

**Poi la Musica:**  
**Intentionality and Luminosity in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Miniature**

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**D R A F T**

Once there's music in a work, I want it to be the master.

--Richard Strauss in a letter to Romain  
Rolland

The thought of rivalry between poet and musician is antithetical to the origins and full realization of both; it rends Orpheus more decisively than did the women of Thrace .

--George Steiner in "Silence and the Poet"

The whole is no beginning in an absolute sense; it is no beginning of anything at all unless it has a function in a communion of existential concern; and the communion of concern as a social field depends for its existence on the communicability of the concern through language. Back we are referred, the reader and I, to the words, for they have begun before I have begun to put them down. Was the word in the beginning after all?

Eric Voegelin observed in "In Search of the Ground" that "All art, if it is any good, is some sort of myth in the sense that it becomes what I call a *cosmion*, a reflection of the unity of the cosmos as a whole. . . . How to produce such units and make them convincing models of the unity of the world--that is the problem in art. It's much closer to cosmological thinking than anything else."<sup>1</sup> [1] While surely not incompatible with Voegelin's suggestion that art can be approached as myth, George Steiner's contention that "proof of a transcendent presence in the fabric of the world" exists in the shared borders of language with "three other modes of statement--light, music, and silence" seems nonetheless to call for a differentiated mode of interrogation.<sup>2</sup> [2] This study is the result of wanting to know whether music could be analyzed from a Voegelinian perspective. Given that Voegelin is fundamentally silent about musical matters,<sup>3</sup> [3] what might enable a Voegelinian reading of a piece of music? Are the principles

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1 [1] . Eric Voegelin, "In Search of the Ground," in *Published Essays 1953-1965*, Vol. 11 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, edited with an introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 240.

2 [2] George Steiner, "Silence and the Poet," in *Language and Silence* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 39.

3 [3] For example, references to Wagner's language in the libretto of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* can be found in Eric Voegelin, ""The German University and the Order of German Society: A Reconsideration of the Nazi Era," in *Published Essays 1966-1985*, Volume 12 in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, edited with an introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990). Robert Heilman's son Pete refers to a production of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* in Munich after which Voegelin "expounded on it to us vigorously." Champlin B. Heilman, Foreword, in Charles Embry, ed., *Robert B. Heilman and Eric Voegelin: A Friendship in Letters 1944-1984* (Columbia : University of Missouri Press , 2004), xii. Unfortunately Pete recalls the occasion but not the substance of Voegelin's remarks. Interview, Newport , Oregon , June 2005.

Voegelin articulated for literary criticism appropriate to the interrogation of a musical source? Or does the premise that any good work of art, and therefore music, is a cosmion invite, or even compel, an entirely different application of Voegelin's thinking? To explore these questions and others, I propose to focus on an art song, "Auf ein altes Bild," a setting of the poem by the Swabian poet, Eduard Mörike (1804-1875), by the late nineteenth-century Viennese composer Hugo Wolf (1860-1903). The choice of an art song for analysis is natural enough for a lapsed singer like me, but it has the advantage of mooted the issue of the extent to which music has meaning, a question of some urgency in discussions of so-called "absolute" and "program" music. In interrogating the art song, compounded of music and poetry, one can safely inquire into the extent that texted music, like language, according to Voegelin, "participates in the paradox of a quest that lets reality become luminous for its truth by pursuing truth as a thing intended."<sup>4</sup> [4] But it also confers the disadvantage of presenting the analyst with a layer of intentionality (the composer's, toward the poem) between searcher and the original poetic source. To complicate matters further, "Auf ein altes Bild" is an ekphrastic poem, a poem on a picture. And in this case "no one knows," writes Susan Youens, "whether the 'old painting' of the title is what John Hollander calls 'unassessable actual ekphrasis' (a poem which invokes an unnamed, lost, or untraceable work of art) or notional ekphrasis (a purely fictive work of art.)"<sup>5</sup> [5]

Voegelin's principles of literary criticism are demonstrated throughout his work, but we find their most explicit expression in his ongoing epistolary conversation with Robert Heilman,

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<sup>4</sup> [4] Eric Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, Vol. V of *Order and History*, Volume 18 in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, edited with an introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 31.

