

## **Nature, Weber and a Revision of the French Sublime**

**Naturaleza, Weber y una revisión del concepto francés de lo sublime**

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This article investigates the emergence and evolution of two mainstream romantic tropes (the relationship between the beautiful and the sublime as well as that between man and nature) in the philosophy, aesthetics and painting of Carl Maria von Weber's time, directing it towards an analysis of Weber's musical style and expression as manifested in his insert aria for Luigi Cherubini's *Lodoïska* "Was Sag Ich," (J. 239). The essay argues that the cosmopolitan characteristic of Weber's operatic expression, that is, his merging of French and Italian styles of operatic expression, was a natural consequence of his participation in the synaesthetic movement of the Romantic era.

Este artículo aborda la aparición y evolución de dos de los grandes temas románticos, la relación entre lo bello y lo sublime, así como la que existe entre el hombre y la naturaleza, en la filosofía, la estética y la pintura de la época de Carl Maria von Weber. El foco se dirige hacia el análisis de la expresión y el estilo musicales de Weber, tal y como se manifiesta en la inserción de su aria "Was sag ich?" (J.239) que escribió para la ópera *Lodoïska* de Luigi Cherubini. Este estudio propone que el carácter cosmopolita de las óperas de Weber (con su fusión de los estilos operísticos francés e italiano) fue una consecuencia natural de su participación en el movimiento sinestésico de la era romántica.

**Keywords:** Carl Maria von Weber, Luigi Cherubini, *Lodoïska*, sublime, beautiful.

**Palabras clave:** Weber, Cherubini, *Lodoïska*, sublime, bello.



In his autobiographical writings Carl Maria von Weber made a point of describing the thorough and interdisciplinary character of his education. For example, in an 1812 letter that he included in his semi-autobiographical novel *Tonkünstlers Leben*, he described the education he received from his mother, stating that she “did nothing to suppress the spark of genius and pointed out the true path along which I should develop if I would but apply myself. The novels that I read overheated my imagination, and I matured early in a dangerous world of ideas which nevertheless had the great advantage of providing me out of a host of heroes, with models of manly virtue.”<sup>1</sup> While travelling with his father he described having “swallowed whole systems of philosophy” although he notes with some regret that at this early age he lacked a critical awareness of what he was studying: “[...] putting a blind trust in the authority attaching to great names which had won credit in the world, knew them all by heart yet in fact knew nothing.”<sup>2</sup> In 1818 he returned to the subject of his education, stating that he was “given the most thorough education, with special preference shown to the fine arts, since my father was himself an excellent violinist. [...] My time was chiefly devoted to painting and music. I was successful in several branches of the former – painting in oils, miniatures and pastel and having some skill in engraving.”<sup>3</sup>

By emphasizing these interdisciplinary interests, especially in 1818 when he was barely a year into his new position as *Königlich Kapellmeister* at the new German Opera in Dresden, Weber was placing himself within the synaesthetic movement that was emerging in the first two decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany and especially Dresden.<sup>4</sup> The movement sought an artist of a multifaceted genius who understood the aesthetic goals of various artistic mediums and could translate those goals freely

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<sup>1</sup> VON WEBER, Carl Maria. “Autobiographical Sketch” in *Writings on Music*. John Warrack (ed.), trans. Martin Cooper. New York, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 327.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> As Linda Siegel has noted, the doctrine of Synaesthesia was first described in the *Athenäum* by the Schlegel brothers. See SIEGEL, Linda. “Synaesthesia and the Paintings of Caspar David Friedrich,” *Art Journal* 33, n° 3 (1974).



into their own work. Thus, it was important for Weber to show that he was trained in these other arts forms even if he was not producing works in these mediums.

It is notable that the other Dresden artists participating in this movement were also some of the most influential artists and theorists of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century German Romantic and Nationalist movement, and many of them interacted with each other's works. A selective list of these artists includes Georg Friedrich Kersting, Caspar David Friedrich, Phillip Otto Runge and Gerhard von Kügelgen as well as writers Theodore Körner, Theodore Hell, and Ludwig Tieck. The synaesthetic aspect of their work was often made manifest in their artistic encounters with each other's work. For example: Georg Kersting's painting *Auf Vorposten* (1815) includes a depiction of the nationalist poet and martyr Theodor Körner in his uniform for the volunteer army the Lützlow Corps, set within a forest of symbolic oak trees.<sup>5</sup> For his part, Theodor Körner wrote a sonnet about Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Abtei im Eichenwald* (1809), entitled *Friedrich's Totenlandschaft*, that describes Körner's aesthetic experience of Friedrich's painting.<sup>6</sup> Weber himself had famously set Körner's cycle of Nationalist poems, *Leyer und Schwert*, to music in 1814. Indeed, these settings helped establish Weber's reputation as a German nationalist composer and to acquire his position in the new German opera in Dresden.

Apart from working artists, many of the most progressive aesthetic theories of the period's critics and philosophers were also represented in Dresden. Through Tieck the early Romantic ideals of Novalis, Wackenroder and the Schlegel brothers would be represented, particularly in their call for the incorporation of emotion into enlightenment ideals.<sup>7</sup> Runge's theoretical writings and his description of the

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<sup>5</sup> For a description of Körner and Kersting's depiction of the German Nationalist movement see WALDRON Arthur and MORAN, Daniel. *The People in Arms: Military Myth and National Mobilization since the French Revolution*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 59-60.

<sup>6</sup> See BOIME, Albert. *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 601-603.

<sup>7</sup> Tieck's participation in the Romantic movement is extensive. Apart from his collaboration with Wackenroder on the latter's *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1797) he also helped establish the new romantic school in Jena with August and Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. See PAULIN, Roger. *Ludwig Tieck, a Literary Biography*. Oxford; New York, Clarendon Press, 1985.



compositional process were quite influential to later artists.<sup>8</sup> Finally, concerning philosophy, as we have seen, Weber testified to an early interest in philosophy, and had a personal relationship with Friedrich Schelling, who he had visited with as recently as 1815.<sup>9</sup>

As a composer, although Weber did not complete any large scale dramatic works in those first few years in Dresden, his style did undergo a significant development in the period. This is particularly evident when one contrasts the Mozartian *Abu Hassan* (1810) with the forward looking style and compositional unity of *Der Freischütz* (1821).<sup>10</sup> Michael Tusa attributes this development to Weber's work as a critic and composer:

