

***SEHNSUCHT* AND ALIENATION IN SCHUBERT'S MIGNON
SETTINGS**

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ABSTRACT

Sehnsucht (longing) and alienation were two central themes of 19th century German Romanticism in literature, music and art. Franz Schubert was one of the great masters of the Romantic era to understand and express these intense emotions through his compositions. This paper discusses *Sehnsucht* and alienation in Schubert's settings of the Mignon songs from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Master William's Apprenticeship). Mignon, a secondary character in this novel, is a prime example of one who experiences these emotions and whose principal medium of expressing herself is through her five songs. My thesis focuses on how Schubert portrays Mignon's longing through use of dissonance, harmonic progressions, melodic contour and shifts in vocal register.

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Sehnsucht and Alienation in Schubert's Mignon Settings

This thesis in partial requirement for the Masters of Music degree will present the Romantic concepts of *Sehnsucht* (yearning) and alienation in Schubert's settings of the Mignon songs from Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Master William's Apprenticeship). These songs deal with a number of important Romantic themes that were central to the music and literature of the 19th century. Yearning for love, for the past, for a homeland, or for a distant ideal are just a few of the many themes that preoccupy Romantic narrative. Furthermore, yearning is often connected to the idea of the Wanderer; an important figure in early German Romanticism. I will be examining how Schubert musically interprets Mignon's *Sehnsucht* and alienation. My thesis will include an analysis of specific lieder dealing first with the poetic text and its images and ideas and then a discussion of specific musical aspects of the songs and how they express the feeling of *Sehnsucht* in the poetry. Vocal and dramatic interpretation will also be discussed to elaborate on these important relationships.

The first part of the paper will explore Goethe's Classic novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and the character of Mignon. Here I will examine the relationship between *Sehnsucht* and Mignon and the ways in which longing is a vital and defining part of her character. Furthermore, through the relationships between Mignon, Wilhelm and the Harper, and through aspects of Mignon's secret past, I will discuss Mignon as an alienated wanderer. In addition, I will revisit the specifics of *Sehnsucht* and how the author himself experienced many of these themes.

The second part will focus on Schubert, one of the first great masters of the lied. He was a uniquely gifted composer who had the ability to portray yearning with refined

subtlety in his music through the use of rich melodies and innovative harmonic structures. His talent for expressing complex emotions in beautiful and dramatic ways makes him one of the finest Romantic composers. The ideas of yearning and alienation have a strong connection to the life of Schubert. Due to his severe illness and his apparent identification to the Romantic paradigm of the ‘suffering artist’, I believe Schubert related strongly to those poems and characters that expressed *Sehnsucht*. Through his letters, memoirs of friends, and works that Schubert composed, one can conclude that he himself experienced, or was drawn to many of these quintessential Romantic emotions.

The final portion of my thesis will consist of my own interpretations of Schubert’s Mignon settings; “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”, “Heiß nicht mich reden”, “So lasst mich scheinen”, and a duet version of “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt” all comprise Opus 62 while “Kennst du das Land?” stands alone as D. 321. Though not part of Opus 62, I have included the latter song as I feel it helps complete the story of Mignon and is musically an appropriate addition to this set. In this section I will examine, in detail, the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic characteristics of these lieder and how they express the wandering Mignon’s longing and alienation. Before I begin to discuss Schubert and his Mignon settings however, it is important to deal more fully with the origins of *Sehnsucht*, its meaning, and how it dominated the Romantic era.

A. *Sehnsucht* and alienation in Romanticism

The German word *Sehnsucht*, for which there is no proper English translation, is a compound word. It originates from an intense longing or yearning (*das Sehnen*) and

addiction (*die Sucht*), however, when placed together, these two translations fail to express the full meaning of the word. This deep emotional state has been expressed throughout the Romantic era in literature, music and art and is the quintessential emotion of the 1800's. The early 19th Century German writer and composer E.T.A. Hoffmann, for instance, wrote that Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 "sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism."¹ This yearning often arises from a feeling of alienation. The songs I have chosen to discuss bring together two of the greatest creative minds of the Romantic Era – Goethe and Schubert – who have, through their respective geniuses, expressed longing and alienation through the character of Mignon. In the course of the novel, Mignon's only medium of sharing her innermost thoughts are through these five lieder. Before we examine her songs, let us first become familiar with the types of longing in Romanticism and those that affected Mignon herself.

The ideas of yearning and alienation are two themes that grow out of the change in world view that occurred during the shift from the Enlightenment to the age of romanticism. Romanticism, which encouraged individual subjectivity, was a reaction to the Enlightenment of the late 17th and 18th centuries – a movement in which rationalism was the universal language of science, literature and philosophy. Furthermore, reason, logic, and a view of nature as a source of scientific inquiry, caused people of the Enlightenment to seem detached from their intuitions and ideas of the "self".² Scientists

¹ E.T.A. Hoffman, "Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony" in *E.T.A. Hoffman's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer; Music Criticism*, David Charlton ed., trans. Martyn Clarke, 234-253 (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 238

² Azade Seyhan, "What is Romanticism, and where did it come from?," in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9, 10

and philosophers alike were striving to explain the world and human behaviour according to natural laws. Newton's discovery of gravity and his general conceptions of rationally understandable laws in the universe, such as those governing motion, prompted the philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) to consider natural theories for political and economic systems as well. His empiricist views stated that man gained knowledge solely through experience and observation, and that scientific understanding could expel superstition.³ Such theories in trying to explain mankind in a social environment unfortunately caused man to become alienated from nature and his natural instincts and intuitions. The counter-Enlightenment at the end of the 18th century was a movement that attempted to return man to his "natural" self. During this time intellectuals and artists longed to return an innocent view of the world in which mankind was at one with nature.

Perhaps the most influential intellectual to generate pre-Romantic ideas was Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). In his philosophical writings he stated that although the concept of rationalism was beneficial to the progress of society, it was feelings and imagination that governed reason and thus along with reason, dictated our actions towards each other.⁴ His ideas of man and the natural world were developed by the German movement in literature, "Sturm und Drang" (Storm and Stress), which focused on man's faith in nature, the overthrow of artistic conventions and belief in the power of genius.⁵ It was also during this time that the Irish philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) brought forth his own ideas about nature in the arts. For him, art had the power to portray the sublime or the infinite. The concepts found in the writings of Rousseau and Burke, and in

³ Duncan Heath, *Introducing Romanticism* (Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd., 2005), 7

⁴ *Ibid.* 24

⁵ Azade Seyhan, "What is Romanticism, and where did it come from?," in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 8

the “Sturm und Drang” movement, all suggested that there had been a fracturing of humanity and nature and a lost awareness of one’s natural place within the universe.

The early Romantics sought to mend this fractured state through music, literature and poetry. Goethe’s first novel, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (Sorrows of a Young Werther) tells of a young man who has become alienated from the polite society he is supposed to conform to, and can find happiness only with simple folk and innocent children. This idea of the innocent child became an important image to the Romantics. It suggested that it was only the young and naive who knew what it was to be one with nature as they had not yet been “educated” by science and society. William Wordsworth’s (1770-1850) poem, *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, further illustrates this Romantic concept as it describes one man’s longing to return to the intuitive understanding of his place in nature and the awe it inspired when he was a child. Wordsworth, like Rousseau, thought man had become alienated from his “natural” self and from his fellow men by industrialized urban life. This was echoed in the ideas of the poet and philosopher Samuel Coleridge (1772-1834). For Coleridge, to feel cut off, isolated, estranged from other men and from the surrounding world was intolerable. He felt that humans should think of themselves as one with nature, rather than “as separated beings...as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life.”⁶ For Coleridge the arts humanized nature and thus “helped to repossess it for the mind from which it had been alienated.” Art, he said, “is the mediatrix between, and reconciler of, nature and man. It is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation.” “To make

⁶ M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 267

the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature, – this is the mystery of genius in the Fine Arts.”⁷

Arthur Schopenhauer’s (1788-1860) own philosophy reflects Coleridge’s ideas of the importance of music. Schopenhauer stated that life is meaningless and directionless and is tormented by the unceasing desire of the will. According to him however, one was capable of finding relief from the suffering caused by the individual will. In finding beauty in someone or something, Schopenhauer thought that there could be temporary respite from this yearning or want. His concept was called aesthetic salvation and was specifically referring to the arts. Music, he argued, was the preeminent way to quiet the individual will.⁸

M.H. Abrams’, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, uses the metaphors of a mirror and a lamp to describe differences in the literature between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. He states that like a mirror, the classical writers imitated the world and the underlying laws of nature through their works. The Romantics however, strove to illuminate nature like a lamp thus transforming it through the eyes of the artwork’s creator. Yearning and the idea of the alienated soul became themes linked closely with music and literature in the Romantic era in describing how intellectuals and artists felt about their detachment from the “natural” self and from their intuitive understanding of their place in the world. They longed to return to a time of innocence when, like children, they were a part of nature rather than detached from it. This is a main theme in Mignon’s story.