<sup>5</sup> [5] Susan Youens, *Hugo Wolf and his Mörike Songs* (2000; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2006), 161.

whom Voegelin had met at LSU in the 1940s before their academic careers led them elsewhere. The conversation continued into the 1980s. Voegelin's critical principles emerged in the context of a critique of historicism. On August 22, 1956, Voegelin responded to comments by Heilman concerning "the 'was' and the 'is'" of a work of art. Heilman had lamented that current literary practice favored the "was" to the point of denying "a non-historical permanence which I find inseparable from myth, fable, the artistic formulations of the imagination, etc." The historicizing activities of the literary critic, to the exclusion of recognizing "the eternal truth of things" implied, unfortunately, a critic's "share in the divine power to see all times." Was that line of thinking "Frivolous? Reckless?" asked Heilman. "I contemplate a searing piece entitled "The Necessity of Anachronism." Voegelin replied:

The basis of historical interpretation is the identity of substance (the psyche) in the object and the subject of interpretation; and its purpose is participation in the great dialogue that goes through the centuries among men about their nature and destiny. And participation is impossible without growth in stature (within personal limitations) toward the rank of the best; and that growth is impossible unless one recognizes authority and surrenders to it.

For Voegelin recognition of authority implies, and must cast the critic in, "the role of the disciple who has everything to learn from the master." The critic proceeds, concomitantly, with an "exhaustion of the source, in order to make sure that the meaning ascertained is indeed the meaning intended by the source." Voegelin indicates, further, that "the terminology of the interpretation, if not identical with the language symbols of the source...must not be introduced from the 'outside,' but be developed in closest contact with the source itself for the purpose of differentiating the meanings which are apparent in the work, but too compactly symbolized as

that the symbols could be used in the discursive form of rational analysis." Ultimately, the critic must translate "meanings, which the poet develops in the action and language of his poem," without distortion, "into the rational order of his work." 6 [6]

To what extent, I wondered, could these principles inform an analysis of art songs? Art songs, especially German *lieder* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had roots in the late eighteenth century and normally entailed the setting by a composer of an already extant text, usually a poem, to music for solo voice and piano. If poetry is a symbolization of experience and an individual poem its evocation, what was the art song? Above all, it would be some sort of critique of the poem, an already extant work of art. At best the continuation in musical language of a symbolization put forth by the poet might issue in what Voegelin called "the interpretation of a literary work by a first-rate artist or philosopher." At worst it might "rapidly derail into the sort of interpretation that is so easily 'put upon' a work of art."<sup>7</sup> [7] Complicating the fact that Voegelin's principles of literary criticism might by definition rule out a Voegelinian reading of a work of art, we have the further problem of the composer of music, whose literal exhaustion of a source--the poem to be set--is likely to produce a thoroughly unintelligible result rather than heaps of praise for fidelity to the source. There is that layer of interpretive intention between the source and the analyst of an art song and the question of whether the composer is the "first-rate artist" imagined by Voegelin. Thus when a critic, such as Martin Cooper, praises a setting by Hugo Wolf because it is "faithful" in its observation of "every slightest image and reference, every infinitesimal change of mood and tempo in the poem," we will suspect that he does not

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6 [6] Charles Embry, ed., *Robert B. Heilman and Eric Voegelin: A Friendship in Letters 1944-1984* (Columbia : University of Missouri Press, 2004), 155, 157, 150-152.

7 [7] *Ibid.*, 151.

mean this statement to be taken literally.<sup>8</sup> [8] As a "compound art," says Susan Youens, a song's "words and music often have their own large tales to tell."<sup>9</sup> [9] This is the premise for her study of the M<sup>o</sup>rke *lieder* of Wolf. Hugo Wolf can be and has been construed as "slavishly deferring to the poet" *and* as "creating ideas where they did not previously exist in a poem," sometimes, as in this case, by the same commentator.<sup>10</sup> [10] The "Wolf legend," which invariably casts Wolf as "the Poet's Composer," has provoked revisions, such as Youens's emphasis on the word "componirt" that appears on the title page below *Gedichte von Eduard M<sup>o</sup>rke f<sup>o</sup>r eine Singstimme und Klavier*, "which," as she says, "matters more: these songs consist of something done *to* the *Gedichte von Eduard M<sup>o</sup>rke*."<sup>11</sup> [11] A successful marriage of music and poetry might conceivably, and even properly, rend Orpheus by consigning the poet's work to the background.<sup>12</sup> [12]

It is appropriate at this point to make a few comments about the backgrounds both of the poet of "Auf ein Altes Bild" and of the poem's composer. "G<sup>o</sup>ttlicher M<sup>o</sup>rke!", as Wolf called him, had been dead more than a dozen years when Wolf set this poem to music.<sup>13</sup> [13] Born more than fifty years before Wolf, M<sup>o</sup>rke was a Lutheran pastor in his early life, an unhappy

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8 [8] Martin Cooper, *Ideas and Music* 1965 (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1967), 241.