The great leap forward from *Abu Hassan* to *Der Freischütz* is less a matter of style or compositional technique than of clarification in Weber's thinking about the problems of opera in general and German opera in particular. The six-year gap between the completion of *Abu Hassan* and the start of work on *Der Freischütz* allowed Weber as a critic and conductor to reflect upon questions of character, dramatic truth and wholeness as they pertained to the lyric stage and to find in works that he admired – Mozart's operas, the operas comiques of Méhul and Cherubini, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Spohr's *Faust*, and Hoffmann's *Undine* – models for realizing his goals.<sup>11</sup>

Weber's emphasis on dramatic truth and depiction of character are indeed central to his mature compositional style and procedures, and one can recognize the influence of those composers and their works on Weber's mature operas.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The standard (although dated) discussion of Runge's influence is FERDINAND, Paul. "Runge und die Zeitgenossen," *Phillip Otto Runge: Sein Leben Und Sein Werk, Deutsche Meister*. Leipzig, Insel Verlag, 1923. A more recent discussion of Runge and his influence can be found in VAUGHAN William, "Phillip Otto Runge" in *German Romantic Painting*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1980, Id., *German Romantic Painting*. New Haven, Conn. Yale University Press, 1980, pp 41-63.

<sup>9</sup> In a letter to his wife, dated July 10, 1815, Weber writes: "Heute Nachmittag will ich zu Schelling gehen, vielleicht daß doch dieser tiefphilosophische Geist mich wenigstens mit edlen Geistesspekulationen umspinnt. Die Nähe eines großen Mannes hat immer etwas ergreifendes." VON WEBER, Carl Maria. *Carl Maria von Weber Briefe*, Hans Christoph (ed.), Worbs, Hamburg, Fischer Taschenbuch, 1982, p. 68.

<sup>10</sup> For an interesting discussion of *Abu Hassan's* position as a transitional document in operatic history see SOMMER, Bernhard. *Carl Maria von Weber: Abu Hassan (1810-1811)- Ein Singspiele zwischen klassik und romantik Examensarbeit* Norderstedt, Germany, GRIN verlag, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> TUSA, Michael. "Carl Maria von Weber" in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40313#S40313> (accessed June 7, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> One excellent example is Stephen C. Meyer's study of Étienne Méhul's *Joseph* and its influence on the development of German Romantic Opera, see MEYER, Stephen C. *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003, 28ff.



However, in the case of Cherubini and especially his French nationalist opera *Lodoïska*, the influences can be brought into sharper relief. This is because in 1817, in response to a commission from a Madam Milder-Hauptman of Berlin, Weber began to work on an insert aria for Cherubini's opera that he titled "Was sag ich? Schaudern macht mich der Gedanke!" This aria provides a unique opportunity to simultaneously track those stylistic attributes that Weber inherited from the French master, as well as identify those characteristics of Weber's mature compositional style that mark him as a German Romantic composer working in Dresden in the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Further, one of the most interesting facets of Weber's aria is the Romanticizing impact that it had on Cherubini's work. Thus, the primary purpose of this paper is to investigate the aesthetic background of Weber's contribution to Cherubini's opera with a particular emphasis on the ways that Weber's aria revises Cherubini's work and the way the expression in this aria parallels the expressive content of works by contemporary artists in Dresden.

However, as modern scholarship is beginning to recognize, Cherubini's work was itself deeply connected with the aesthetic theories of his time, particularly regarding the ideal of the sublime.<sup>13</sup> In order then, to set the basis for a comparison of the two works this investigation must first begin by establishing the aesthetic context of Cherubini's opera and the character of the sublime as it was described by aestheticians at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> Then the investigation will turn to the evolving ideal of the proper relationship between mankind and nature in the philosophical writings of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany, and how this relationship was to be expressed in a synthesis of the beautiful and the sublime in early German Romantic Art.

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<sup>13</sup> See FEND, Michael. "Literary Motifs, Musical Form and the Quest for the Sublime: Cherubini's, *Eliza ou le voyage aux glaciers du Mont St. Bernard*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, n° 1 (1993).

<sup>14</sup> Of course, there is not enough space here for a comprehensive investigation of the character of the sublime in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Instead I present a selective introduction to the idea whose purpose is to contribute to a later analysis of Cherubini and Weber's music. For a more thorough discussion of this and other aesthetic aspects of this era, BOWIE, Andrew. *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd ed. Manchester, UK; New York, Manchester University Press, 2003. Is a valuable resource.



At this point, the article turns from the theoretical to the practical with a discussion of selected manifestations of these ideas in German art, particularly in the work of Caspar David Friedrich, and briefly introduces evidence of the entrance of this idea into the popular imagination. Finally the paper retraces its steps in music by first discussing Luigi Cherubini's opera *Lodoïska* (1791) as a musical representation of the sublime and a metaphor for the French Revolution and following it with an analysis of Weber's insert aria for *Lodoïska*, "Was Sag Ich", (J. 239) as an effort on behalf of the German composer to bring Cherubini's enlightened French style opera into line with this new Romantic German aesthetic.

### **From the Enlightenment to the Romantic: the Sublime and the Beautiful**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, artists and aestheticians became interested in the depiction of the sublime, particularly as it occurred in the natural world.<sup>15</sup> Edmund Burke's definition of the term as "[...] whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects" set the tone for later writers.<sup>16</sup> Accepting Burke's characterization, Immanuel Kant argued that in defining an object by its effect we locate that object in the subject effected: "Sublimity, therefore, does not reside in anything of nature, but only in our mind, in so far as we can become conscious that we are superior to nature within, and therefore also to nature without us (so far as it influences us.)"<sup>17</sup> For Kant, although nature is the source of the effect, the sublime is interpreted and expressed in human experience.

As interest in the sublime took hold of the imagination of these philosophers, they simultaneously began to play down the role of beauty as a proper goal for

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<sup>15</sup> This 19<sup>th</sup> century interest in the sublime likely developed from the popularity of an 18<sup>th</sup> century translation of the classical text ascribed to Dionysius Longinus, reprinted in Dionysius Longinus *On the Sublime* William Smith (trans.) Baltimore, Shaw and Shoemaker, 1810.

<sup>16</sup> BURKE, Edmund. "Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Vincent B. Leitch(ed.). New York, Norton, 2001, p. 549. Burke's ideas are somewhat indebted to Joseph Addison's concept of "the great" as described in Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* 411-421(1712).