⁷ Samuel Coleridge, “On Poesy or Art,” in *Biographia Literaria*, II, 253, 258

⁸ Dale Jacquette, “Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of appearance and Will in the philosophy of art,” in *Schopenhauer, philosophy, and the arts*, ed. Dale Jacquette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27

However, longing or *Sehnsucht* was applied to much more than just this one condition. Other circumstances include longing for love, to be a part of society, or for a long forgotten home. Many poems and novels are centered on an exotic or spiritual land that symbolizes a place where one can escape reality. In short, the basis of *Sehnsucht* became a resistance to change, a desire to return to an ideal but unattainable place, to avoid the harsh realities of the world and ultimately to find inner peace. Connected to this idea of alienation and *Sehnsucht* is 'the wanderer', a prototypical character in Romantic art and literature. The wanderer experiences *Sehnsucht* through the desire to travel and to escape into a simpler life, often reflected in a longing to return to nature. This idea of the wanderer is a main theme in certain German novels of the late 18th century often called *Bildungsroman* ("novel of education"). This is a genre in which the protagonist experiences psychological and moral growth often due to his travels and the characters he encounters. Through a new maturity the hero eventually fully enters into society.

B. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehjahre*

The novel we will be looking at, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehjahre* (Master William's Apprenticeship), is generally considered the first of the *Bildungsroman*. It follows the young Wilhelm Meister as he embarks on a journey of self-realization by attempting to escape his mundane, bourgeois life. The novel made a significant impact on European literature and Mignon's songs in particular captured the imagination of many of the greatest composers of the 19th century, several of whom were inspired to set

her songs multiple times.⁹ Each of these unique settings capture different aspects of Goethe's novel and Mignon's character.

The story of Wilhelm Meister opens with the budding relationship between our hero Wilhelm, who is drawn to the world of theatre and the young actress, Marianna. When he believes Marianna to be unfaithful, he sets out on a business trip for his father but soon meets a group of travelling actors whom he befriends. He quickly disregards his business trip and joins the group, travelling and performing. Once, while passing by a circus troupe, Wilhelm notices a young tomboy being treated poorly. He is intrigued by her appearance and feels sorry for the abused child so purchases her freedom. This young girl, Mignon and the old Harper, who they also meet here, join the travelling group. Mignon becomes increasingly attached to Wilhelm as they continue on their journey, first looking to him as a protector and then gradually as something more. When a gang of robbers attack the group one evening, Wilhelm is badly injured. Only Mignon, the Harper, Wilhelm and the young actress Philina escape the violent assault. They quickly flee with the unconscious Wilhelm to a nearby town. During his convalescence Mignon is particularly devoted to him.

As long as the frivolous Philina had continued to attend the patient with assiduous care, little Mignon had gradually withdrawn herself, remaining silent and absorbed in her thoughts; but now when the field was again clear, she was once more zealous in her attentions and her love, and was both anxious to serve and eager to entertain Wilhelm.¹⁰

This marks the beginning of Mignon's longing for Wilhelm and her feelings for him only grow stronger and more physical through the course of the novel. Once Wilhelm has

⁹ There are settings of Mignon lieder by many other composers including Beethoven, Liszt, Schumann, Tchaikovsky and Wolf.

¹⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, trans. R. Dillon Boylan (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), 220

recovered from his injuries he decides to go on a journey, to Mignon's dismay. While away, Mignon is reclusive and does nothing but yearn for Wilhelm's arrival. Upon his return, he decides that Mignon should be sent away to the country to receive education. She is deeply upset about being separated from Wilhelm.

He accordingly sent for Mignon, that he might prepare her for the proposed change. "Master!" she said, "keep me with yourself – it will be for my advantage and for my sorrow." He represented to her that she was now grown up, and that something should be done for her further education. "I am sufficiently educated," she answered, "to love and to grieve."¹¹

Mignon is nonetheless sent away but shortly after her arrival in the country she falls gravely ill. Letters are sent to Wilhelm to tell him of her condition. One such letter discusses her deep anguish:

...the child was pining away under the influence of some deep mental affliction, that under extreme excitement, which it endeavoured to conceal, its little heart suffered painful and violent attacks, and that any sudden agitation, it would suddenly cease to beat and leave no sign of life in the bosom of the innocent sufferer.¹²

Near the end of the novel, another letter arrives for Wilhelm in which we learn that Mignon was invited to a birthday party for which she dressed as an angel. She finally has come to understand that Wilhelm will never reciprocate her feelings and thus longs for freedom in death. When Wilhelm visits the country home where Mignon is living, an announcement is made of Wilhelm's engagement to a young woman. The moment Mignon learns of his news, she falls into her caregiver's arms and tragically dies. After her death, Wilhelm learns that he unwittingly caused Mignon's mental and physical illnesses and consequently feels overwhelmingly guilty about his ignorance of her feelings. In a lengthy discussion Wilhelm has following Mignon's funeral, many secrets

¹¹ Ibid. 457

¹² Ibid. 481

of her tragic past are uncovered; of her mother who went mad, how Mignon was kidnapped in her homeland of Italy by the circus troupe, and more importantly the reason for her timorous and melancholic state – that she is the result of an incestuous relationship of a brother and sister.

C. Mignon: The Character

From this brief synopsis, it is evident that there are many reasons that Mignon's character may reflect some of the important Romantic ideas of the 18th century. She is, for example, the perfect illustration of an alienated soul. Her childhood was devoid of much care and love. Mignon is the child of none other than the Harper – the old man who had been accompanying the small troupe since Wilhelm's first visit, though neither knew of their true connection. The Harper, years before, had fallen in love with Sperata, his own sister. They did not know they were siblings until after Mignon was conceived but once it was discovered, Sperata eventually went mad and died, and the Harper was left to wander the world alone and in great despair. Neither of Mignon's parents was capable of showing Mignon love and affection as her father disappeared shortly after he learned the truth and once her mother was overcome with grief, Mignon was neglected. Consequently, when Mignon was old enough to understand that she was the result of an incestuous relationship, she felt terribly guilty and became increasingly introverted. Her forced travels and abusive employment in the circus added to her alienation as it left her with no friends or meaningful connections. Even when she is saved by Wilhelm and taken to live with him, she was always regarded as an outsider, a child isolated from

society. She is also seen as an example of the Wanderer. During her childhood, she lived separated from her mother and was forced into a travelling circus; even with Wilhelm's acting troupe she never truly found a home.

Mignon's change through the course of the novel is impelled by her love for Wilhelm. Though his actions and words often lead Mignon to believe these feelings are mutual, Wilhelm always sees her as a child and nothing more and thus her doomed love for him eventually leads to her untimely death. Her relationship with Wilhelm begins, however, with only Mignon's innocent desire for a father-figure. For Wilhelm though, his attraction to Mignon is never romantic, instead he feels compassion for her as her protector. For instance, shortly after he frees her from the circus, he finds himself intrigued with her. "He longed to take this forsaken child into his heart, to hold her in his embrace, and with the fullness of a father's love to awaken within her bosom all joys of existence."¹³ Due to the guilt Mignon feels from the heavy secret she carries, there is a distant and forlorn quality about her. Those who are unaware of her secret see only an odd but interesting child and it is these characteristics Wilhelm finds mysterious. Mignon demonstrates another quality that adds to her mystery: gender ambiguity. When Wilhelm first sees Mignon with the circus troupe, he is unsure of her sex as she is dressed in boy's clothes. Throughout the beginning of the novel she prefers only to wear male attire. When Wilhelm offers to purchase her a new suit of clothes, she accepts on the condition that it be a jacket and sailor pants. As she matures from child to woman she begins to dress more in feminine clothing – culminating in the birthday scene in which she is dressed as an angel.