9 [9] Youens, *Wolf and his M<sup>o</sup>rke Songs*, 140.

10 [10] Lorraine Gorrell, *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993), 28.

11 [11] Youens, *Wolf and his M<sup>o</sup>rke Songs*, x.

12 [12] "The thought of rivalry between poet and musician is antithetical to the origins and full realization of both; it rends Orpheus more decisively than did the women of Thrace ." This is George Steiner's observation in, "Silence and the Poet," 43.

13 [13] Youens, *Wolf and his M<sup>o</sup>rke Songs*, 1.

and then failed cleric who had found the writing of sermons painful and ultimately impossible. Wolf was a lapsed Catholic, an avowed "unbeliever" who once bewailed the "utterly stifling hymnbook influences" that limited those in his profession.<sup>14</sup> [14] But when in 1888 Wolf composed more than fifty M♠rike poems, he chose to set a number of M♠rike's poems on sacred themes. "Auf ein altes Bild" was one of these. Eric Sams has seen "a quiet radiance about M♠rike's poetry, as if it were in a state of grace" and "a sudden belated and almost Pentecostal release" in Wolf's settings.<sup>15</sup> [15] But despite their interest in sacred iconography (M♠rike wrote more than one ekphrastic poem and Wolf set two in the M♠rike songbook), both artists must be understood as troubled, at the very least, in their relationships with their respective church traditions.

Despite the interpretive layering launched by the setting of a poem to music, the art song confers one advantage on the critic (who in attempting to exhaust the source asks first whether the composer has done so): its character as a miniature. Given the attraction for nineteenth-century composers of large forms--operas, symphonies, concertos--what was the attraction of the miniature form (*lied* or piano character piece), and what, for them, was its potential? While the pull of the miniature for a composer of the nineteenth century had more than one dimension, Charles Rosen's discussion of the origins and influence of the "Romantic Fragment" is helpful. Rosen offers Robert Schumann's "Im Wundersch♠nen Monat Mai," which opens the song cycle *Dichterliebe* on poems of Heine, as "the perfect Romantic fragment:" "completely balanced and

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<sup>14</sup> [14] Youens, *Wolf: The Vocal Music*, 254.

<sup>15</sup> [15] Eric Sams, *The Songs of Hugo Wolf* (London: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1961), 35.

yet unstable...complete in itself, a fragmentary image of the infinite."16 [16] "Im Wunderschönen Monat Mai," which begins and ends on an unstable chord, is "an appearance of the Fragment in its most obvious form--a piece that begins in the middle or does not have a proper grammatical end." But, says Rosen, "even the final cadence could be a tonic triad and still convey a sense of subtly opening up the ending." 17 [17] A legacy of the "circle of young artists, philosophers, scientists, and poets in Jena during the very last years of the eighteenth century," says Rosen, the Fragment was a "principal form of expression; it characterized the movement." In 1798, Friedrich Schlegel prescribed for the Fragment the condition of "a little work of art, complete in itself and separate from the rest of the universe like a hedgehog." The hedgehog metaphor configured the Fragment as "well defined and yet blurred at the edges. . . . it projects into the universe precisely by the way it cuts itself off."18 [18] Johann Wilhelm Ritter, a physicist, went further, declaring each word (of the Fragment) to be "a secret song, for music from within continuously accompanies it. In audible song, the inner voice is raised as well. Song is praise of the creator, it completely expresses the moment of existence."19 [19] It is not difficult to see correspondences between the Romantic Fragment in its aesthetic setting; the emergent form that would become the *lied*; and Voegelin's political discussion of representation in *The New Science of Politics*:

Human society is not merely a fact, or an event, in the external world to be studied by an observer like a natural phenomenon. Although it has externality as one of its important components, it is as a whole a little world, a cosmion, illuminated with meaning from within by the human beings who continuously create and bear it as the mode and

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16 [16] Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 48.

17 [17] *Ibid.*, 79, 81.

18 [18] *Ibid.*, 48.