<sup>17</sup> KANT, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. Dover Philosophical Classics. Mineola, N.Y., Dover Publications, 2005, p. 129.



depiction in art. Burke's investigation into the sublime characterized the difference between the beautiful and the sublime as of a "very different nature," the sublime, he argued, carried the more powerful effect because of it was "founded on pain" while beauty was "founded on pleasure."<sup>18</sup> Burke finishes his discussion by describing the effect of a union between the sublime and the beautiful as the same as the colors black and white, stating that Nor when they [black and white] are so softened and blended with each other, or with different colours, is the power of black as black, or of white as white, so strong as when each stands uniform and distinguished."<sup>19</sup> As an enlightenment writer of the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, for Burke, the merging of the sublime and the beautiful lessens ("softens") the effect of each.

The ideal relationship between the beautiful and sublime had altered by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly as discussed by Goethe and Schelling. In his *Philosophy of Art*, Schelling described the sublime and the beautiful in terms of two opposing processes: "The first of the two unities, that which constitutes the informing of the infinite into the finite, expresses itself within the work of art primarily as **sublimity**; the other, that which constitutes the informing of the finite into the infinite, as **beauty**."<sup>20</sup> When synthesized, these processes, which are elsewhere called the "schematic" and "allegorical," become a symbolic expression: "The synthesis of these two, where neither the universal means the particular nor the particular the universal, but rather where both are absolutely one, is the *symbolic*."<sup>21</sup> As Jochen Schulte-Sasse has shown, these ideas were quite influential on August Wilhelm Schlegel, and Goethe stated this abstract ideal much more eloquently in his *Maxims and Reflections*: "That is true

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<sup>18</sup> BURKE. "Enquiry into the Sublime..." p. 551. An excellent discussion of Burke's characterization of the sublime and its relationship with the beautiful can be found in SHAW Philip, *The Sublime*. London, Routledge, 2006, pp 48-71.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> WILHELM, Friedrich; VON SCHELLING, Joseph and STOTT, Douglas W. *The Philosophy of Art*, Theory and History of Literature; V. 58. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 85.

<sup>21</sup> For example, on page 46 of his *The Philosophy of Art*, Schelling states "That representation in which the universal means the particular or in which the particular is intuited through the universal is schematicism. That representation, however, in which the particular means the universal or in which the universal is intuited through the particular is allegory."



symbolism, where the more particular represents the more general, not as a dream or shade, but as a vivid, instantaneous revelation of the inscrutable.”<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, as the Romantic Movement took hold in Germany, artists and poets in particular sought to unify the aesthetics of the beautiful and sublime. In his essay *On the Sublime* (1801), Friedrich Schiller ascribes the appreciation of beauty to the “morally cultivated” person, whose “mind [is] sufficiently refined as to be moved more by the form than the matter of things.” However, the same man “is strengthened by sublime emotions and by frequent acquaintance with destructive nature, both where she shows him her ruinous strength only from afar and when she actually employs it against his fellow man.”<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, it is only through the recognition of nature’s merging of the beautiful and the sublime that man can acquire the correct relationship with nature: “Only if the sublime is wedded to the beautiful and our sensitivity for both has been cultivated in equal measure are we perfect citizens of nature without thereby becoming her slaves and without squandering our citizenship in the intelligible world.”

Similarly in 1802, Philipp Otto Runge (1777-1810) placed the relationship between man and nature as the primary source of all “eternal art.”<sup>24</sup> In a remarkable letter to his brother Daniel, Runge describes the “requisites of a work of art with regard not only to the order of their significance but to their proper order in the creative process.” These requisites, ten in all, are given in an itemized list:

1. Our intimation of God,
2. the perception of ourselves in relation to the whole; and out of these two:
3. religion and art, that is, expression of our loftiest feelings through words, tones or images; and there pictorial art seeks first:
  4. the subject, then
  5. the composition,

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<sup>22</sup> See HORNE Haynes and SCHULTE-SASSE, Jochen. *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, and VON GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang. *Maximen und Reflexionen* (1827) n° 202.

<sup>23</sup> SCHILLER, Friedrich. “On the Sublime,” in *Essays: Friedrich Schiller*, Walter Hinderer (ed.). London, Continuum Press, 1993), pp. 22-45.

<sup>24</sup> See: RUNGE, Philipp Otto. “Letter to Daniel Runge (1802),” in *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art*, Joshua C. Taylor (ed.), *California Studies in the History of Art*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987.



6. the design,
7. the color scheme,
8. the ordering of color,
9. the coloring,
10. the tone

The first three items apply generally to all artists, whereas the rest of the list takes up the specific processes of painting. In the letter, Runge provides each item in the list with commentary.

The first requisite, “Our intimation of God,” results from the artist’s recognition and identification with a universal dialectic, a dialectic which places the beautiful and sublime in opposition:

We feel that an inexorable severity and appalling everlastingness are opposed to a sweet, eternal, and boundless love in a harsh and violent struggle, like hardness and softness, like rocks and water. These opponents are the quintessence of the world, are basic in the world, and come from God, and over them God is alone.[...] The human being is born helpless, without consciousness, put into the world so that fate may exercise on him what it can and chooses. Along with what is frightful, that which is most beautiful, maternal love, enters the struggle and unites savage passions with the sweetest love and innocence. At the point of completion, man sees his relationship with the whole world. He unifies and completes himself through the opposing forces. [...] We unite these words, tones, or images with our most fervent feeling, our intimation of God, and, through perceiving the unity of the whole, with the certainty of our own eternity.<sup>25</sup>

The starting point for Runge is the intimation of God, which consists in the recognition of unity within all diversity; the ultimate expression of this is in the unity of man with the “whole world.” From this intimation, Runge merges religion and art as “expression[s] of our loftiest feelings...”

For Runge, the fourth requisite, the subject of the work, is not the feeling to be expressed, but the medium, the natural event that reflects his feelings: “We search for an occurrence that corresponds in character to the feeling we want to express, and when we have found it, we have selected a subject for art.” A work’s composition is described thus: “When we link this subject to our feeling, we juxtapose those symbols

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<sup>25</sup> This and the following description comes from *ibid.*, pp. 263-267.



of the powers of nature or of the feelings in us so that they express the peculiar characteristics of both the *subject* and *our perception*. This is composition.”

Runge’s goals for depicting the intuitive relationship between man and nature were quite influential for later artists, particularly his friend Caspar David Friedrich. Friedrich projected the correlation between a man’s inner feelings and nature by turning the central human characters away from the viewer.<sup>26</sup> These famous “Rückenfiguren,” examples of which can be seen in Friedrich’s *Mondaufgang am Meer* below, force the viewer to look to the landscape to understand more about these human characters.<sup>27</sup>



Plate 1: Caspar David Friedrich, *Mondaufgang am Meer* (1822)

The interior life of these figures is also an expression of the artist’s own interior life, as Friedrich wrote: “The artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him. If however, he sees nothing within him, then he should also omit to paint that which he sees before him. Otherwise his pictures will resemble those folding screens behind which one expects to find only the sick or even the

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<sup>26</sup> For example see, *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (1818), *Kreidefelsen auf Rügen* (1818), *Auf dem Segler* (1818), *Zwei Männer in Betrachtung des Mondes* (1819), *Mann und Frau den Mond betrachtend* (1835), *Zwei Jünglinge bei Mondaufgang am Meer* (1835).