¹³ Ibid. 102

This attire Mignon wears reflects not only her maturation, but also her growing love for Wilhelm. Mignon's feelings for Wilhelm become increasingly intense until she is bound to him by half filial, half erotic feelings. In one scene in particular we become aware of the sexual element that is continually suggested in their embrace.

When she met him or bade him farewell, in the morning or at night, she was accustomed to embrace him so affectionately, and to kiss him with so much ardour, that the force of her ripening nature often rendered him anxious and fearful.¹⁴

These feelings for Wilhelm, as we can see, quickly develop into something more dangerous until they finally manifest themselves into an illness. One evening, after Mignon learns that Wilhelm is thinking of continuing on his travels without his troupe, Mignon enters his room. After seeing how unhappy he is, he tells her that she, among other things, is a source of his sorrow and he must leave. She throws herself at his feet and we come to understand the extent of her feelings.

She held her own hand firmly to her heart, when suddenly she uttered a piercing shriek, and her whole frame shook with a violent and spasmodic action. She rose upon her feet, and then fell down suddenly, as if she had all at once lost the power of her limbs....Suddenly she became rigid, like one who suffers from the most intense physical pain; but soon her frame seemed inspired with new energy, and she threw her arms wildly around Wilhelm's neck, and held him firmly, as it were in the pressure of a strong spring which has closed, whilst at the same moment a full tide of grief opened within her soul, and her tears flowed in copious torrents from her closed eyes into his bosom.¹⁵

This quote is only the first mention of Mignon's physical suffering. Without realizing it, Wilhelm has caused Mignon much grief and anguish and her songs are perhaps the only way she is able to truly express her unending longing and guilt.

¹⁴ Ibid. 242

¹⁵ Ibid. 128

D. Schubert and his settings

Mignon's first entrance in the novel is so vividly described by Goethe that she is quickly an object of significant interest to the reader. She is furthermore the only character throughout the narrative that is so fully described. The intriguing characterization and mysterious quality that fascinated Wilhelm must have, in some way, attracted composers like Schubert. Many inferences and assumptions can be made as to why Schubert was personally drawn to Mignon's story but nothing can be known for certain. In learning that Schubert set countless poems with the theme of *Sehnsucht* and alienation, one might surmise that he had a predisposition to these themes. This can be seen in the many settings containing the word *Sehnsucht* in the title, including Friedrich von Schiller's "Sehnsucht" D.52, Opus 105 "Sehnsucht", and Goethe's "Sehnsucht" D 123. He also set a number of separate Mignon lieder, not part of the Op. 62 "Gesänge aus Wilhelm Meister". These include D 469 "Mignon", D 359 "Lied der Mignon", D 321 "Mignon", D 481 "Lied der Mignon", D 726 "Mignon 1", and D 727 "Mignon 2". Thus, one might infer that the novel of Wilhelm Meister, the character of Mignon, and the longing she experienced resonated with the insightful composer. Schubert was also drawn to the theme of the Wanderer, another important idea in Mignon's story, which is reflected in earlier lieder settings such as "Kennst du das Land?" from 1815, "Der Wanderer" of 1816, and "Der Wanderer's Nachtlied" of 1822. We find Schubert's penchant for the theme of the Wanderer not solely in his choice of poetry, but also in a short allegorical tale he wrote in 1822. This narrative, titled "Meine Traum" or "My Dream," tells of a wanderer who, because he was banished by his father, suffered at the

hands of those he loved. He, like Mignon, was forced to wander the land, searching for happiness and longing for eternal bliss.

I turned my footsteps and, my heart full of infinite love for those who disdained it, I wandered into far-off regions. For long years I felt torn between the greatest grief and the greatest love.¹⁶

In this dream, the speaker's feeling toward his family is similar to that of Mignon's – they feel love for their family but that love it is united with the greatest grief. The end of the dream suggests this wanderer's desire to escape to the distant and "better" land or "a life after death" where love is no longer synonymous with pain. These ideas again have a definite parallel to Mignon as at the end of her own story she longs for final salvation in death where she may be released from her secret and from the pain she experiences in loving Wilhelm.

Perhaps Schubert's proclivity for these themes, the Wanderer, *Sehnsucht* and alienation, were aggravated by the fatal illness he contracted in late 1822 or early 1823. It is known that Schubert became infected with syphilis at the age of 25 through contact with a prostitute. Perhaps due to this disease and the death he knew was imminent, Schubert felt the same yearning expressed by Mignon for a more innocent past.

Through letters written by Schubert, one can understand the intense longing and despair he felt. One such letter is the touching message sent from Schubert to his good friend, Leopold Kupelwieser, in March of 1824. Reflective of Mignon's own feelings of nostalgia, Schubert writes of the yearning he feels for the 'sweet days of the past'. A

¹⁶ Franz Schubert, "My Dream", in Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: A Documentary Biography*, Erich Blom, trans. 226-228 (London: J.M. Dent, 1946), 227

quote from this letter that depicts Schubert's deeply felt sorrow and yearning for not only what was, but what could have been.

In a word, I feel myself to be the most unhappy and wretched creature in the world. Imagine a man whose health will never be right again, and who in sheer despair over this ever makes things worse and worse instead of better; imagine a man...to whom the felicity of love and friendship have nothing to offer but pain...is he not a miserable, unhappy being? – “My peace is gone, my heart is sore, I shall find it never and nevermore,”¹⁷ ... Thus, joyless and friendless, I should pass my days, did not Schwind visit me now and again and turn on me a ray of those sweet days of the past.¹⁸

Through writings such as these and through the multiple settings of the poetry with the themes of *Sehnsucht* and alienation, Schubert must have been personally drawn to these Romantic ideas. There are over 15 compositions of the Mignon lieder that span an 11 year period, one of which, “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”, is set six times alone. Let us now examine these settings and the ways in which he expresses Mignon's longing.

First, a brief overview of the Mignon lieder: Of the five songs that will be discussed, the first was written in 1815 while the remaining four were composed 11 years later in 1826 and published together as Opus 62. The characteristic elements of Romantic *Sehnsucht* and alienation that have been discussed are realized in each of Mignon's songs in various ways. In her opening lied, “Kennst du das Land?” she longs for her far away home and lost childhood and refers to the journey she was forced to take by the circus troupe. As Mignon is only 12 or 13 at the time of her first song, her childlike qualities can be readily heard in both the vocal line and piano accompaniment. However, as she matures into a young woman through the course of the novel, her remaining songs are likewise marked with a maturity and deep understanding of her fractured state. Her

¹⁷ This quote is taken from Goethe's poem “Gretchen am Spinnrade” which Schubert set in 1814. This quote shows how closely he identified with the personae of the texts he set.

¹⁸ Franz Schubert, “Schubert to Leopold Kupelweiser”: in Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: A Documentary Biography*, Erich Blom, trans. 338-340 (London: J.M. Dent, 1946), 339

desire for Wilhelm's love and her longing for salvation and release are recurring themes in the four final songs.

E. "Kennst du das Land"

Mignon's opening song in the novel, "Kennst du das Land?," is the reader's first glimpse into her inner-most thoughts as she sings of her longing to return to her homeland of Italy. In the context of the novel, Wilhelm has just informed Mignon that he wishes to leave when she cries and clings to his neck. Wilhelm kisses her and says "My child! You are mine...I will be faithful to you, and never forsake you!" to which she replies "My father!...you will not forsake me; you will continue to be a father to me, and I will be your child!"¹⁹ From this exchange we know that their relationship is still a filial one and more innocent for Mignon. Later, Wilhelm hears music outside his door and thinks it to be the Harper until the little Mignon enters with her zither. When Wilhelm asks where she got the little song Mignon replies "Italy!...if thou go to Italy, take me along with thee; for I am too cold here."²⁰ This quick reply is indicative of Mignon's longing for the warmth and inviting recollections of Italy. The song continuously expresses the excitement of her dream-like memories of the place she so fondly remembers. As she describes these childhood memories, of the exotic landscape of Italy and the beautiful house she grew up in, she is carried away by her own vivid images.

