



National Identity in the Arts

8. From Mount and Meadow

November 8, 2022

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THE ARTS IN BRITAIN AT THE START OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY—poetry and painting at least—are linked by a sense that physical surroundings such as weather and landscape are an intrinsic part of the national identity. We see this on two scales. One is grand and heroic, inspired by the mountains of Scotland and the supposed poetry of Ossian; Turner carries on this tradition to mid-century. The other, exemplified by Wordsworth, Constable, and the English watercolorists, takes delight in the here and now, changing weather, and the familiar countryside.

A similar identification with nature can be found in the music and poetry of Germany at around the same time. But it takes a different color, less particular, more symbolic, and with a sense that even secular subjects can have transcendent overtones. We will study these aspects through the musical settings that Franz Schubert—an Austrian—made of verse by Goethe and others. *rb.*

A. Different Cultures, Different Scales

Four videos to establish parameters. Between them, they look at both Britain and Germany, and on both scales.

- ♫ **Mendelssohn:** *Hebrides Overture*, excerpt (1832)
- ♫ **Heine/Silcher:** *Loreleylied*, sung by Willy Schneider
- ♫ **Browning:** *Home Thoughts from Abroad* (1845)
- ♫ **Brooke:** *The Old Vicarage, Granchester* (1912, Jasper Britton)

B. The Heroic Strain

An important precursor of Romanticism was the concept of the Sublime: aspects of nature that inspire awe. We see it in the supposed poetry of the Celtic bard Ossian, the paintings of Philip de Louthembourg, and much of the work of Turner.

Cotman: *Drop Gate* (1806), *Mountain Scene in Wales* (1810)

Macpherson: *The Song of Selma*, extract

Louthembourg: *Shipwreck* (1767, Vienna)

Loutherbourg: *Avalanche in the Alps* (1803, London Tate)

Loutherbourg: *Falls of the Rhine* (1788, London V&A)

Turner: *Falls of the Rhine* (1806, Boston MFA)

Turner: *Devil's Bridge, St Gotthard Pass* (1802, London Tate)

Turner: *Petworth Church from the Rectory Meadows* (1827, Tate)

Turner: *Burning of the Houses of Parliament* (1834, Philadelphia)

Turner: *Snow Storm; Steamer off the Harbour's Mouth* (1842, Tate)

Turner: *Rain, Steam, and Speed* (1844, London NG)

♪ **Bax:** *Tintagel* (1917), excerpt

C. A Poetic Interlude

Coleridge and Wordsworth, who collaborated on the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798, subsequently moved in different directions: Coleridge to record the heroic and mythical, Wordsworth to treasure the flowers in his own woodlands.

Turner: *Valley of Chamouni* (1803, British Library)

♪ **Coleridge:** *Hymn Before Sunrise*, excerpt

♪ **Wordsworth:** *Glen Almain*

Wordsworth: *To the Daisy*

D. In England, Now

The phrase is Browning's, but numerous other poets and painters have taken special delight in the familiar details of the English landscape and its perennial capacity for change.

Downman: *Tree near Albano* (1774, Tate)

Towne: *Trees Overhanging Water* (1800, Tate)

Linnell: *Tree Study* (1811, Tate)

Constable: *Branch Hill Pond, Hampstead Heath* (1825, V&A)

Constable: *Dedham Lock and Mill* (1817, V&A), with sketches

♪ **Constable:** *The Haywain* (1821, London NG), with sketches

E. Schubert's Goethe Lieder

Three Schubert settings of Goethe (plus one by a lesser poet) that span the range from simple parable to transcendent meditation.

♪ **Schubert/Goethe:** *Heidenröslein* (Little Heath Rose, 1815)

Alois Mühlbacher (*countertenor*), Franz Farnberger (*piano*)

♪ **Schubert/Goethe:** *Erkönig* (Alder King, 1815)

Matthias Goerne (*baritone*), Andreas Haefliger (*piano*)

♪ **Schubert/Goethe:** *Wandrer's Nachtlied* (Night Song 1825)

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (*baritone*), Gerald Moore (*piano*)

♪ **Schubert/Craigher:** *Die Jüne Nonne* (The Young Nun, 1825)

Janet Baker (*mezzo-soprano*), Murray Perahia (*piano*)

F. Schubert and Müller

Wilhelm Müller provided the texts for Schubert's two great song cycles, *Die schöne Müllerin* (The Pretty Miller's Daughter) of 1823 and *Winterreise* (Winter Journey) of 1827, both suffused with nature imagery. We will hear three songs from the first cycle plus another Müller setting where Schubert calls upon a clarinet to paint the scene.

♪ **Schubert/Müller:** *Die schöne Müllerin* (1823), ## 2, 23, 24

Julian Prégardien (*tenor*), Els Biesemans (*piano*)

♪ **Schubert/Müller:** *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* (1828)

Anna Lucia Richter (*sop.*), Blaž Šparovec (*clt.*), Nicholas Rimmer (*pno.*)

Artists, Composers, and Writers

Arnold **Bax** (1883–1953, *English composer*), Rupert **Brooke** (1887–1915, *English poet*), Robert **Browning** (1812–89, *English poet*), Edmund **Burke** (1729–97, *Irish writer*), Samuel Taylor **Coleridge** (1772–1834, *English poet*), John **Constable** (1776–1837, *English artist*), John Sell **Cotman** (1782–1842, *English artist*), Jakob Nikolaus **Craigher** de Jachelutta (1797–1855, *Austrian poet*), John **Downman** (1750–1824, *Welsh artist*), Caspar David **Friedrich** (1774–1840, *German artist*), Johann Wolfgang von **Goethe** (1749–1832, *German poet*), Henrich **Heine** (1797–1856, *German poet*), Gustav **Holst** (1874–1934, *English composer*), John **Linnell** (1792–1882, *English artist*), Henry Wadsworth **Longfellow** (1807–82, *American poet*), Philippe de **Loutherbourg** (1740–1812, *English artist*), James **Macpherson** (1736–96, *Scottish poet*), Felix **Mendelssohn** (1809–47, *German composer*), Wilhelm **Müller** (1794–1827, *German poet*), Franz **Schubert** (1797–1828, *Austrian composer*), Moritz von **Schwind** (1804–71, *German artist*), Friedrich **Silcher** (1789–1860, *German composer*), Francis **Towne** (1749–1816, *English artist*), JMW **Turner** (1775–1851, *English artist*), Ralph **Vaughan-Williams** (1872–1958, *English composer*), William **Wordsworth** (1770–1850, *English poet*)