<sup>27</sup> This is a faithful photographic reproduction of a two-dimensional, public domain work of art and as such is free of known restrictions under copyright law. See: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar\\_David\\_Friedrich\\_-\\_Mondaufgang\\_am\\_Meer\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_-_Mondaufgang_am_Meer_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg).



dead.”<sup>28</sup> Appropriately, Michael Fried has emphasized the reflexivity in these works and their distinct contrast with the French style:

This new sort of beholder (or new ‘subject’) with the profoundly different conception of the self, as in some sense *brought before* itself in the activity of representation, emerges as a central theme in the writings of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German Idealist philosophers, Fichte in particular. [...] such a conception of the self may be held to be posited by the art of Caspar David Friedrich and other Northern painters of the period; indeed it provides a key to the interpretation of some of the most salient (and un-French) features of that art, e.g., the predilection for symmetrical compositions, the use of foreground figures depicted from the rear cognizing a landscape or similar scene, the minimizing of surface qualities in favor of effects of transparency, and so on.<sup>29</sup>

In these terms then, the *Rückenfiguren* are placeholders, meant to simultaneously embody the artist and the viewer.<sup>30</sup> These middleground figures, given a chiaroscuro that places them at the border between darkness and light, leads to the interpretation that it is on that rock that the interior and exterior self is mediated. The brightness of the outer, background landscape is contrasted with the interiorized, romantic night of the foreground. The ships beyond, a symbol of the soul, are headed towards a rocky shore that is reminiscent of Novalis’s *Hymn to the Night*:

## VI. Longing for Death

Into the bosom of the earth!

Out of the light’s dominions!

Death’s pains are but the bursting fourth

Of glad departures pinions!

Swift in the narrow little boat

Swift to the heavenly shore we float!

Blest be the everlasting Night,

And blest be the endless slumber!

We are heated with the day too bright,

And withered up with cumber!

We’re weary of that life abroad:

Come, we will now go home to God.

<sup>28</sup> VAUGHAN. *German Romantic Painting...*, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> FRIED, Michael. *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 104n.

<sup>30</sup> PRAGER, Brad. “Kant in Caspar David Friedrich’s Frames,” *Art History* 25, n° 1 (2002).



The ship's return to the dark shore, and into Novalis's night, is the same darkness glimpsed in the foreground of Friedrich's painting.<sup>31</sup> Further, the shore to which the ships are returning is the very place where Friedrich's *Rückenfiguren* sit, mediating the unity and privileged darkness of the interior self with the diversity of the outer world, the same place that Runge placed his intimation of God.

Of course, this abstract aesthetic ideal of linking art with religion is one of the primary tenets of the Romantic Movement, extending back as far as Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's *Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst* (1799), where he too linked the pursuit of art and religion as reflective of the inner and outer life of man and a pathway to the "true nature" of all things:

[...] these two great and divine natures, religion and art, are, for mankind, the best guides to their outer real life, as well as the inner spiritual life of the human soul; their resources are the richest and most delightful treasure trove of thoughts and feelings, and to me it is a very important and mysterious conception – I compare it to two magical concave mirrors through which all things of the symbolic world must pass and through whose magical images I learn to recognize and understand the true nature of all things.<sup>32</sup>

However, in Germany by 1807, the need to merge the beautiful within the sublime became more than an abstract aesthetic goal, it became a geopolitical reality. Indeed, the German people came to share Cherubini's perspective that the French Revolution was associated with the sublime. Particularly for the Prussian consciousness, isolation in the face of a sublime, overwhelming power was a reality in the events leading up to and including the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807. That treaty, which resulted in a reduction of Prussian lands by half, was negotiated by Napoleon and Tsar Alexander on a raft in the Niemen River. Friedrich William III was left onshore and only informed of the terms once they had been negotiated in his absence.

Two months after the treaty, from exile in Riga, the Prime Minister of Prussia, Karl August von Hardenberg, used a metaphor of the natural sublime, here an uncontrollable flood after a storm, to characterize the effects of the French Revolution on Germany:

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<sup>31</sup> NOVALIS. *Hymnen an die Nacht*, Dick Higgins (trans.). New Paltz, N.Y., McPherson, 1984.

<sup>32</sup> WACKENRODER, Wilhelm Heinrich. *Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst*. Thalwil-Z[ürich], E. Oesch, 1947.



The French revolution, of which the present wars are a continuation, gave the Frenchmen a completely new momentum under bloodshed and storm. All of the sleeping forces were awoken; the miserable and weak, the outdated prejudices and physical defects —along with the good—were all destroyed. Those nearby and vanquished were washed away in the current. The dams were all powerless to oppose this and because of weakness, selfish self-interest and false view [...] they gave the river entrance. [...] The violence of these [the revolution's] principles is so great, they are so widely accepted and widespread that the state that does not accept them awaits either destruction or a forced adoption of them.

So a revolution in the good sense, leading directly to the great purpose of ennobling mankind through the wisdom of government and not through violent impulses from within or without, that is our goal and our guiding principle. Democratic principles in a monarchical government: to me this seems the appropriate form for the current zeitgeist.<sup>33</sup>

Matthew Levinger has pointed out that in this famous statement, Hardenberg sought “a means of harnessing the power of the French Revolution while avoiding what they [Friedrich Wilhelm III and Hardenberg] saw as the revolution’s unfortunate side effects, such as the abolition of the aristocracy and the execution of the king.”<sup>34</sup> Put in the aesthetic terms of the period, for Hardenberg the beauty of the Prussian monarchy must merge with the source of the sublime flood, the liberal principles that initiated the revolution. In this way the aesthetic ideal of a synthesis of the beautiful and the sublime became a government doctrine.

However, while it threatened the survival of the Prussian monarchy, the French Revolution also changed the character of the aesthetic ideal. Specifically, after the Napoleonic wars, a new feature of the relationship between the sublime and the beautiful emerged in artistic depictions; the depiction of the sublime will now often

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<sup>33</sup> VON HARDENBERG, Karl August. “Über die Reorganisation des Preußischen Staats,” 12. September 1807 in MENZE Clemens. “Über Die Reorganisation Des Preußischen Staats,” in *Die Bildungsreform Wilhelm von Humboldts*. Hanover, Schroedel, 1975, p. 72.