Kennst du das Land?

Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen
Im dunklen Laub die Gold-Orangen glühen,

Do you know the land?

Do you know the land where the lemons blossom
midst dark leaves the golden orange glow,

¹⁹ Ibid. 129

²⁰ Ibid. 131

Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht,
Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht?
Kennst du es wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn!

a soft wind from the blue heaven blows,
The myrtle is still and the laurel tall?
Do you know it?
There! There
Would I go with you, oh my beloved!

Kennst du das Haus? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach.
Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach,
Und Marmorbilder stehn und sehn mich an:
Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan?
Kennst du es wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Beschützer, ziehn!

Do you know the house ? On pillars rests its roof ;
the hall gleams, the room shines,
and marble statues stand and look at me:
What have they done to you, you poor child?
Do you know it?
There! There
Would I go with you, oh my protector!

Kennst du den Berg und seinen Wolkensteg?
Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg;
In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut;
Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut!
Kennst du ihn wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Geht unser Weg! O Vater, laß uns ziehn!²¹

Do you know the mountain and its clouded path?
The mule seeks, in the mist, its way.
In caves dwells the ancient brood of dragons;
The rock plunges down, and over it the torrent.
Do you know it?
There! There
Leads our way ! Oh father, let us go !

In the first stanza she sings of lemon trees blossoming and oranges glowing and a soft wind blowing from heaven; images that reflect her own innocence. Moreover, such illustrations are reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. These religious references are linked to Mignon's final songs when she sings of God and when she longs to be released into heaven where she will find happiness and beauty once again. At the refrain "Dahin! Dahin" (there, there), she is brought back to reality when she asks Wilhelm if he knows of this place. Her longing is not only for her return to Italy but also for Wilhelm to experience somehow the beauty that she once knew. She begs him to understand; countless times she exclaims "There, there! Would I go with you." Yet in these bright and inviting recollections are underlying memories of an innocence lost and of a child who has experienced a dark change.

²¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Lehjahre*, English translation *100 Songs (The Vocal Library)*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2000

Mignon continues to describe her memories in stanza two with images of a lavish house comprised of grand pillars and gleaming halls. Whether or not this house belonged to her family is unknown, but her memories of the place imply that she has seen such a space and finds comfort in remembering it. The image of the statues inquiring “What have they done to you, poor child?” suggests that something tragic has happened to Mignon and she has consequently lost her innocence (this tragedy being her understanding of her family’s secret). She is pulled out of her memory and once again speaks to Wilhelm; “Do you know it?”

The third verse reveals a difficult and treacherous journey she was forced to take and as she tells her story, she becomes increasingly caught up in the drama. She excitedly describes the journey over steep misty mountain paths (probably through the Alps which she would have crossed to get from Italy to Germany) through which the mule seeks its way, and where dragons dwell in caves. Her mention of the mule, not fantastic like the dragon, suggests this was a journey she truly endured. Mignon addresses Wilhelm three different times during the course of the song, and each time he is given a different title. He is first referred to as her beloved, then protector, and finally in the third verse she calls him father. This change in title and the fact that it becomes more and more intimate could signify that a father figure is what Mignon is ultimately searching and longing for. Whether she is speaking specifically to Wilhelm or whether her mind has wandered to that father she has lost long ago is unknown. We only know that throughout the novel, Mignon follows Wilhelm and longs for him to offer any form of security he can. “Kennst du das Land?” is the first time the reader is shown intimate thoughts of the character and what she has endured in her short lifetime.

Though Mignon is still a child, she describes her pain and longing for her home with an incredible amount of maturity, imagination and comprehension. Her emotional delivery of the song is expressed through the words of Goethe:

At the third line, her voice became lower and fainter – the words, “Know’st thou it?” were pronounced with a mysterious thoughtful expression, and the “thither, oh, thither!” was uttered with an irresistible feeling of longing, and at every repetition of the words “Let us flee!” she changed her intonation. At one time she seemed to entreat and to implore and at the next to become earnest and persuasive.²²

This setting of “Kennst du das Land?” captures Mignon’s childlike innocence and earnest longing to return to where she was once pure. The first two stanzas are composed in A major and suggest the idealistic vision that Mignon has retained of the land of her childhood. Her opening line is set to a timid ascending phrase (C# to E) that quickly ceases when she remembers her place (Ex. 1).

Ex 1.: “Kennst du das Land?”, bb. 1-4

Mäßig

Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen, im
 Kennst du das Haus? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach, es

p

6

She is unable to restrain her excitement and becomes lost in the beautiful memories of Italy. To highlight these poetic images of a far-off land, Schubert suddenly shifts from A major to the distant tonalities of flat III (C major) and flat VI (F major). To illustrate her excitement, the piano accompaniment gains energy and speed with an animated gesture of sextuplets, mirroring memories of a soft wind (Ex. 2).

²² Ibid. 131

Example 2.: “Kennst du das Land?” bb. 9-11

Musical score for Example 2, measures 9-11. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "sanf - ter - Wind - vom blau - en - Him - mel weht, die Mar - mor - bil - der stehn - und - sehn mich an: was". The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

When she poses her question “Do you know it?” however, the piano abruptly stops and changes to recitative style chords in a half cadence in A. There is a timid turn in the vocal melody that lands on a B held with a fermata. The composer has scored this phrase with a *pianissimo* that ends in a half cadence (Ex. 3)

Ex. 3.: “Kennst du das Land?”, bb. 15-18

Musical score for Example 3, measures 15-18. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "kennst - du es wohl?". The piano accompaniment consists of long-held chords in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The vocal line is marked *pp* and features a fermata on the final note.

These long-held chords and the lingering dominant suggest her question remains unanswered, just as it does in the book.

Moving into the refrain “Dahin, dahin”, Schubert has prefaced it with a two-bar interlude marked *etwas geschwinder* (somewhat faster) on rising chromatic figures that begin *piano* and crescendo to *forte*. This, along with the excited repetition of “Dahin, dahin”, reflects Mignon’s sudden overwhelming sense of yearning. Goethe’s poem consists of only two ‘Dahin’s’ but in Schubert’s setting there are 11 repeated ‘Dahin’s’ each highlighting Mignon’s simultaneous feelings of excitement and yearning at the idea

of returning home and the desperation for Wilhelm to go with her. The initial statement of the refrain cadences in D in bar 30, which is subsequently followed by a climactic restatement of the refrain. This repeated text is set with new music. The excited triplets stand over a pedal E in the bass clef which results in a prolonged cadence in A major. This tension on the dominant and the repeated leaps from B to E followed by the final run up to A in the vocal line suggests she is begging for him to understand her. This climactic motion that is accompanied by a crescendo remains in the singer's upper register further creating tension that reflects Mignon's yearning (Ex. 4). This example also shows the chromaticism in the accompaniment over the dominant chord that expresses Mignon's longing as she remembers her once innocent past. Finally, at bar 40, the dominant resolves to the tonic and, accompanied with the high A in the vocal line, illustrates the zenith of Mignon's excitement.

Ex. 4.: "Kennst du das Land?", bb 34-40

The musical score for "Kennst du das Land?" (measures 34-40) is presented in A major (three sharps) and 3/4 time. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "zieh'n, da - hin, da - hin, da -" (measures 34-36) and "hin, da - hin! hin, da - hin!" (measures 37-40). The piano accompaniment features a prominent triplet in the right hand and a pedal point on E in the left hand. Dynamics include *f* and *ff*.

