 43)

Music, as well as the other arts, became to the Romantics much more than a source of enjoyment or enrichment. The arts were supposed to "move" their audiences, awaken in them passions that were absent in their daily lives. More and more, however, they became a substitute for life, drifting from the conception held by early Romantics. It was the challenge of the later Romantics to reassess both their art and their role as creator.

The choice of Johannes Brahms as a representative of late Romanticism may seem odd in consideration of the
number of worthy composers of this period. Certainly others are more associated with the musical/poetic connection; for example, Liszt's motto, "Renewal of music through its inner connection with poetry," suggests Liszt was perhaps more literary than Brahms, and thus more Romantic. Liszt's symphonic poems by definition were inspired by poetry and painting. However, as Einstein notes, even these works, while originating from poetic ideas, follow their own pattern, culminating in a new work which captures the essence of its inspiration (140-42).

Yet the most important factor limiting Liszt's position is his quest to be "too" Romantic; he disregards Classical form. Again the paradox of the Romantic rejection of and dependence upon Classicism emerges. While Liszt most certainly acknowledged the accomplishments of the great composers, he shunned their traditional methods in favor of revolutionary ones. He was very much a product of his culture and his time, and he rejected the past (Einstein 149). For this reason Brahms serves as both the antithesis of Liszt as well as the symbol of the Romantic revival of the past.

This is not to suggest that Brahms lacked the fiery, revolutionary spirit of the textbook Romantic. Schumann referred to the promising musician as "the young eagle" (Latham 23). His description of Brahms in Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik reflects typical Romantic zeal:

...a musician would inevitably appear to whom it
was vouchsafed to give the highest and most
to the tendencies of our time,
one who would not show his mastery in a gradual
development, but, like Athena, would spring
fully armed from the head of Zeus. And he has
come, a young man over whose cradle Graces and
Heroes stood watch. His name is Johannes
Brahms. (Latham 23-24)
The three piano sonatas of Brahms' early period indicate
that Schumann's description, while a bit flowery, was also
accurate. Ironically, the sonatas themselves reflect the
influence of Classicism in general and Beethoven in
particular (Einstein 151).
Brahms borrowed shamelessly from the past,
incorporating strict form in the German tradition of Bach,
Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann. Increasingly Brahms
found himself in opposition to the ideology and works of
such contemporaries as Wagner and Liszt, and more and more
a "posthumous musician" (Einstein 150). He was, in fact,
the "heir" of Beethoven, and he proudly followed the model
established by the "master." One need only compare the
opening measures of Brahms' first published work, the
piano Sonata, Op. 1, with Beethoven's "Waldstein" sonata
to see how deliberately Brahms echoes Beethoven (Latham
96).
Yet there are obviously differences in the two
composers. Beethoven's works exude confidence, power, and
joy. He is not afraid to take risks, and he succeeds; he utilizes powerful chords and unusual passages, as in the entry of the horn at the end of the development section in the "Eroica." Brahms is caution and organization. He is a superior contrapuntal to Beethoven, and his work reflects his serious nature (Latham 97). The ultimate difference, however, is a matter of style: Brahms is the more lyrical composer. Whether due to their different personalities, or to their relative positions in the age of Romanticism, or a combination of both, this fact remains. Beethoven is the grand epic writer; Brahms is the lyric poet. Beethoven's subject is mankind's relationship to the universe and God; Brahms' subject is one man's feelings. To understand this difference is to understand the development of Romanticism, regardless of the particular art being examined.

Brahms achieved this lyrical quality through various avenues of expression, but one form best conveyed his true emotions. Brahms' strongest connection to Romanticism, poetry, and thus his audience, is through folk song. For Romantics, the folk song originated quite mystically from the true heart of the people, and it captured the nationalistic spirit of the age (Einstein 40). While it may have seemed opposed aesthetically to the Classical tradition, the Lied is a product of not only German lyric poetry and folk song but also the keyboard style of Mozart and Beethoven (Latham 148). Brahms, who delighted
in folk song, poetry, and traditional form, must have
found song a personally satisfying mode of expression.
His collection of children's songs (1858) or the more
general collection (1894) exhibit the care of a true
artist, if not always a musicologist. Brahms probably
took some liberties in transcribing melodies; for example,
_In stiller Nacht_ was probably as much his creation as that
of the "folk" (Latham 148-49).

The poetic sources for Brahms' songs are remarkably
limited. A few Goethe and Heine poems are used, but
the main source comes from a lesser-known poet named
Friedrich Daumer. Latham suggests that this preference
may be due to Brahms' tendency to modify verse to suit
music, and for this reason he avoided the greater writers
(153). Whatever the reason, the verses used occasionally
suffer an accent on unimportant words or a prolonged
syllable to accommodate the melody. Other composers such as
Wolf never would have allowed these inconsistencies, claiming
music should fit the verse. Brahms was no uneducated man in
either verse or composition, but he would not sacrifice
melody or musical form (Latham 152).