<sup>34</sup> LEVINGER, Matthew. *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2000. LEVINGER, Matthew Bernard. *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848*. Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 5.



threaten the beautiful with which it is merged. In painting, perhaps the best example is Friedrich's *Kreuz an der Ostsee*.<sup>35</sup>

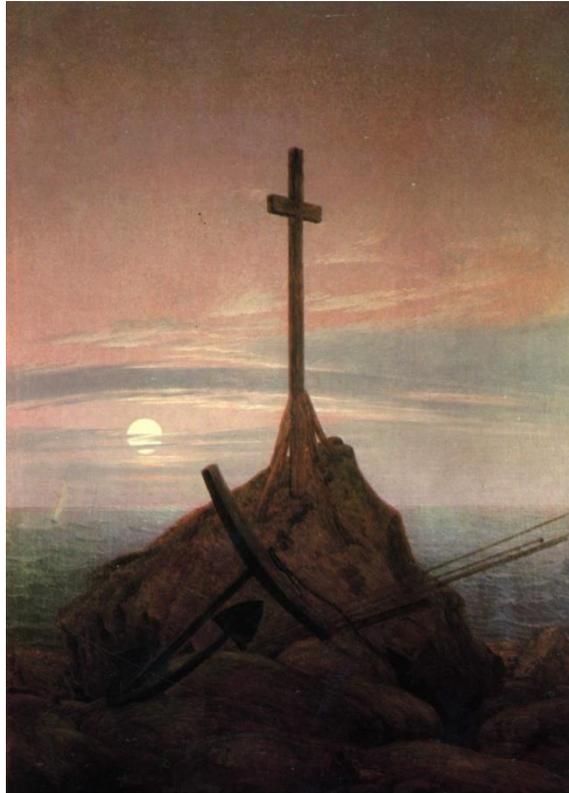


Plate 2 C. D. Friedrich, *Kreuz an der Ostsee* (1815)

In 1815 Friedrich, a devout Lutheran, created a striking image of the cross on the barren shore of the Baltic sea. In a letter to Louise Seidler, Friedrich emphasized the tension created by the cross in this setting: “The picture for your friend is already finished, however it came about without a church, no tree, no plant, no blade of grass. On the naked, rocky seashore, the cross stands, placed high so that for those who long for a cross in such a way it is a comfort, but for those who don’t it isn’t.”<sup>36</sup>

This tension is heightened by the *chiaroscuro*, the light of the sun seems to stop when it reaches the cross (as it does with the *Rüchenfiguren* above), placing the cross at the border between darkness and light, again, the interior and exterior. The anchor,

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<sup>35</sup> This is a faithful photographic reproduction of a two-dimensional, public domain work of art and as such is free of known restrictions under copyright law. See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar\\_David\\_Friedrich\\_024.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_024.jpg).

<sup>36</sup> FRIEDRICH, Caspar David. *Caspar David Friedrich: Die Briefe*. Hermmann Zschoche (ed.). Hamburg, ConferencePoint Verlag, 2006, p. 97.



the symbol of hope and Christian faith, is placed in the darker, interiorized foreground —suggesting that it is the subject’s interior faith that will permit the cross to survive in such a threatening setting.

### The Arias

It is certainly not surprising that these ideas found expression in the music of the period and were readily apparent on France’s operatic stage, particularly in the works of Luigi Cherubini from the 1790s. As Sarah Hibberd has argued, the sublime in nature was often employed as a metaphor signaling the tumultuous events in France at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> This sublime was usually depicted as a force of and in nature, as “Volcanos, storms, avalanches and explosions.”<sup>38</sup> One such opera is Cherubini’s *Lodoïska*, from 1791.

Set in Poland, the plot of *Lodoïska* revolves around the rescue of the leading lady for whom the opera is named. Before the opera opens, Lodoïska was placed in the evil Baron Dourlinski’s care by her father, who has since died. She is now imprisoned in the castle until she consents to marry the Baron. The opera opens as her true love Floreski appears by chance outside the castle and meets Titzikan, a Tartan General who is seeking to avenge one of Dourlinski’s cruelties. In disguise, Floreski gains access to the castle but is captured and also imprisoned. Just as Dourlinski is prepared to dispatch Floreski, Titzikan and his army attack the castle. Floreski escapes by switching a drugged cocktail with his guards and seeks out Lodoïska. He rescues her as the burning castle collapses around them in a *dénouement* typical of the enlightenment’s understanding of the sublime.

From a musical standpoint, the opera is representative of Cherubini’s French Nationalist style of the 1790’s. In this style, Cherubini had forsaken the Italian

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<sup>37</sup> HIBBERD, Sarah. “Cherubini and the Revolutionary Sublime,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 24, n° 3 (2012), pp. 293-318.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*



conventions of melody and form for a French style that emphasized motivic techniques derived from instrumental music and that privileged what was thought to be a more realistic depiction of the plot. Michael Fend's view that "[...] in Cherubini's operas of the 1790s, the singers' emotions were represented with uncompromising force at the expense of melodic beauty" appropriately points to this "almost ugly singing" and striking orchestral effect as Cherubini's conscious effort to depict a musical sublime.<sup>39</sup> Notably, Cherubini's depiction of the sublime in music necessitates his abandonment of the Italian conventions of musical beauty. Like Burke, from Cherubini's perspective as a composer from the enlightenment, any combination of the beautiful and the sublime will simply lessen the effect of each.

The act one vengeance aria, "Triomphons avec noblesse" sung by Titzikan, provides an excellent example of Cherubini's depiction of the musical sublime. After a secondary character has suggested that Titzikan could quickly get revenge through a ruse, Titzikan responds that it is only through noble means that he will seek revenge from Baron Dourlinski. As such, the aria's function is to define Titzikan's character and express his passion for revenge. In a broader dramatic context, the number's purpose is to contribute to the dramatic tension that Cherubini develops through the first act. Within the framework of a simple closed ternary form culminating with a coda Cherubini creates an unresolved dramatic excitement appropriate to its purpose.

As can be seen in the following example, the excitement of the aria lies primarily in the first violin's ascending 16<sup>th</sup> note figure moving quickly against the held notes in the voice, all supported by an 8<sup>th</sup> note arpeggiation in the bassoon and 32<sup>nd</sup> note tremolos in the rest of the string section. This very busy accompaniment is contrasted to the singer's slow moving melodic line.