For the third verse, Schubert sets Mignon's unhappy memories in A minor, reflecting her sombre recollections of her journey through the alps. This could imply that Mignon wanted nothing more than to remain in Italy rather than travel the treacherous road through the mountains to an unknown place beyond. Schubert's rich accompaniment, featuring left hand octaves and full chords in the right hand, not only continues to express Mignon's yearning for her past, but also depicts the Romantic idiom of images of the sublime in nature and the power of the natural world. She does not care that the way entails clouded paths and treacherous mountains full of caves of dragons and plunging boulders, only that she must find her homeland. At bar 52 there is a change in accompaniment; the majestic dotted rhythms that mirror the vocal line and the accented octaves in the bass reflect that theme of the sublime. This is followed closely by a descending line in F major in octaves in the bass, reflecting the motion of the falling rocks (Ex. 5, bar 53).

Ex. 5.: "Kennst du das Land?", bb 51-54

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's 'Kennst du das Land?' (Example 5), measures 51-54. The score is in A minor and 3/4 time. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with the lyrics 'Brut; es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut,'. The piano accompaniment features a series of sextuplets in the right hand and octaves in the left hand. The dynamic marking 'fp' (fortissimo) is present in the piano part.

As in the first two stanzas, we are brought once again through a series of sextuplets that lead to Mignon's question. The piece ends with the same refrain as stanza one and two. Mignon's hope to return to Italy is shown once again in the rising vocal line, the final cadence with its tense prolonged dominant, the fortissimo dynamic markings and the rising chromaticism in the accompaniment. The vocal characteristics of Schubert's

setting of Mignon's first song display her young age and childish excitement which is shown in a less subtle manner than the following pieces. The outbursts of energy during the refrain, the continuously high register of the vocal line, and the timid rise of the opening lines of each stanza all suggest that Schubert is portraying Mignon as a character at the beginning stages of her later maturity.

F. "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt" (Duet)

The following four songs, as mentioned previously, are part of Schubert's Opus 62 of 1826. It is near the time of the duet of "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt" that we truly realize the magnitude of Mignon's passion for Wilhelm. After an evening of cheerful fun with Wilhelm and a group of friends, Mignon gains enough courage to go to Wilhelm and declare her true feelings. When she approaches his door however, Mignon witnesses a robed female figure enter Wilhelm's bedroom. Mignon's longing and heartbreak for him reaches such intensity that she becomes physically ill and spends the evening in convulsions at the Harper's feet. Together they sing this tragic duet full of yearning and anguish brought on by Mignon's passionate jealousy. Schubert set this poem repeatedly over 11 years, attempting to express Mignon's longing so carefully articulated by Goethe.

Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt

Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt,
Weiß, was ich leide.
Allein und abgetrennt
Von aller Freude,
Seh ich ans Firmament
Nach jener Seite.
Ach, der mich liebt und kennt,
Ist in der Weite.
Es schwindelte mir, es brennt

Only he who knows longing

Only he who knows longing
Knows what I suffer.
Alone and separated
from all joy,
I look to the firmament
Toward yonder direction.
Ah, he who loves and knows me
Is far away.
I am reeling; on fire are

Mein Eingeweide.²³
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt,
Weiß, was ich leide.

My vitals.
Only he who knows longing
Knows what I suffer.

Together, Mignon and the Harper speak of how only those who have experienced unfulfilled longing can understand what they suffer. The yearning that Mignon experiences at this moment, instigated by her desire for Wilhelm to reciprocate her love, is fully expressed in her statement ‘On fire are my vitals’. As previously mentioned, the overwhelming grief she feels for him has caused physical pain and suffering, and it is during this song that Mignon first addresses it. As Mignon sings of her incessant heartache, she is unaware that her father has his own feelings of anguish. Perhaps, the source of the Harper’s longing is that he yearns to be forgiven for his incestuous relationship with his sister and wants forgiveness and redemption from God.

The *Sehnsucht* in their words “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt, wieß was ich leide” is exhibited through the use of chromaticism, abrupt changes in dynamics, and frantic tremolos in the B section. The four bar introduction begins in B minor with a descending melodic line that reflects the melancholic mood of Mignon and the Harper. As with other settings in Opus 62, all of the motivic material is presented in the piano's four-bar prelude: the fatally descending melodic curve, the dotted rhythms and the harmonic motion that darkens from I-IV followed by a moment of hope and yearning in flat II before proceeding tragically through V7-I. This slow tempo of the melodic line and accompanying dotted rhythm creates an intensely nostalgic mood surrounding the characters. The flattened supertonic region (C major) in the prelude emphasizes the

²³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Lehjahre*, English translation *100 Songs (The Vocal Library)*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2000

singers' longing, but also that lingering hope that underpins Mignon's story.

Furthermore, this shift to C major and the descending gesture comprised of open 4th, 5th, and 6th chords in bar 3 suggest a horn call (Ex. 6).²⁴ This moment of relief from

Mignon's grief in C major key returns once again when she longs for someone who is far away (Ex. 7).

Ex. 6.: "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt", bb 1-5

When the voices enter, the dark atmosphere returns and the first two lines of the poem are rooted in the tonic minor. Mignon enters first, followed by the Harper, and the soprano and tenor voice interweave with one another during their opening statement but unite at the hopeful mention of help from the heavens. Their vocal lines rise and fall each time, one after the other as if they are so fatigued by their grief they are unable to finish a phrase. Each line rises to important words; 'Sehnsucht', 'Leide' (suffer) and finally 'Weite' (far away) at the end of the piece. Example 7 illustrates this ever rising and falling melody that always accents the words that highlight the singers' reasons for yearning found at the climax of the line (bar 2 in the soprano). It also shows in the Harper's vocal line at 'Sehnsucht', the sharpened 7th degree (A sharp) that expresses his own sorrow.

²⁴ The part writing, called horn fifths, strongly suggests the sound of a horn.

Ex. 7.: “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”, bb 6-9

Through the consistently falling melodic line and the low octaves in the bass clef, one can hear the unrelenting *Sehnsucht* felt by Mignon and the Harper. Their first statement modulates from the minor sub-dominant (E minor) to the sub-median (G major). At “Ach, der mich liebt und kennt is in der Weite” (he who loves and knows me is far away) the voices continue to move in parallel as Mignon longs for the seemingly detached Wilhelm. Their melancholy is juxtaposed with a return shift to C major and a pianissimo dynamic marking that creates a beautiful moment as it is a reminder of the horn fifths from the prelude of the song. (Ex. 8)

Ex. 8.: “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”, bb 20-24

Furthermore, this change to a major key brings out the characters’ thoughts of turning to the heavens when all joy is lost. The melody continues to be sung together by the

characters, while the chordal accompaniment gathers momentum and the music modulates from the flattened super-tonic back to the sub-dominant (E minor at bar 28 seen in EX 9).

Schubert's widely varied dynamics aid in expressing the shared suffering of Mignon and her father by highlighting important words and following the vocal line. Not only does the vocal melody increase in intensity leading to words such as 'Sehnsucht' and 'leide', but the dynamics increase as well. In bars 7 and 10, crescendos lead to bar 12, where accented *forte* triads emphasize 'Sehnsucht' and 'leide'. We find in bars 10-12 the dramatic decrescendo from *fortissimo* to *piano* to *pianissimo*. Another significant decrescendo is found at bars 28-30 when the singers join together in the statement 'ist in der Weite'. Here, the dynamics begin *fortissimo* at the beginning of the bar and then suddenly decrescendo to *piano* and finish with a seemingly defeated *pianissimo* on the word 'Weite'. This sudden loss of energy reflects the exhausting yearning Mignon experiences and reiterates the idea that her unending longing seems to be an illness she has created for herself (Ex. 9).

Ex. 9.: "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt", bb 25-30

The image shows a musical score for three parts: two vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are: 'Wei - te, ach, der mich liebt und kennt ist in der Wei - te.' The piano part features a prominent tremolo in the left hand, with dynamic markings including *pp*, *ff*, *p*, and *dim.* The vocal lines are marked with *pp* at the beginning and end of the phrase.

A short two-bar interlude interrupts their parallel voices and the climactic ninth and tenth lines are declaimed as recitative over an agitated crescendo tremolo in the piano's left

hand, moving upwards chromatically to the tonic major (bar 32-35). These ascending tremolos create dramatic tension as Mignon and the Harper sing of the effect of their unrelenting grief (Ex. 10).