19 [19] *Ibid.*, 59.

condition of their self-realization. It is illuminated through an elaborate symbolism, in various degrees of compactness and differentiation--from rite, through myth, to theory--and this symbolism illuminates it with meaning in so far as the symbols make the internal structure of such a cosmion, the relations between its members and groups of members, as well as its existence as a whole, transparent for the mystery of human existence.<sup>20</sup> [20]

The *lied*, analogous to the Romantic Fragment, was a cosmion unfolding in a particular kind of time: the Time of the Tale, where the eikon and eternity intersect. Accordingly, we find that if "all art, if it is any good....is closer to cosmological thought than anything else," it becomes necessary to account for the differentiated Christian symbols in a work of art by recalling that while the symbolizations in cosmological and differentiated styles of truth, in Voegelin's words, "distribute the accents differently...they are still experiences of the same total structure of being:"

In the compact experience of the cosmos ritual attunement to divine order is required as much as pragmatic adjustment to its visible order; in differentiated experience of the universe under God, pragmatic adjustment to the visible order is necessary as much as the attunement of existence to the 'unseen measure.' What is at stake in both cases is the truth of human existence, truth in the sense of a willingness both to understand and to accept the *condicio humana*--although it requires the advance toward the differentiated experience of transcendent Being in order to establish explicitly the insight that the order of the world is not of 'this world' alone but also of the 'world beyond.'<sup>21</sup> [21]

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20 [20] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics in Modernity Without Restraint*, Vol. 5 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, edited with an introduction by Manfred Henningsen (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 109.

21 [21] Eric Voegelin, "World Empire and the Unity of Mankind," in *Published Essays 1953-1965*, Vol. 11 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, edited with an introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 144-145.

While Voegelin's discussion above unfolds in the context of the establishment and language of world empire, it seems reasonable to conclude that empire as a "human imperial creation analogically commensurate with the world" has in common with a good work of art, even one that compounds differentiated sacred symbols, "the creation of a cosmic analogue or, as it has occasionally been called, a *cosmion*."22 [22]

Composers of art songs--*lieder* and *melodies*--were literary critics of a particular stripe, using a specialized artistic language to call attention to a poem or poems, including, frequently, poems whose poet's fame came exclusively to rest on their musical settings. As we have suggested, the composer can be construed as a critic on the order of the sensitive reader Voegelin presents in the postscript to the letter on Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. A literarily sensitive composer, under the best circumstances, could conceivably interrogate the consciousness of the poet as well as the source that has issued from this consciousness. Poetry and music are time-arts, as Edward Cone and others have termed them; and the composer's intentionality toward the poem and its interpretation in music is structured by a number of common features, such as meter and form. But, as Susan Youens has suggested, in Wolf's *lieder*, "declamation is a constant compromise...between the observance of textual rhythm and accentuation on the one hand and pure, melodic design, regular periodicity and phrasing on the other." 23 [23] Among the composer's many choices in setting a poem to music is the degree of respect for the form and meter laid out in the poem. The composer is by no means limited, of course, to the obvious gestures of emphasizing a syllable through long duration, high pitch level,

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22 [22] *Ibid.*, 145.

23 [23] Susan Youens, *Hugo Wolf: The Vocal Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), xvii.

or accented placement within measures. Other choices available to the composer are nearly inexhaustible. They include, beyond usual decisions conscious or intuitive having to do with melody, harmony, texture, phrasing, tone- or word-painting, and prosody, a further world of choices having to do with the relationship of voice and piano, decisions peculiar to the genre. A few of the possibilities, formulated as questions, will give a sense of the complexity of this relationship. To what extent will the piano straightforwardly accompany the vocal part? How relatively dense or busy will the accompaniment be? Will the piano part observe a steady figuration, developed--or not--in response to a particular feature of the poem, such as the famous example of Schubert's multifarious figurative evocations of the brook in Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin*? How exposed will the vocal part be? How will the vocal range and tessitura compare with that observed in the piano? Will the sung line share melodic material with the piano, and if so, how will this material be distributed? Will the piano part harmonize the vocal declamation conventionally or will it confound expectations? And finally, to what extent will voice or piano carry any subtextual hints to which the composer wishes to point?<sup>24</sup> [24] Although Richard Wagner's operatic idiom provided one model for composers of art song after mid-century--that of orchestral primacy in the delivery of meaning premised on the existence of an inner life for the drama--both Schubert and Schumann had experimented with clues in the piano part that underscored, revealed, extended, denied or ironized the sung words.

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<sup>24</sup> [24] We could continue indefinitely with such abstract questions. I mention them here partly because I have found it useful in coaching performers, or in seminars on the art song, to have students consider, before the first hearing of a particular *lied* with an eye to eventual performance or analysis, how the poem might lend itself to musical setting. The development of compositional questions that must be answered is probably not a good compositional process, but it is one way to compel the question "why did the composer do it that way and not another way?" that, in turn, focuses the student back onto the poetry and what in the poetry the composer may have chosen explicitly or implicitly to emphasize.