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<sup>39</sup> FEND. "Literary Motifs, Musical Form and the Quest for the Sublime...", p. 38.



Example 1 L. Cherubini, Lodoïska, "Triumphons avec noblesse" mm. 9-14

Between each of Titzikan's statements, the bass surges upward in quarter-note motion, each ascent reaching further than the last. When this primal ascent in the bass reaches its highest point, the horn's long held notes break into a martial fanfare. Then Titzikan's voice enters it is as if it has suddenly emerged from the bass line. The bass turns downward and supports a major triad a third below his voice. As such, the



markedly declamatory vocal line operates from within the orchestral texture rather than simply being accompanied by it (as would occur in an Italian style aria).

This texture continues through the return of the A section of Titzikan's aria, the ascending 16<sup>th</sup> note figure shifts from the first violin to the viola and bassoon. Titzikan's tessitura reaches to the G above the tenor staff, contributing to the growing excitement. The bass takes up an ascending 32<sup>nd</sup> note figure in the coda, and, as the texture is filled out, the number closes. The lack of difference in the vocal line indicates the absence of vocal bravura; the orchestra conveys an immensity that overwhelms the vocal expression.

A section, mm. 2

Tri - om - phons a - vec no - ble - sse

A' section, mm. 83

Tri - om - phons a - vec no - ble - sse

*Example 2 L. Cherubini, Lodoïska, "Triomphons avec noblesse" Themes from A and A' compared*

In an Italian style aria, the return of the A section marks a moment during which the singer may "ad libitum" display a virtuosic and improvisatory skill at ornamentation that would culminate under a fermata. Cherubini has chosen instead to notate the singer's line so that the overall expressive effect might be maintained.

In a review of *Lodoïska* from 1817, Weber defended Cherubini's "lack of melody" as a necessary component of his "amalgamation of all means to a single unified end." Weber's description merits a fuller quotation:

In [Cherubini's work] this amalgamation of all means to a single unified end has often earned him – though no doubt unfairly – the charge of lacking melody; and it cannot be denied that he often subordinates what are generally accepted as the individual singer's melodic privileges to the melody of the whole musical number. This is not, perhaps, always to be recommended to other composers in its totality; but in Cherubini's case it is largely excusable (even in arias, where it would seem least pardonable) by the fact that he was writing for French singers, or screechers, who seek the expression of feeling more in the intensification of the declamatory style by means



of the orchestra whereas Italian singers rely on their own voices and powers of expression and the *Germans attempt to combine both methods*.<sup>40</sup>

Weber's description argues that while the Italian style maintained an emphasis on beauty in opera as heard in their reliance on their own voices for expression, the French sought a musical expression of the sublime that would often trump the vocal dominance and conventions of Italian opera. The "screeching" of this French style projects an expression which is more emotional than beautiful. Importantly this quote closes with the idea that, in Weber's view, the German style combines the French expression of the sublime with the Italian expression of beauty.

In 1818, Weber fulfilled a commission, likely from Berlin's General Theater Intendant Carl von Brühl, to write an insert aria for a Berlin production of Cherubini's *Lodoïska* that featured Anna Pauline Milder-Hauptmann in the title role.<sup>41</sup> The commission must have been a prestigious one for Weber. Milder-Hauptmann was, by 1818, already quite famous in the European operatic scene. Known for her vocal power and intensity, she had created Leonora in all three versions of Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1805, 1806, and 1814) as well as participating in the Gluck revival by



Plate 3 Anna Pauline Milder-Hauptmann (1818).

performing in *Iphigénie en Tauride* in 1812. While it is true that Weber did not like to alter pre-existing works, he also understood the pragmatic necessities that often required *ad hoc* performance revisions. In a letter to Hinrich Lichtenstein, Weber wrote of the commission: "If there then has to be an insertion, it would be better that

<sup>40</sup> VON WEBER, Carl Maria. *Writings on Music*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 234.

<sup>41</sup> The origins of this commission are unclear, Weber's diary indicates that he had already begun composition of the Aria as early as 1816. See JÄHNS, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Carl Maria von Weber in seinen Werken*. Berlin-Lichterfelde, Lienau, 1967, p. 256.



it is dared by a German heart honoring the master, than that such an Italian *lirum larum* poured water into this spiced wine.”<sup>42</sup>

Most remarkable about this comment is its nationalistic content. With his “Italian *lirum-larum*” Weber was likely referring to Gaspare Spontini, an Italian composer of French opera who the Prussian King was then courting to lead the opera in Berlin. Spontini eventually accepted the position in 1820 over Brühl’s advice, replacing Weber’s longtime friend Bernard Anselm Weber. Further, while Weber clearly intends to “honor the master” with his aria, he is not abandoning his own German identity in a mimicry of the French style but instead daring something from the heart. It is a remarkable statement of intention.

Interestingly, the scena that Weber was to replace is itself a remarkable piece of music. Organized as a two-movement scena, with preceding recitative, the piece creates a dark contrast between Lodoïska’s lack of hope in the opening slow movement and her fear for her lover Floreski in the darkly faster second part.

French	English	Section
<p>Que dis-je! ô ciel! si contre mon attente            Il voulait s’introduire in cet affreux séjour,            Grands Dieux! il est perdu, si jamais il le tente!            Je connais sa valeur....je connais son amour!            Pourquoi me suis-je fait connaître?...            Quoi!...ne devais-je passer            Que j’allais l’exposer au plus cruel danger....            Ah! malgré mes conseils...il s’armera, peut-être...            Mais il était perdu pour moi...            Pouvais-je contenir mon coeur à sa            présence?...            Il fallait garder le silence....            Oui!...Tout m’en imposait la loi!...</p>	<p>Heavens, what am I saying! against my            hopes he wanted to enter this dreadful            place.            Great God, he will be lost if he tries            I know his bravery, I know his love!            Why did I let him know I am here?            How did I not realize            That he would be exposed to cruel            dangers?            Ah! despite my advice...maybe he will be            armed            but he was already lost to me            How could I restrain my heart when I            saw him?            I should have remained silent            Yes... everything demanded it.</p>	<p>Allegro            (Recit.)            C major            35 mm.</p>
<p>Hélas! dans ce cruel asyle            C’était assez de mon Malheur,            Du moins une douleur tranquille            Y consumait mon triste Coeur.</p>	<p>Alas! in this cruel asylum            My woe was enough            At least a tranquil pain            Consumed my sad heart.</p>	<p>Larghetto            F Major            56 mm.</p>

<sup>42</sup> On Weber’s relationship with Spontini see BARTLITZ, Eveline. “‘Unrichtigkeit’ oder ‘Ungenauigkeit’? Der Streit um Webers Berliner *Euryanthe*-Honorar im Kontext der Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Brühl und Spontini”, *Weberiana* 21 (2011).