Ex. 10.: “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”, bb 31-34

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is the vocal line for Mignon, with lyrics: "Es schwindelt mir, es brennt mein Eingeweide,". The middle staff is the vocal line for the Harper, with lyrics: "es brennt mein Eingeweide,". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a nervous tremolo in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *p*, and *cresc.*

Mignon’s image of her internal burning and the agitated piano accompaniment is contrasted with the longing heard in their reprise. The mournful closing pair of lines reverses the order of initial entrances of the vocalists, but they essentially sing the same melody over a similar piano accompaniment. The left hand continues its nervous tremolo into the repeat of the opening, mirroring the relentless inner unease of Mignon and her father. These tension-filled tremolos coupled with the last funeral bars of the song create a contrast as their duet comes to a close. “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt” achieves the melancholic connection between Mignon and the Harper through their interweaving lines and the similarity in their emotions when the two voices join together in a homophonic duet.

G. “Heiß mich nicht reden”

Mignon’s third song is a chance for Mignon to express the frustration she feels in being unable to disclose her dark secret. Wilhelm is about to set out on a journey and

Mignon, who remains behind, bids him farewell. Mignon seizes his hand, and kisses it. She leaves Wilhelm to finish preparing to leave and sings “Heiß mich nicht reden” (Bid me not speak) “amid a thousand conflicting thoughts and emotions”²⁵. Her song, which she has recited many times before with great feeling, expresses profound *Sehnsucht* for a companion to whom she can tell her secrets and for Wilhelm to be this friend.

Heiß mich nicht reden

Heiß mich nicht reden, heiß mich schweigen,
Denn mein Geheimnis ist mir Pflicht,
Ich möchte dir mein ganzes Innre zeigen,
Allein das Schicksal will es nicht.

Zur rechten Zeit vertreibt der Sonne Lauf
Die finstre Nacht, und sie muß sich erhellen,
Der harte Fels schließt seinen Busen auf,
Mißgönnt der Erde nicht die tiefverborgnen Quellen.

Ein jeder sucht im Arm des Freundes Ruh,
Dort kann die Brust in Klagen sich ergießen,
Allein ein Schwur drückt mir die Lippen zu,
Und nur ein Gott vermag sie aufzuschließen.²⁶

Bid me not speak

Bid me not speak; bid me to keep silent,
for my secret is my duty.
I would like to show you my whole soul,
But fate wills it not.

In good time the sun's course will dispel
the dark night, and it must brighten;
the hard rock will unlock its bosom,
Will not begrudge the earth's deeply concealed springs.

Every person seeks in the arms of a friend;
there can the heart in lament pour forth.
But an oath seals my lips,
And only a god can open them.

In stanza one, Mignon requests to remain silent for it is her duty to maintain her secret. Though she would willingly confess this heavy secret, fate does not allow it. In stanza two Mignon uses the metaphor of the circling sun that drives away darkness to symbolize the joy she would feel if she could unburden herself to someone. The rock which opens its bosom and pours its deep-hidden waters to the earth symbolizes her surge of emotion. The way she expresses these metaphors without disclosing any aspect of her secret allows her to retain her air of mystery. In her final stanza she yearns for someone to whom she can confess and develops this further by acknowledging that all of mankind

²⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, trans. R. Dillon Boylan (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), 332

²⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Lehjahre*, English translation *Schubert 100 Songs*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2000

would need such a friend. She, however, has taken an oath to the Virgin Mary who appeared to her when she was being kidnapped. On that journey, Mignon learned of her incestuous beginnings and the Virgin Mary promised to take care of her. In return for this protection, the child swore a sacred oath that she would never again trust anyone and never tell her story. The poem expresses her everlasting inner conflict of longing to reveal her feelings, juxtaposed with her need to hold them back.

The poignant setting of “Heiß mich nicht reden” opens with a *pianissimo* four-bar piano prelude whose melody is echoed by the voice when it enters. The funereal and unadorned melody of her opening stanza expresses Mignon’s restraint and the quiet weight of her words and the simple accompaniment that supports the voice reflects the honesty of her statement. But more importantly it highlights her feeling of resignation that will become even more intense in “So lasst mich scheinen”. The slowly rising line of the melody in the first three bars (G-D) reflects the rising tension in Mignon as she begs the listener to keep from asking (Heiß mich nicht reden, heiß mich schweigen). At the word “Geheimnes” (secret) in bar 8, Schubert pivots from E minor to G major and does not return to the tonic minor until “das Schicksal” (bar 12). This shift to the relative major mirrors Mignon’s optimistic thoughts of divulging her whole soul (Ich möchte dir mein ganzes Innre zeigen). This moment quickly fades however, when at the end of the stanza we return to the tonic and she remembers that although she would like to be free of her affliction, *fate* will not allow it. The melody line through these final two lines of the stanza ascends with a crescendo to *forte* to the climax of the line “Schicksal” (fate), a major cause of Mignon’s grief and longing (Ex. 11). The decrescendo at the end of bar 11 and the delicate turn on “es” at bar 12 (Ex. 11), mirror her fragile and vulnerable state.

Ex. 11.: “Heiß mich nicht reden”, bb 9-12

9
 möch - te dir — mein gan - zes Inn - re ze - gen, al - lein das Schick - sal — will es — nicht.
 cresc. f p pp

A short interlude echoes her vow of secrecy. The funereal quality of the first stanza is contrasted with a shift to C major in the second stanza as Mignon sings of her desire to confess and open up like the rising sun. Furthermore, this shift to C major brings with it a feeling of confidence and hope and suggests that Mignon is optimistic that one day her yearning may come to an end. The left hand accompaniment has changed from open octaves to a thicker texture as full chords have been added to highlight Mignon’s burst of happiness as she thinks of declaring her secret. Her growing excitement and the image of the rising sun are heard in the ascending vocal line, supported by the piano in the right hand (Ex. 12, bb 14-15).

Ex. 12.: “Heiß mich nicht reden”, bb 13-16

13
 Zur rech - ten Zeit ver - treibt der Son - ne Lauf — die fins - tre Nacht, und sie muss sich er -
 pp p

This is quickly followed by a descending line and a *decrescendo* when she speaks of ‘die finstre nacht’ (the dark night) (bar 15). Following a two bar interlude that ruminates on

the radiating sun, the rise and fall of the previous musical phrase is repeated at bar 18. Both the vocal line and the right hand melody beautifully convey the images of the rock unlocking its bosom and consequently freeing its deeply concealed springs. A four-bar interlude brings us to her final stanza at which time the opening melody returns. However, there is a transformation of the harmonic setting of Mignon's melody from E minor to E major, expressing her desire of finding comfort in a friend. As Mignon's yearning grows increasingly powerful, the music moves through a series of unstable chromatic prolongations. The vocal line at "dort kann die Brust in Klagen sich ergießen" (there can the heart in lament pour forth) creates a chromatic melody (B-B#-C#-D-D#) that conveys the strain she suffers in maintaining her vow and her yearning for release in the arms of a friend (Ex. 13, bar 28-29). The accompaniment abruptly changes to a recitative-like section as Mignon sings of her oath, contrasting with the melodic flow of the preceding lines (Ex. 13, bar 31).

Ex. 13.: "Heiß mich nicht reden", bb 25-32

25
Ein je - der sucht im Arm des Freun-des Ruh, dort kann die Brust in

29
Kla-gen sich er-gie-Ben, in - Kla - gen sich er - gie - Ben. Al-lein ein Schwur drückt mir die Lip-pen

pp

cresc.

The slow harmonic movement, the dramatic descent in the bass, and the *fortissimo* and *sforzando* markings all realize the tremendous fatalistic power of her words: “und nur ein Gott vermag sie aufzuschließen” (Only a God can open my lips). This climactic statement is repeated, beginning again at “ein Schwur”. Each harmonic setting of the bass line that accompanies her repeated statement is different; they both lead to A, but are approached differently - first with a descending bass line of E-D-C-Bb-A and then a largely chromatic setting of D-Db-C-B-A. Although a cadence at the close of the initial statement at bar 36 is expected, we return once again to the beginning of the bass descent, this time starting on D. Additionally, it is at these climactic phrases that we find the vocal melody in the performer’s highest register, further emphasizing Mignon’s words. Mignon’s grief in her inability to tell her secret is shown through her repetition of the line “ein Schwur drückt mir die Lippen zu, und nur ein Gott vermag sie aufzuschließen” (an oath seals my lips and only a god can open them). Furthermore, the words “Ein Gott” (a god) is repeated twice more during her second repetition of the phrase, and coupled with the higher vocal register and dramatic bass accompaniment it denotes the climax of her emotions. The recitative is broken after a *sforzando* dominant seventh chord that is resolved in a cadence in the tonic key (Ex. 14, bar 39-40).