This is not to suggest that Brahms ignored poetic
form. Folk song incorporates the strophic form, but not
all of his songs are structured thus; in other words,
music is written in such a way as to best present the
poem. Furthermore, the images in the poems are clearly
recreated in song: the noon heat of summer in
Feldeinsamkeit, the summer evening in Waldeseinsamkeit, and the movements of the sleepwalker in Nachtwandler (Latham 153). Brahms' songs are Romantic in that they incorporate poetry, but they exhibit Romanticism through the very lyrical quality that is the hallmark of Brahms.

If song best reveals Brahms' true Romantic nature, then it also suggests another Romantic paradox: that of the isolated artist versus his public. The musician's role had radically changed by the time of Beethoven; no longer did the musician write for a particular class, but for a "humanity that the creative artist had raised to his own level" (Einstein 38). Yet the aspirations exceeded reality. This "humanity" did not always appreciate, understand, or accept the music of the Romantic composer. Beethoven and Wordsworth first acknowledged this paradox, but Brahms was to feel its full impact.

In song Brahms could hide behind the verses, whereas the emotions expressed in instrumental works must have belonged solely to the composer. He, who was generally so guarded, so protected by the screen of form, could relax and allow a free reign of sentiment and impulse, all in the name of the poet. This theory, however, has a failing point. Perhaps because he was so comfortable with the form, occasional lapses revealed the "inner Brahms" he was usually so careful to hide (Latham 154). This revelation is most obvious in Four Serious Songs, music that is somewhat confessional and decidedly personal.
Brahms described the creative process behind Four Serious Songs in a revealing letter to Marie Schumann:

Deep in the heart of man something often whispers and stirs, quite unconsciously perhaps, which in time may ring out in the form of poetry or music. (Holmes 151)

Based on Biblical text, the first three songs poignantly capture a pessimistic view of death. Yet the final song, echoing Ecclesiastes, suggests not only a positive message for mankind, but a climactic revelation for Brahms himself. As Latham notes,

Faith he lacked, Hope had deserted him, but to the third of St. Paul's anchors he held fast, and so holding could depart with a smile and a benediction. (156-57)

This song, Brahms' final one, fits neatly in the development of the Romantic artist. As a young composer, his exuberant enthusiasm for the age was quelled by what he saw as a lack of form and substance. His works became increasingly less "showy" and more personal, culminating in his final piece. Gone is the characteristically Romantic exuberance, and the listener is left with a highly personal, confident testimony (Einstein 192). Once again the paradox emerges; Brahms rejects the role as creator for humanity and instead resigns himself to his inner thoughts and feelings. Yet in doing so, he is very much a Romantic--of the final phase.
Einstein observes that the Romantic movement in music was "at once young and old" (362). The same could be said for literature. The artists who strove so desperately to disassociate themselves with the past and to create something so radically new found the past inescapable. In no other poet is this more profoundly felt than in Tennyson. He stood at a crossroads: the end of the Romantic and the beginning of the Victorian period. His poetry, however, reflects a Classical style and a musical influence similar to that of Keats.

Much has been written about the musical quality of Tennyson's poetry. Even in the use of the ballad form, Tennyson suggests the dignity of his subject through the creation of a slow-moving line, such as "Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea" (Waterson 118). Often mood is set not by meaning or symbols but by the sonorous quality of the words or the rhythmic movement of the lines, as in these from "The Lotos-Eaters":

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentler on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the
blissful skies. (49, lines 46-52)

The repetition of the word "music" and the use of
assonance and sibilance further the spell of the flower
more than the actual words Tennyson chooses. In this
sense, Tennyson rivals Keats in the musical quality of his
verse.

Yet Tennyson evidently lacked the musical background
that Keats had acquired. In "A Personal Reminiscence,"
James Knowles observes

A notable thing was his comparative indifference
to music as a separate art: it seemed as if the
extreme fineness of his hearing was too fine for
the enjoyment of its usual intervals and effects
and craved the subtler and multitudinous
distinctions and inflections and variations of
sound, which only the instrument of language can
produce.... It is curious that Browning, whose
music is so rare in his verse, was a masterly
musician outside of it, while Tennyson, whose
every line was music, cared so little for it
except in poetry. (577)

As a late Romantic, Tennyson's perspective of Romanticism
differed from Keats'. The excitement of the age and the
idea of a union of the arts had weakened, and Tennyson
could see both the impractical side of full-blown
Romanticism as well as the beginning of a new period. His
position created a conflict that was not as much an issue
for Keats, but quite similar to that experienced by
Brahms.
For Tennyson the central conflict evolves into one between the artist and his society. Poems such as "The Lotos-Eaters" express this tension. The even stanzas of the work suggest a conflict in the consciousness of the sailors:

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?