Pour moi seule j'avais à craindre, Et je languissais dans les fers; J'attendais enfin, sans me plaindre, La fin des maux que j'ai soufferts	For myself I had only fear and I languished in chains; Finally, without complaining, I expected the end of the pain I have suffered.	
Mais pour moi, s'il s'expose, Je mourrai mille fois; Moi seule, je suis cause Des maux que je prévois. Floreski! je m'efforce, A souffrir leur rigueur; Mais je n'ai pas la force De causer ton malheur;	But since because of me he is in danger I will die a thousand times; Me alone, because I am the cause, of the troubles that I foresee Floreski! I can find the strength To suffer the troubles, But I don't have the strength to be The cause of your unhappiness.	Allegro F minor 96 mm.

Table 1 Luigi Cherubini, Lodoïska, "Que dis-je! o ciel!"

While the aria above displayed Titzikan's more general connection with sublime nature, here Cherubini is much more conventional in his depiction of the sublime. Indeed, it conforms to the "sublime climax" that James Webster has located in his catalogue of the sublime in the late works of Franz Joseph Haydn.<sup>43</sup>

This climax, a device of gestural shock that usually comes at the end of a movement," occurs three steps: 1. the preparation, which "subverts what appeared to be a drive towards a structural cadence," followed by; 2. the apotheosis, when the preparation "suddenly culminates in a single, astonishing moment" and completed by; 3, the denouement with a final cadence that is necessarily rapid and terse so that the "preceding moment of astonishment will dominate the impression".

As demonstrated in the example, in measure 170 Cherubini has acquired a cadential 6-4 which arrives at the dominant on the next downbeat. This clear progression is then interrupted by a four measure piano section which repeats the same text and melody, creating a "one-more time" effect. At measure 176 the voice suddenly leaps over an octave and the full orchestra re-enters for the apotheosis. After the leap, the section closes in a terse cadence to tonic F minor. Obviously, it is an abstract premonition of the sublime moment which refers to the exploding castle at

<sup>43</sup> WEBSTER, James. "The *Creation*, Haydn's Late Vocal Music, and the Musical Sublime," in *Haydn and His World*. Elaine Sisman (ed.). Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 57-102.



the opera's denouement, but locally its dramatic purpose it simply to personalize the danger and fear that Lodoïska is experiencing.

Drive towards cadence....

la for - ce de cau - ser ton mal - heur

1: The drive to cadence is suddenly subverted.

de cau-ser \_ ton mal - heur non de cau-ser \_ lon mal - heur non

2: Apotheosis: single, astonishing moment.

3: Final rapid and terse cadence....

de cau-ser \_ ton mal - heur de cau - ser ton mal - heur!

Example 3 Luigi Cherubini, Lodoïska, "Que dis-je! o ciel!"



Turning to Weber's insert Aria, "Was Sag' Ich" (J. 239), the first thing one notices is how Italian it appears compared to Cherubini's original. Indeed, the aria represents a remarkable synthesis of Italian and French operatic styles that simultaneously emphasize Lodoiska's beauty within the threatening isolation of the castle that is her prison.

Mm.#	Tempo	Text		Key
1-20	<i>Allegro</i> (recit.)	Was sag' ich Schaudern macht mich der Gedanke! Weh mir! ihm droht Verrath! Ihn spornt viel leicht sein Muth zu kühner That; in des ich muthlos schwanke!	What should I say? The thought makes me shudder! Poor me! Betrayal threatens him! His courage easily excites him to action; instead I stagger without courage.	C Maj.
25-32	<i>Adagio non troppo,</i>	Fern von ihm in öden Mauern, quälte mich der Trennung Schmerz,	Far from him, behind deserted walls, The pain of separation torments me,	E min.
33-40		Gram der Sehnsucht war mein Trauern, hoffnungs loser lag mein Herz.	The sorrow of loing was my mourning, Ever hopeless was my heart	E min.
41-45	<i>(Tempo di mezzo)</i>	Neu beseelt mich seine Nähe freundlich. Lacht der hoffnungs Strahl,	His friendly nearness re-inspires me as a laughing ray of hope,	G maj.
45-53		doch dass ihn bedroht ich sehe mischt dir Freude noch mit Qual.	But when I see him threatened my joy is mixed with agony.	B maj.
54-75	<i>Allegro con fuoco</i>	Sichre meines, meines Retters Leben, Schütz o Gott ihn vor Gefahr,	My confidence, my rescuer's life, Protect, Oh God, him from danger	E Maj.
79-147		Lautrem Glück zurück gegeben preisst dich dann ein seelges Paar.	A blessed pair then praises you and is given back to pure happiness.	E Maj.

Table 2 Text and Formal Organization of Weber's "Was sag' ich?"

In general form and organization (see table 1), the aria adheres to the conventions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian aria form, "la solita forma," that is, a movement in two sections, the first a slow cantabile and the second a faster, brilliant *caballetta*.<sup>44</sup> Further, the cantabile is preceded by a declamatory recitative and the two movements

<sup>44</sup> For a complete description of the characteristics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian aria see: BUDDEN, Julian. "19<sup>th</sup> Century aria: Italy" in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/43315> (accessed October 26, 2010).





more) and the running vocal line against a relatively restrained accompaniment briefly allows the voice a virtuosic dominance of the overall expression.

Vocal Line is isolated

130 *ff* preisst dich preisst - - - dich dann ein seel - ges -

(Cadential 6-4)

141 *p* Paar, ein - seel - - ges Paar.

Example 5 Closing measures (130-149) of 'Was Sag' Ich'

On the other hand, there are several elements that seem to echo the French style of Cherubini's work. The first is a reminiscence motive in the form of a repeated descending chromatic line. In the scene before the one in which our aria occurs, Lodoïska's lover Floreski has managed to switch a drugged cocktail with one of his guards, causing them to sleep and him to escape. There a repeated descending chromatic line accompanies the guards drinking the poisonous concoction. In a broader dramatic context, it is the first moment in the opera when events begin to turn the way of our hero and heroine. In the context of Lodoïska's aria, when the reminiscence returns, she wishes for more of the luck that allowed Floreski to get free.



Three Emissaries: Floreski:

bon nous all - ons tous a - moir bon

Flute

Violin

Viola

Cello

Chromatic descent

Chromatic descent

Example 6 Chromatic descent in Lodoïska "Amis, que ce divin breuvage"

Lodoïska:

lau - trem Glück da - hin ge - - - ge - - - ben

Fag.