The same music heard at the close of the prelude and through each interlude returns once again in the piano postlude, bringing the song to an end. Mignon’s tension, accompanied with a feeling of resignation, is maintained through the closing progression until it concludes with a perfect cadence enhanced with a Picardie third (Ex. 14, bar 42). After such dark phrases this final chord suggests Mignon’s last attempt at hope.

Ex. 14.: “Heiß mich nicht reden”, bb 38-42

H. “So lasst mich scheinen”

“So lasst mich scheinen”, Mignon’s final song in the novel is heard at the birthday party for which she is dressed as an angel and reflects not only her longing for release in death but also for final salvation. The angelic clothes she wears during the birthday party signify her withdrawal from the world and her refusal to remove the costume tells of her inner detachment from the present and attachment to distant and higher ends. Her desire to remain in the white clothes may also suggest her yearning for the purity she lacks. We find in the novel that during this time, Mignon had been feeling ‘wonderfully altered’, and had even taken a fancy to wearing more feminine apparel, which she formerly avoided. Mignon’s yearning in “So lasst mich scheinen” is for freedom from the pain she has suffered during her short but tragic life.

So lasst mich scheinen

So lasst mich scheinen, bis ich werde,
Zieht mir das weiße Kleid nicht aus!
Ich eile von der schönen Erde
Hinab in jenes dunkle Haus.

Dort ruh' ich eine kleine Stille,
Dann öffnet sich der frische Blick;
Ich laße dann die reine Hülle,
Den Gürtel und den Kranz zurück.

So let me seem

So let me seem, until I so become;
Do not take off my white robe!
I shall hasten from the beautiful earth
Down to that dark dwelling place.

There shall I rest in a brief silence;
then my refreshed eyes will open.
I will then leave the chaste raiment,
The sash and the wreath behind.

Und jene himmlischen Gestalten
Sie fragen nicht nach Mann und Weib,
Und keine Kleider, keine Falten
Umgeben den verklärten Leib.

Zwar lebt' ich ohne Sorg' und Mühe,
Doch fühlt' ich tiefen Schmerz genug.
Vor Kummer altert' ich zu frühe;
Macht mich auf ewig wieder jung!²⁷

And those heavenly forms
question not if one is man or woman;
And no garments, no folds
Enclose the transfigured body.

True, I lived without care and trouble;
Yet felt deep pain enough.
From grief I aged too early;
Make me forever again young!

In stanza one, Mignon's desire to retain her white robes introduces the theme that she is eager to leave this world. It is surprising that she describes the earth as beautiful is interesting considering her past, but it may suggest that through the pain she has suffered in her life, she did experience something beautiful; the love she felt for Wilhelm.

In stanza two, Mignon sings of that place where she will at last find peace and of the time when she may leave behind the physical garment, symbolizing her desire to be free of the trials that have caused her so much pain. The images from these two verses are symbolic of Christ's burial and resurrection. In stanza one, Mignon's thoughts of entering 'that dark dwelling place' may symbolize Christ's burial in the dark tomb, while in stanza two, the white robes, the sash and the wreath she leaves behind parallel Christ's own robes being left in his burial place. In the third stanza her angelic clothes become of little importance as her arrival into heaven will mean her return to an ungendered state. Her final stanza is her acknowledgment of the pain and grief she experienced through her family's sin that has thus caused her to age too soon and creates the endless longing she feels for her lost innocence.

²⁷ Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Lehjahre*, English trans. *Schubert 100 Songs*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2000

In his setting of this text, Schubert made four attempts; the first two remain as fragments, and the third, D. 727, is seldom performed. His final setting, and the one that will be discussed here, focuses on Mignon’s yearning to enter into heaven so that she may be made forever young again. The key of B major emphasizes the happiness Mignon expects to find once she has arrived at that place where she will no longer feel pain or know tragedy.

As in Schubert’s setting of “Heiß mich nicht reden”, the piano accompaniment in this song consists of a full chordal texture that doubles the voice. This not only allows for Mignon’s special and powerful words to remain unobstructed, but also reminds one of a hymn; thus suggesting further Mignon’s close linkage to God and religion. It further resembles the other songs of Opus 62 in that the piano prelude contains the musical essentials of the whole song: the graceful triple-time rhythm, the hymn-like chordal melody, and above all the elated tone of transfiguration. However, the dissonance created by a raised 4th degree (E#) against the F# pedal in the second bar expresses Mignon’s still lingering yearning (Ex. 15).

Ex. 15.: “So lasst mich scheinen”, bb 1-4



The *pianissimo* dynamic and the legato vocal line in the first verse seem to indicate that Mignon is not only speaking to the children attending the party, but also internally to God as she longs for death. Mignon’s image of the dark dwelling place at the end of the verse is reflected in a descent in the vocal line to a new lower range ending with a leap down to

D sharp. The two-bar interlude between stanza one and two emphasizes the calm and peaceful emotion that Mignon feels when thinking of her release from the earth, and the low register supported by the dark left hand octaves color these thoughts. The diatonic harmonies of the first stanza contrast with the second stanza, where Schubert intensifies Mignon’s desire for transformation in death first through an applied diminished 7th to the dominant followed by an ascending gesture in both the vocal line and piano accompaniment that paints the words “dann öffnet sich” (then they will open). This creates a sense of resurrection culminating in the arrival of the flat mediant major (D+) at ‘frische Blick’ (Ex. 16, bars 17-18).

Ex. 16.: “So lasst mich scheinen”, bb 15-23

The musical score for Ex. 16 consists of two systems of music. The first system (bars 15-18) shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a two-bar interlude. The piano accompaniment features a dark, low register in the left hand. The second system (bars 19-23) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes dynamic markings 'pp' and 'f'.

In bar 19, Mignon speaks of leaving the sash and wreath behind. These images create in her a feeling of yearning to no longer be defined by her appearance, as her attire has been a cause of anxiety throughout the novel. Firstly, she felt that by dressing as a boy, the circus troupe would treat her with more respect and second, that by dressing in a more feminine way, Wilhelm would come to see her as a woman. Thus, her clothing has been

a parallel to her internal struggles and without the burden of gender stigma she would be free from this worry. The chromatic tonicizations throughout bars 19-22 reflect Mignon's yearning to be free of this issue and the return to B major in bar 23 mirrors her hopeful anticipation of the next world.

As "So lasst mich scheinen" is a modified strophic song in which stanzas three and four are set to the same music as stanzas one and two with one exception (see below). Mignon calmly expresses that in heaven there will be no judgement. What is more, she hopes to arrive at a place where she will finally be released from her need to express her character and gender through external clothing. The staccato markings under the accompanying chords suggest a lightness to Mignon's thoughts as she remarks on the relief and freedom she will finally find once she has been transformed (Ex. 17 bb 5- 9). A return of the piano interlude heard in the first stanza leads into her final stanza. The piano accompaniment, composed solely in the bass clef, may echo Mignon's first thoughts of entering the deep dark place (bar 12).

Ex. 17.: "So lasst mich scheinen", bb 5-9

5
 So lasst mich schei - nen, bis ich wer - de, zieht mir das wei - Be Kleid nicht aus, ich ei - le

Mignon's mix of emotions in the final two lines of her song are coloured with different tonicizations. Here, the rising gesture of stanza two (bb 17-18) is repeated culminating in D minor at the word "Schmerz" (pain), rather than D major (Ex. 18 bb 37-

38). This is followed by a brief descending melodic line to the Dominant 7th of B- (bb 39-40), mirroring her disheartening grief, before once again gaining energy and leaping to the F#.