(49, lines 57-59)

All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence—ripen, fall, and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or
dreamful ease. (50, lines 96-98)

The "dreamful ease" echoes the "easeful Death" Keats courted in "Ode to a Nightingale." A similar hypnotic state is achieved in each work, but in Tennyson's poem, a definite conclusion is reached:

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind. (51, lines 153-55)

In the work, the sea could be viewed as symbolic of social responsibility while the land represents imagination. In this particular poem, it would seem Tennyson has chosen the isolation of the artist over his role in society.
Tennyson's many poems address this conflict from different views. For example, in "Ulysses," the sea represents the world of imagination while the land symbolizes social responsibility:

I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone... (52, lines 6-9)

The poem vacillates between the practical responsibilities of a leader of the people and a Romantic, mystic urge "To follow knowledge like a sinking star,/ Beyond the utmost bound of human thought" (53, lines 31-32). Yet in "Tithonus," we see a direct questioning of "Ulysses":

Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most need for all?
(71, lines 28-31)

The poem is interesting not only because it again addresses this conflict of artist versus life but because it also shows Tennyson at the crossroads of late Romanticism. The poem simultaneously exhibits the Victorian notion of limits, an antithesis of the desire for the infinite, and a Keatsian realization of the power of the imagination.

Perhaps the poem that best reveals this central tension is "The Lady of Shalott." In the work Tennyson's
desire to be a Keats-like Romantic poet conflicts with his desire to be a socially concerned poet. The climactic section of the poem symbolically portrays this "choice":

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

It is, however, this choice of "the helmet and the plume," or life, over the "loom," art, that destroys the Lady of Shalott. For her, art without life is a sterile reflection of the world. While she seems to have accepted her fate, the poem's cryptic ending suggests Tennyson could not resolve this tension.

A series of circumstances and events brings Tennyson to the ironic position held by Brahms: that of the late Romantic. Each man must have discovered that Romanticism was neither the antithesis of Classicism nor the perfect conveyor of their respective arts. Both found themselves alienated by the very Romantic tenets that were their foundations, and both responded by creating works so personal that they took Romanticism to a new level. The point is easily proven by comparing Wordsworth's Prelude
to Tennyson's *In Memoriam A.H.H.*: Wordsworth's work is personal, yet the reader is aware of Wordsworth's audience, which is mankind, and his purpose, which is to express his feelings on a universal level. Tennyson's work was written for himself; it attains a singular level of sadness. While it is extremely personal in origin, *In Memoriam A.H.H.* appears to resolve the conflict Tennyson addressed in so many works; his grief for Hallam is linked with the more public problem of religious faith in the wake of evolution. Ironically, Tennyson manages to be a subjective artist and a public figure addressing public issues. Tennyson is at once more "personal" and "public" than Wordsworth.
Conclusion

Ultimately, what is the connection between music and literature of the Romantic period? It should now be obvious that instances in which one "inspired" the other or borrowed text or technique are not the soul of this relationship. It is, rather, a striking list of similarities: the rise and apparent rejection of the Neoclassical, the development of six great artists along unusually similar lines, the full blown glory of the Romantic spirit, and the realization of its limitations.

Romanticism was, for each art, a living force; but as with all living things, its creation and growth must end in death. Perhaps because its tenets asked too much of both the artist and his audience, or perhaps because, in a new age of Darwin and discovery, the very foundation of human existence was being questioned, this period was destined to end. Ultimately it is the paradox of the age that consumes it: the intimate, personal revelations that remove the artist from his audience; the pursuit of original, emotion-filled art that becomes meaningless without traditional form; or the quest for the infinite by finite beings.

Yet the works of each of the six great artists endure, partly because of the immense talents of their
creators and partly because they are the unique products of the Romantic age. There is a reason why everyone recognizes a Beethoven melody, why lines of Tennyson's poetry have crept into the vernacular, or why mothers hum Brahms' lullaby. They are intimate, real, and accessible; in short, they reflect the human condition. Einstein's description of the influence of Romantic music applies to literature equally well:

If one thinks of the works of the past which are still alive today, the Romantic counterbalances the Classic. We should have been immeasurably poorer if the history of music had stood still with the death of Beethoven. To be sure, the music of the Classical period is like the starry heavens. We cannot reach the stars; we cannot even envy them. But the music of the Romantic period is our music, at once fulfillment and boundless yearning.(362)

The great artists knew the limitations of words and melody. They also knew an enthusiasm for the human spirit that has had no equal in expression since their time. Their modes of expression differed, but ultimately their likenesses formed a bond that helps today's listener or reader appreciate the intricacies of each art and its product. It is through this interrelationship of poetry and music that we come to better understand the paradox of Romanticism.
Works Cited