Vlns.

Vla. & Cf.

Bass.

Chromatic Descent

Chromatic Descent

Example 7 Chromatic descent in Weber's "Was Sag Ich"

Another French stylistic element is the thematic variation with which Weber treats the melody of the faster second movement. The primary motivic idea of the Allegro consists of a descending third and ascending fifth/sixth cell. As indicated with brackets in the following example, Weber's first variation of the figure comes almost immediately, setting the figure in retrograde and eliding it with the repetition at the third. This variation is repeated, ending the phrase on the fourth scale degree. In the next phrase the figure is varied again with an augmented rhythm and then repeated, a fourth higher, before it leads to the tonic and the section ends.



54

Sich - re mei - nes, mei - nes Ret - ters\_\_ Le - ben, Schütz\_\_ o\_\_ Gott ihn vor\_\_ Ge\_\_ fahr, \_\_

62

Schütz o Gott ihn\_\_ vor\_\_ ge - fahr, \_\_ Schütz o Gott zu\_\_ ruck ihn\_\_ vor ge - fahr.

retrograde with elision

Example 8 “Was Sag Ich” Allegro, vocal line only

The theme is briefly recapitulated at the end of the movement, but appended with a stepwise ascent that is accompanied in the orchestra which, just as Weber described the French style, intensifies “the declamatory style by means of the orchestra” This is followed by the Italianesque cadenza (discussed above) that finally isolates the voice, emphasizing the character’s loneliness in face of the castle’s threatening isolation.

122

sich - re mei - nes mei - nes Ret - ters\_\_ Le - ben, Schütz o Gott ihn vor Ge - fahr!

Stepwise ascent.

Example 9 Stepwise ascent in measures 122-129 of “Was Sag’ Ich”

Friedrich Rochlitz, a contemporary critic of Weber wrote a review of the aria that focuses on the vocalist’s requirements in light of the orchestral expression:



It [the aria] is not Bravura (as it is said,) but a noble character is held throughout the work. There are no recurring passages and as such, there are much fewer bare decorating ornamentations and on that account there are more requirements of tone (melodious, full, prepared tone); the piece is somewhat unusual in modulation and instrumentation without being completely Bizarre... In short, it is a masterwork for a master singer.<sup>45</sup>

Rochlitz's identification of the "somewhat unusual" harmonic organization refers to the mediant relations that unify the aria's different sections. The aria is divided into four sections that are related by harmonic shifts to the mediant area (reduced in the example below, and shown in the last column of table one above). Importantly, these transformations occur at the moment the character's emotions shift. Although the arrivals of the Adagio and Allegro movements are accentuated through dominant preparation, it is the structural relationship of the mediant that Weber employs to communicate Lodoïska's shifting emotions poetically.

The emphasis is not on the contrast between the two movements but the transformation between the two movements. Formally, it is this emphasis on the transformation that clearly marks the work as a Romantic composition.

Appropriately, the critics of this aria have recognized it as a musical metaphor for the sublime. Robert Schumann, writing as Eusebius in 1835, likened the aria to a "German Oak" which stood in contrast to the "Italian Butterflies" that "fluttered" about it, stating that it is an aria that would bring a singer "more honor as an artist than applause as a virtuosa."<sup>46</sup> In 1871, Friedrich Jähns described the aria in terms which remind one of Hardenberg's sublime flood:

[The aria] might be characterized as a river of deep feeling and high passion, which begins painfully complaining; however, soon it raises the emotional excitement, ever higher and higher, until with rapid violence it pushes to the end.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> ROCHLITZ, Johann F. "Bewertung," *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 27(1818), p. 852.

<sup>46</sup> SCHUMANN, Robert. *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, October 21, 1835, cited in STRUNK, W. Oliver and TREITLER, Leo. *Source Readings in Music History*, Rev. ed., 7 vols. New York, Norton, 1998, p. 1150.

<sup>47</sup> JÄHNS. *Carl Maria Von Weber...*, p. 256.



Example 10 Harmonic Organization of “Was Sag Ich”

The emphasis on the transformative mediant in the harmonic organization of “Was sag’ Ich,” and its synthesis of national styles are both characteristics that would mark all of Weber’s later arias. As Jähns noted, the aria holds “[...] an outstanding place in Weber’s collection of dramatic German arias; it is the direct forerunner of his later, large works in this genre.”<sup>48</sup> The later works that have these characteristics include the arias for Max and Agathe from *Der Freischütz*, the title character’s aria from *Euryanthe* and Reiza’s from *Oberon*. More generally, however, the use of poetic modulation to depict a character’s emotional transformation becomes one of the primary characteristics of later German Romantic operas and dramas.

Similarly, from a dramatic perspective Weber will leave his leading lady in threatening isolation again and again throughout his career. In *Euryanthe*, the faithful title character is charged with adultery and left to die in the wilderness. In *Oberon*, the Lady Reiza’s love for Sir Huon is tested when she is left alone on a deserted island. This situation recurs on operatic stages throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One example is Robert Schumann’s *Genoveva*, in which the heroine is brought to die in the wilderness where she has a vision of the cross.

\*

By way of closing, we return to another one of Weber’s *Autobiographical Sketches* in which he describes the experience of seeing a landscape as “a kind of musical performance,” which “oddly enough, is an event in time.”<sup>49</sup> Like the transitions between musical sections that, as we have seen, reflect Lodoïska’s emotional

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> VON WEBER, Carl Maria. “106. Autobiographical Sketch” in *Writings on Music* John Warrack (ed.), Martin Cooper (trans.). New York, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 324.



transformations, Weber relates the shifting visual landscape to musical topoi, but only after being mediated in his heart:

If I stand absolutely still and look steadily towards the horizon, the image I obtain may be compared to something similar in the related mental world of my musical imagination, and I may well be able to take it to my heart, retain its contours and develop it. But heavens above! What a mad succession of funeral marches, rondos, furiosos and pastorals somersaults through my eyes! I become more and more silent as I struggle with the all too vivid demands of my brain. I cannot remove my gaze from the shining spectacle provided by nature [....] And woe to any chatty neighbor, particularly at the beginning of my journey, if he hopes to find another such in me.

The remarkable aspect of this statement is the fact that Weber's response to this "mad succession" of details in the landscape is to become quiet and introspective. One can almost imagine him as one of Friedrich's *Rückenfiguren*, sitting with his back turned towards his chatty neighbor as he quietly revels in a synaesthetic experience of the sublime landscape.



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