Ex. 18.: “So lasst mich scheinen”, bb 34-41

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's "So lasst mich scheinen" (bb 34-41). It consists of two systems of music. The first system (measures 34-37) features a vocal line with lyrics "Zwar lebt' ich oh - ne Sorg und Mü - he, doch fühlt' ich" and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes dynamics *pp* and *f*. The second system (measures 38-41) features a vocal line with lyrics "tie - fen Schmerz - ge - nung, vor Kum - mer al - tert' ich zu - frü - he, macht mich auf" and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes dynamics *ff*, *p*, and *f*. The key signature is B major (two sharps) and the time signature is 3/4.

Finally, the yearning she feels to be made young again is heard in her chromatically rising line at “macht mich auf ewig” (bar 41). Schubert repeats the words “auf ewig” (forever) thereby lengthening the musical climax that illuminates Mignon’s deepest longing to regain her lost innocence and to be made young forever.

Although the piece is mainly in B major and carries a warmer tone, Schubert’s alteration of tonalities and contrasting sections continues to express the underlying anguish that Mignon so heartily tries to forget. Both strophes begin diatonically in a lower and warmer range, signifying a calmer, more hopeful character, and end in the upper register, which displays Mignon’s desperate cry for freedom. In the last two lines of the poem, her emotions are heightened when she remembers the deep pain she has felt only this time her vocal line rises to only an F natural. It is not until she pleads to be

made young again that we hear once more the high F# (bar 42). The dichotomies of shadow and light, of fear and hope, of mortal death and immortal life in the music of “So lasst mich scheinen” makes it a very special piece in his Mignon settings. However, the sadness in her yearning is never so precisely expressed than in the final song in Schubert’s Opus 62; Mignon’s solo of “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”.

I. “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”

The last setting in Schubert’s Opus 62 is the Mignon’s solo performance of “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”. Though identical to the text of the duet between Mignon and the Harper, it is Mignon’s voice alone that is heard in this last setting. The yearning she feels for Wilhelm is expressed through the haunting melody that opens and closes her song, and the unstable harmonies heard throughout the song convey her inner suffering. The six-bar prelude for the piano begins in A minor with a simple melody that ascends in a step-wise motion and then descends in stages accentuating Mignon’s ever rising and falling emotions that are always so close to the surface. Her longing for Wilhelm conveyed in the prelude is shown first in bar 3 with a flat 2 scale degree accented in octaves in the treble and echoed in the middle voice (Ex. 19).

Ex. 19.: “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”, bb 1-6

The musical score for the piano prelude of "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt" (measures 1-6) is presented in 6/8 time, marked "Langsam". The right hand (treble clef) features a simple melody that ascends stepwise and then descends. The left hand (bass clef) provides harmonic support with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include "pp legato" and "cresc. pp". The key signature is one flat (A minor).

When the voice enters, Schubert further emphasizes Mignon's emotions through chromatic harmony and modulation that is first discovered on the word "Sehnsucht" in bar 8. The D sharp (raised fourth degree) in the broken chord of the right hand, which was previously heard in the prelude, highlights Mignon's angst at the first mention of the word "Sehnsucht"(Ex. 20).

Ex. 20.: "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt", bb 7-11

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's 'Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt' (Ex. 20), measures 7-11. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The lyrics are: 'Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt, weiß, was ich leide, nur wer die'. The piano part features a broken arpeggio pattern in the right hand and block chords in the left hand. The dynamic marking 'pp' is present in the piano part.

The music subsequently modulates into the relative major key of C on "leide" at bar 14. The major tonality coupled with the word "leide" (suffering) may suggest Mignon's longing for release and hope that soon her misery will end. With Mignon's mention of isolation and loneliness, Schubert shifts to C minor and continues on with tonicizations of G minor (bar 18) and D minor (bar 20) when Mignon speaks of her desire for distant lands. This alienation is further suggested through Schubert's cleverly scored accompaniment; the preceding broken arpeggios abruptly cease and in their place we hear *pianissimo* syncopated block chords. The austere chords accentuate the words "allein und abgetrennt" (alone and separated) and continue under Mignon's rising vocal line as she proclaims her faith to the heavens. A solitary bar of triple *pianissimo* chords leads to the sparsely accompanied statement 'ach, der mich liebt und kennt', ist in der Weite' (ah, the

one who knows and loves me if far away) that is full of intense longing. This brief moment, with its *sehr leise* (very quiet) marking, diminuendo at bar 25 and off-beat chords in the right hand gives a feel of momentary suspension at which time Mignon is barely containing her emotions (Ex. 21, bar 22-26). Furthermore, the extreme spacing between the bass and treble parallels the character's thoughts of the vast distance between her and Wilhelm. Her memory of the distant lands brings us back to the tonic, but just as suddenly we are pulled away through a series of repeated diminished chords in the accompaniment as Mignon declares the torture she feels inside her. These sextuplets and triplets in the treble clef are accented by an ominous bass that ascends chromatically from Bb to E, clearly portraying the inner turmoil that Mignon is describing. (Ex. 21, bars 27-28) The accented 8th notes in the bass create a staggering effect as if Mignon is overcome with pain and suffering at the thought of Wilhelm ever being away from her.

Ex. 21.: "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt", bb 22-28

The musical score for Ex. 21 consists of two systems of music. The first system covers bars 22 to 26. The vocal line begins at bar 22 with the lyrics "Ach, der mich liebt und kennt, ist in der Wei - te." The piano accompaniment starts at bar 22 with a *ppp* marking and a *[sehr leise]* dynamic. The right hand features off-beat chords, and the left hand has a chromatic bass line. The second system covers bars 27 to 28. The vocal line begins at bar 27 with the lyrics "Es schwin - delt mir, es". The piano accompaniment starts at bar 27 with an *[a tempo]* marking. The right hand features complex textures including sextuplets and triplets, and the left hand has a chromatic bass line with accented 8th notes. The score concludes at bar 28 with a *cresc.* marking.

The erratic harmonies, the shift of the accompaniment to sextuplets and triplet figurations and the change of the cantabile vocal line to a recitative depict Mignon's emotional collapse through these lines. Her growing exhaustion is further illustrated in the short two-bar piano interlude, with its *diminuendo* marking, sinking treble line which moves to the dominant chord and suspensions in the right hand repeated chords. The opening melody returns and Mignon experiences a last surge of energy during her final phrase. Only the brief crescendo to her repeated word 'Sehnsucht' and subsequent *sforzando* at 'kennt' in bar 39 reminds us that she continues to be and will forever remain tormented by her unceasing longing (Ex. 22). Instead of the expected resolution of F to E in bar 39, Mignon's resignation is shown through the drop in the vocal line from the high F to the A, a sixth below. The closing moments consist of the same six bars that were heard at the opening of the piece, ending with a defeated *pianissimo* tonic chord.

Ex. 22.: "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt", bb 37-46

The musical score for Ex. 22, "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt", measures 37-46, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 37-41) shows the vocal line in the upper staff and the piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Dynamic markings include *fz* (sforzando) and *p* (piano). The second system (measures 42-46) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a half note G4, followed by quarter notes F4, E4, and D4. The piano accompaniment includes a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking and ends with a *pp* (pianissimo) tonic chord. The score concludes with a final cadence.

Concluding Remarks

Schubert's settings of the Mignon lieder express, with great sensitivity, the seemingly endless *Sehnsucht* and alienation felt by the young Mignon. For listeners, the melancholic and compelling character of Mignon is brought to life through Schubert's intimate understanding of both the emotive potential of the human voice and, as shown through these musical analyses, of Mignon's own powerful emotions. His numerous re-settings of the poems confirm that he longed to give justice to these emotions in the poetry by use of fitting devices that are simultaneously expressive and structural. In performing each of the songs, I came to realize the timelessness of Schubert. His creations, like that of all great artists, lives on in the hearts of not only those who perform and study his art, but also by those who seek only pleasure and enjoyment from his work. *Sehnsucht* and alienation, while so integral to 19th century Romanticism, are still understood and indeed, powerfully felt in the 21st century. Thus, Schubert's brilliant perception and uncanny ability to successfully convey Mignon's longing through these beautiful settings has resulted in centuries of admiration, and a deeply moving musical experience for audiences and performers alike.