It would be unthinkable to proceed with these choices in the absence of a strong intentionality toward the poem to be set, a desire once and for all to comprehend the poem in music. Some composers are thought more "literary" than others; that is, we recognize their sensitivity to the poetic works they are interpreting in music. But sensitivity to the written word can mean many things. At one end of the spectrum we would find Arnold Schönberg, who recalled composing "many of my songs straight through to the end without troubling myself in the slightest about the continuation of the poetic events." Schönberg claimed that composing based entirely on the "first contact with the sound of the beginning" led to the discovery that "the work of art is like every other complete organism. . . . in every little detail it reveals its truest essence."<sup>25</sup> [25] But who is at the other end of the spectrum? Robert Schumann, Claude Debussy, and Hugo Wolf come immediately to mind. Wolf, who, as we have seen, gave top billing to his poets, frequently accompanied his singers at the keyboard and would read the poem before listeners heard its realization in music for voice and piano. Lawrence Kramer has suggested that "In passing from recitation to song, and from a silent background to an accompaniment notable for its individuality and independence from the voice, Wolf would in effect stage the *lied* as a reproduction of meaning and figuratively re-enact its composition."<sup>26</sup> [26] Thus might the performance of the *lied* become, all at once, a symbol pointing beyond itself to a previous experience and symbolization, a powerful reference to the experience of adding music to the words, a sensual--auditory--experience in the present, and a cosmic analogue: indeed a constellation of evocations.

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25 [25] Gorrell, *German Lied*, 16.

26 [26] Lawrence Kramer, "Hugo Wolf: Subjectivity in the Fin-de-Siècle Lied" in *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rufus Hallmark (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 187.

But first we must begin, as Wolf's audiences did, with Mörrike's poem:

Auf ein altes Bild

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!

Paul Hindemith's translation follows:

In the green landscape of a blossoming summer  
Beside cool water, reeds, and canes,  
Behold how the sinless child  
Plays freely on the virgin's knee.  
And there, in the woods, blissfully,  
Alas, growing already is the stem that will become the cross.<sup>27</sup> [27]

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<sup>27</sup> [27] [http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=11622](http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=11622); accessed 8/9/06 . Interesting to note: Probably the most famous example of a musical work based on a painting is Hindemith's *Mathis der Mahler*.

And S. S. Praver's:

In a green landscape veiled in summer air,  
beside cool water, reeds and rushes,  
see the infant Jesus, free from sin,  
playing gaily on the Virgin's lap!  
And there, in those delightful woods  
the tree of the cross is already in leaf.<sup>28</sup> [28]

In the world of this poem we are looking with a narrator--a sort of docent--who directs our gaze at a painting of the Madonna and Child. The docent, the painting, and the first two lines of the poem draw us into a green landscape with its cool water and reeds so that we may behold at the beginning of the third line, the infant, sinless, freely at play in his mother's lap. At the beginning of the fifth line we are directed to look "there" at the tree that is already growing the cross of Christ's passion. Thus the six lines present a natural setting, zoom in on the sacred subject, and then recede to the wide angle, taking in the whole natural setting that will deepen that subject and project it into the future. Under tutelage of the narrator, the viewer's gaze is a process, just as the painting is simultaneously a tale of time and a "still point," where, as T.S. Eliot says, "the dance is." Two exclamations--beginning lines 3 and 6--in an otherwise stable iambic tetrameter suggest that we are meant to be as aware of our narrator, our moving

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<sup>28</sup> [28] S. S. Praver, editor and translator, *The Penguin Book of Lieder* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1964), 109.

exploration of the old painting, and ourselves, as we are of the collapse of time onto an "indelible present" that can allusively comprehend a sacred past and its own inevitable future, the time of the Beginning in a paradisiacal garden, the narrator's time, the time of the painting's creation, our own present apprehension of its features, and our growing apprehension, within limits, of what it means. The term "indelible present" appears in Voegelin's discussion of Heraclitus and Plato in "Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme" to indicate that "while the events of history are datable in external time, corresponding to the bodily existence of the man who has the experience, the events themselves occur at the intersection of external time with the flux of divine presence, i.e., in the existential time of the *metaxy*."<sup>29</sup> [29] The elaboration of this discussion in *In Search of Order* captures the modes of time implied in the ekphrastic poem and glosses the foregrounding of the docent:

The Parousia of the Beyond, experienced in the present of the quest, thus, imposes on the dimension of external time, with its past, present, and future, the dimension of divine presence. The past is not simply in the past, nor the future simply in the future, for both past and future participate in the presence of the same divine-immortal Beyond that is experienced in the present of the questioner's participatory meditation. We have to speak, therefore, of a flux of presence endowing all the phases--past, present, and future--of external time with the structural dimension of an indelible present. . . . the mode of time in which the It tells its tale through the events of the metaleptic quest by endowing it with the indelible present; it is the time of the It-tale that demands expression through the capitalized Beginning and End when the presence of the Beyond is to be symbolized in the questioner's account of his quest.<sup>30</sup> [30]

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<sup>29</sup> [29] Voegelin, "Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme," in *Published Essays 1966-1985*, Vol. 12 in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, edited with an introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 347.

<sup>30</sup> [30] Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, 44.

There are at least two narratives at work in this poem: the narrative configured as a guide for seeing the painting--"reality intended in its mode of thingness"<sup>31</sup> [31] --and the elliptical narrative of the life of Christ: from infant to Saviour on the cross. What makes these multiple strands "not narratively referential," as Voegelin would say, "but luminously symbolic"?<sup>32</sup> [32] To reconfigure and re-aim the question at the *lied* that transforms this poem, to what extent and how will Hugo Wolf recognize and configure the "paradoxical structure" of the ekphrastic poem of a failed Lutheran pastor into a oneness in "the participatory structure of the event and the account given of it in the referential structure of the narrative"?<sup>33</sup> [33]

To interrogate Wolf's setting of this painting via the two narratives established by the poet, we must configure questions that will exhaust the musical source in the context of its exhaustion of the poetic source. Wolf sets the poem in the style of a Protestant chorale: four-part chordal movement, short, even phrases, and narrow vocal range that, in the beginning, nearly exactly doubles the bass line in the piano.<sup>34</sup> [34] The strictly observed iambic patterns of lines 1, 2, and 5 require the vocal lines to begin on a weak beat, the last quarter- or eighth-note of the measure. Limited syncopation and a few melismas of no more than two notes relieve the straight declamation of text. Modifications to the chorale form are not only compelled by the odd length of the poem but also by its content: the explicit presence of the guide to the painting, dramatized in the musical setting by the singer. At measures 13 and 14, Wolf has the guide keep silent as we

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31 [31] *Ibid.*, 40.

32 [32] *Ibid.*, 41.

33 [33] *Ibid.*, 41.

34 [34] Hugo Wolf, *Gedichte von Eduard Mörike*, in *Sämtliche Werke* vol. 1 (Wien: Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1963), 86-87.

are drawn back by the piano from the Madonna and child in order to behold the surrounding blissful ("wonesam") wood. Two measures intervene before we are directed to the cross prefigured in a greening tree. Short as it is, fewer than three minutes in length, the piece features remarkable economy, befitting the brevity and the density of Morike's poem. For example, of the song's 26 measures, 19 feature a melodic fragment in the right hand that descends stepwise a minor third. The effect on the ear is one of stillness, compression, timelessness, even numbness. The climactic introduction of the word "Kreuz" by the voice is observed by a ritard and hold on a dissonance.

The key is an unstable f#-minor, unstable both because the tonic is not strongly inflected by the chord sequences, and because the two full cadences in measures 12 and 24-25 resolve to the parallel major, which has already appeared in root position in three other places, beginning with measure two. The key of f# minor has three sharps, F, C, and G; before the song's finish e-sharp, d-sharp, a-sharp, and b-sharp have appeared as well. Because "Kreuz" denotes the musical accidental "sharp" as well as "cross," listeners both "hear" the cross via these harmonic inflections in the sharp direction, and may see it in the score, well before, with the help of the guide, we are called to observe its origins in the blissful wood. In effect, the composer is suggesting F#-major, not only by frequent use of the picardy third, but by using all seven sharps that would occur in the key signature for F#-major.<sup>35</sup> [35] In examining the score, we see that these interpolated accidentals become more plentiful as the song unfolds. At the level of the ear, we hear sorrow overlaid with bliss as the unstable f#-minor gives way to an emphatic final cadence in F#-major. As we see the sharps proliferate in the score, the eyes of our minds are

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35 [35] Wolf's emphatic opposition to the publication of his songs in keys other than the original is well known.

guided away from Madonna and Child, the painting's conventional subject, and toward Golgotha

As part of an attempt to "exhaust the source," the above discussion recalls a particular episode in the Voegelin-Heilman correspondence, which occurred well before the 1956 sequence of letters on historicism and literary criticism. After reading *This Great Stage*, Heilman's study of *King Lear*, Voegelin described his friend's methodology and analysis:

"You try to analyze the pattern of imagery, that is of the structure of the poetic medium by which a meaning is conveyed that itself transcends the level of sensual symbolism." Before arguing that "a poem can have a pattern because it has a word-body...and a word-body because the body is a carrier of meaning," Voegelin focused on the "sight-pattern" Heilman had exhausted in *King Lear* as "a basic symbolic structure for the higher levels of meaning because the world of the senses is loaded, indeed, with meanings beyond the physical content...'eyes' are not just optical apparatuses but mediums of intelligence."<sup>36</sup> [36] I would suggest that "Auf ein altes Bild," as interpreted by Hugo Wolf, is a musical meditation prompted partly by the patterns of sight-- "Schau" and "dort" --imposed by M<sup>o</sup>rke's imaginary docent for viewing what may well have been an imaginary painting.

Just as the docent conceivably extends the content of the painting by imagining the cross in a grove of trees, Wolf's differentiation of the M<sup>o</sup>rke poem, proceeding musically at the level of technique, rests ultimately, as does the poem, on language: especially the Gospel of John. Analyses of the piano part have referenced a medieval-style Gregorian melody and even

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36 [36] *Heilman and Voegelin*, 31, 33, 32.

organum texture suggested by the recurring parallel fourths in the right hand. This is not incompatible with the chorale form and texture I have noted above, but there is another notational device that strikes the ear as well. This is the weaving repetitive figures in right and left hands. At an octave's remove we hear acceptable, if austere, chorale-style voice leading. If we focus on the relationship of the upper part in the right hand and the lower part in the left hand (which from time to time doubles the vocal line), we can discern in the score the crown of thorns that is woven for Christ prior to the scene that evokes the famous words "Ecce homo," in John 19, a third well-known image in the inventory of Christian iconography.<sup>37</sup> [37] In graphic renderings of the Ecce Homo we expect to see the crown of thorns. In the unknown artist's painting, as configured by M<sup>◆</sup>rike in language and at one remove by Wolf, we "hear" it twisted into being. This is word-painting of course, at times regarded as the cheapest and most abused device of a composer's craft, but here Wolf is painting for us an absent word, evoking an element of the *vita Christi* that is missing not only from the anonymous painting but also from M<sup>◆</sup>rike's poem, which had nonetheless "seen" beyond the apparent subject of Madonna and Child. The blissful wood ("Walde Wonnensam"), its greening cross, and the thorn crown recall to us Voegelin's observation in "The Gospel and Culture" that "the cosmos does not cease to be real when the consciousness of existence in the In-Between differentiates."<sup>38</sup> [38] In fact, the insights of poet, and then composer, into the "indelible present" of the painting rest on, are accessed through, its natural setting.

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37 [37] Mosco Carner calls similar material in the piano prelude and postlude of Wolf's "Schlafendes Jesuskind" a "halo round the Christ-child's head." Mosco Carner, *Hugo Wolf Songs* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982), 26.

38 [38] Eric Voegelin, "The Gospel and Culture," in *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, 208.

Thus Wolf elaborates on the flow of divine presence to which M<sup>o</sup>rke has called the viewer's/reader's attention: it is not one timeless moment, but many. The fragment extracted from M<sup>o</sup>rke's work nearly 100 years after the Fragment symbolized reality among the group at Jena becomes in the interpretation of Hugo Wolf a recognition that, in Voegelin's words, "If history is to be compatible with the truth of existence, it must be symbolized as a revelatory process: the cosmological past of experience and symbolization must be intelligibly related to the differentiated consciousness to which it has given birth; and the vision of the future must bear some intelligible relation to the insight into the double meaning of life and death." The secret of the gospel, writes Voegelin, "is neither the mystery of divine presence in existence, nor its articulation through new symbols, but the event of its full comprehension and enactment through the life and death of Jesus."<sup>39</sup> [39] This Wolf accomplishes by evoking the crown of thorns through a green cosmic haze that is transparent for the Christian symbols, both seen and heard. But when Wolf recalled the experience of composing this poem in a letter, the event had left an impressionistic, almost inarticulate residue: "The song I have just finished, is without doubt the crown of my work so far. I am still in the grip of the enchantment of the mood of this song; there is still a green summery haze shimmering around me."<sup>40</sup> [40] Few works illustrate more economically the cosmological underpinnings of differentiation. J. P. Stern says of M<sup>o</sup>rke: "Underlying his poetry and rarely made explicit is a belief in the connectedness of the human

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39 [39] *Ibid.*, 208, 204.

40 [40] Sams, *Songs of Hugo Wolf*, 63.

and the divine. Art for him is not an expression of the ineffable but of the world, or at least of a small, intimate part of the world, as a creation of God, "pulcher horologium Dei."<sup>41</sup> [41]

So we have a cosmion incrementally differentiated through two nineteenth-century miniatures, poem and music. As art, they evoke rather than inform. But what does the crown of thorns embedded in the relationship of voice and piano, or in the voice leading in four-part harmony, evoke? This is a question about what the *Ecce Homo*, another piece in the pattern of sight, evokes. As we "Behold the Man" crowned with thorns we are thrust:

(1) back to John XIX and the words of Pontius Pilate;

(2) back to the rich tradition of Christian iconography of the *Ecce Homo* episode;

(3) both back and forward to Nietzsche and his *Ecce Homo* (publ. 1908): Wolf "knew his Nietzsche,"<sup>42</sup> [42] although he wouldn't have known *Ecce Homo*, which was written in the same year as the *Mörrike lieder* (1888), but published after Wolf had died.

(4) forward to George Grosz, who knew on what his art rested: "Perhaps outwardly, all my pictures are baskets." Drawing reflects, he writes, "the innate human faculty for weaving and braiding."<sup>43</sup> [43] In his *Ecce Homo* (1923) Grosz documents the relationship between existential

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<sup>41</sup> [41] J. P. Stern, "German Literature in the Age of European Realism," in *German Language and Literature: Seven Essays*, Karl S. Weimar, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), 259.

<sup>42</sup> [42] Kramer, 188.

<sup>43</sup> [43] Quoted from Grosz' autobiography by Henry Miller, in the introduction to George Grosz, *Ecce Homo* (New York: Grove Press, Inc. 1966), xii. This volume is a facsimile of the original (Malik-Verlag, 1923), except for the addition of the Miller introduction.

disorder, addiction and self-loathing. It also reminds us that ceaseless activity is often, ironically, a disguise for nonparticipation.

(5) forward to Thomas Mann, who certainly knew his Wolf; when he set for himself a modern telling of the Faust legend, he sent to the Library of Congress for the Wolf correspondence.<sup>44</sup> [44] What Mann learned about Wolf from the letters (and from the Ernest Newman biography) would inform part of the Adrian Leverkühn character and, concomitantly, what Voegelin referred to as "the Ecce Homo stance:"

Thomas Mann formulates the matter explicitly: 'The lament--and here we deal with a constant, inexhaustibly accentuated lament of the most painful Ecce-Homo variety--the lament is the expressive act itself.' Lament is not the language of defection, lament is the language of suffering from estrangement--the Ecce-Homo stance. This suffering, however, belongs to the essence of man, for though it is man's destiny to be *imago Dei*, the possibility is also present not to live up to it--to fall away from it and to close oneself off. The dignity of the *imago Dei* encompasses the suffering of the Ecce-Homo. Language, therefore, has a double meaning as an expression of both suffering and joy. Even in the exultation of joy there can be heard the lament of the human which is at a distance from the divine, and therefore capable of estrangement from it. Even in the lament there lives the dignity of the hope to be delivered from one's estrangement. 45 [45]

In the Wolf setting of "Auf ein altes Bild," we find the audible tracks of "reality becoming luminous for its truth" in a paradox of suffering and joy. The Mörrike poem by itself does not bear the weight of this paradox, except by the use of the word "Wonnesam," blissful. It is the composer's translation of the poem into music, itself an intentional act, that evokes the glow of

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44 [44] Thomas Mann, *The Genesis of a Novel*, transl. Richard and Clara Winston (London: Secker & Warburg, 1961), 18.

45 [45] Voegelin, "The German University," 17-18.

insight into the identity of the *imago Dei* and accordingly the potential for defection, but beyond that, return: beginning in lament as an expression both of suffering and joy. The cross in the blissful wood, "discovered" by the poet in the painting of the Madonna and Child, is translated in music to the glowing paradox of the *imago Dei* "beholding" the "Man" presented by Pontius Pilate. The "Kn<sup>o</sup>blein s<sup>o</sup>ndelos" becomes in an instant the man in whom Pontius Pilate can find no fault.

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Poi la Musica: Intentionality and Luminosity in a 19. th. -century Miniature. Copyright 2006 Polly Detels. DRAFT.Â Art songs, especially German lieder of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had roots in the late eighteenth century and normally entailed the setting by a composer of an already extant text, usually a poem, to music for solo voice and piano. If poetry is a symbolization of experience and an individual poem its evocation, what was the art song?