

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION OF THE POETIC PRIMARY SOURCE IN BALLADS BY F. SCHUBERT, S. MONIUSZKO, H. WOLF ON GOETHE'S TEXT «KENNST DU DAS LAND»

NATALIYA GOVORUKHINA¹

SUMMARY. We propose to study the ways of embodying the poetic text of Goethe's poem by three composers (F. Schubert, S. Moniuszko, H. Wolf) by analyzing the patterns of the poetic text structural and functional method (repetition, system of repetitions, update) and its relationship with the musical and poetic method at the level of the general structure and individual techniques (duplication, replacement) with the involvement of the comparative method. The need to reveal the meaning and value of a particular technique led to the use of the semantic method. In comparison with other romantic examples – F. Schubert and H. Wolf, which continuously attract the attention of researchers, the composer's version of S. Moniuszko is involved. As a result of the analysis, we made a conclusion about the relative constancy in all three selected samples of the implementation of repetition both at the level of the entire text (three stanzas), the structure of the stanza, and at the level of keywords (question "Kennst du..."), at that time, the renewal in the poetic text observed in the second and third stanzas of Goethe's poem, is embodied in different musical and poetic forms — from leveling changes (S. Moniuszko) to their consistent implementation (H. Wolf). The only exception to this is the "chorus", in which J. Goethe presents variant appeals of the female protagonist to different addressees — composers interpret them identically (the poetic text is renewed and the musical text remains unchanged), which also acts as a constant element of the interpretation of the poetic original source.

Keywords: interaction of textual and musical repetition, transformation of the poetic primary source, musical and poetic text, duplication techniques, repetition system, constant and variant principles.

¹ Honored Art Worker of Ukraine, PhD in Musicology, Professor of Solo singing and Opera Department, Rector of Kharkiv I. P. Kotlyarevsky National University of Arts, Deputy Head of Kharkiv regional branch of National All-Ukrainian Musical Union.
E-mail: govoruhina_n@ukr.net

Introduction

Lyrics of the song Mignon “*Kennst du das Land*” (1783-1784; edited – 1795), preceding the third book of Goethe’s novel “The Years of Wilhelm Meister’s Studies”/ “*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*”, attracts romantic composers all over the world. Only during 1795 – 1888, nine musical versions of this poetry were created in western European Music and 10 more in Russian (however, only A. Rubinstein and P. Tchaikovsky stand out among significant figures).

A number of researchers study various musical versions of this poetic work² since the 60s of the twentieth century, an example of which is the works of P. S. Crenshaw, where Schumann and Wolf’s “Mignon’s Songs” are compared³; J. A. McCrory, which considers eight different approaches – J. Reichardt, L. Beethoven, F. Schubert, R. Schumann, F. Liszt, H. Wolf, and is also the only example from foreign researchers who uses the version of the Russian composer P. Tchaikovsky⁴. This topic continues to attract attention in the XXI century. Thus, E. Albert performs a psychoanalytic reading of six versions (J. Reichardt, L. van Beethoven, F. Schubert, R. Schumann, H. Wolf), as a result of which he comes to the conclusion that the character develops from “a Reichardt’s innocent and cheerful child to a Wolf’s exotic and melancholic woman”⁵. J. Abrogast compares five versions (L. Beethoven, R. Schumann, F. Schubert, F. Liszt, H. Wolf) and is inclined to think that the most convincing is the Liszt’s version, which “shows more raw emotions than others, and, despite being inaccessible to performers due to its complexity, is a luxurious version of this song”⁶. J. Cheryl (2018) compares the composer’s interpretations of Goethe’s poem by F. Schubert, R. Schumann, and H. Wolf

² In addition to the musical text, researchers study translations of Goethe’s poetic text in different languages. Thus, O. Lebedeva considers 15 texts of translations of “Mignon” into Russian, created in the period from 1817 (translated by V. Zhukovsky) to 2002 (translated by B. A. Toman) (Lebedeva, Olga. The receptive history of the poem by J. W. Goethe’s “Mignon” in Russian literature of the 19th – 20th centuries. *Euro-Asian Intercultural Dialogue: “ours” and “aliens” in the national identity of culture.* Tomsk: Tomsk University Publishing House, 2007, p. 223–247).

³ Crenshaw, Patricia Sam. The Mignon song settings of Robert Schumann and Hugo Wolf: Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Music. Denton, Texas, 1966.

⁴ McCrory, Jennifer A. Goethe’s “*Kennst du das Land*”: Eight musical settings. (Master of Music). The North Texas State University. Denton, Texas, 1977.

⁵ Albert, Anne E. *Fragments: A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Character Mignon on Her Journey Through Nineteenth Century Lieder.* (D.M.A. diss.). The University of North Carolina. Greensboro, 2009.

⁶ Abrogast, Jennifer. A comparative analysis of Mignon’s song *Kennst du das Land*. (A creative project for the degree of Master of Music with a major in vocal performance). Ball State University, 2008, p.27.

in terms of a different approach to the embodiment of the female image – from “Childish” by F. Schubert and “rebellious” fighting for her feelings by R. Schumann to a mysterious, mystical, mature woman capable of depth of feelings by H. Wolf⁷. Thus, the research thought focuses mainly on the image of the Minion and the way it appears in various vocal versions of Goethe’s text, and therefore this sphere is quite studied, while the compositional aspects of the structure of the poem and the principles of its transformation in the musical text remain poorly covered.

The panorama of research also illustrates the continued interest in the works of F. Schubert (1815) and H. Wolf (1888), which can be considered as extreme milestones in the romantic interpretation of this text. However, “*Znasz li ten kraj*” (1842, edited – 1855) S. Moniuszko, despite his belonging to the era of romanticism, with the exception of the work of the Italian researcher M. A. Balsano⁸, does not attract the attention of musicologists, although his musical version of this text by J. Goethe, distanced from the poetic original by the translation of A. Mickiewicz, undoubtedly stands out from the group of works on “*Kennst du das Land*” and it reveals an alternative vision not only of the content, but also of the genre coloring of the poetic primary source. In comparison with the most significant examples in the romantic interpretation of this text – F. Schubert and H. Wolf – it will make it possible to identify different ways of interpretation of the verbal text, which determines the relevance and **novelty** of the stated topic.

The purpose of this research is the identification of the principles of the implementation by composers of the poetic primary source in the “*Kennst du das Land*” by F. Schubert, S. Moniuszko, H. Wolf. According to the purpose, we selected the following **methods**: *structural and functional* — to determine the specifics of the construction and division of a poetic text (primary syntax) and secondary syntax in a musical text, *comparative* — to identify the essence of the transformation of the verbal primary source in the vocal composition and techniques that are used, as well as the features of the ratio of the opposition pair “repetition — renewal”; *semantic* — to reveal the symbolism/ meaning of a particular method of converting verbal text in a chamber-vocal work.

⁷ Sherill, Jennifer. Musical Mignon. A Discussion of Three Musical Settings of Goethe. Art Song Comprehensive Project. (Thesis). University of California, Davis, 2018, p. 21.

⁸ Balsano, Maria Antonella. “Mignon in Polonia. Rielaborazioni poetiche e musicali pollacche della balata di Goethe”. *Diagonali*, I. 20, 2012.

Discussion

Despite the fact that the process of embodying the poetic primary source in vocal music is accompanied by a number of changes justified by the composer's vision of the content of the poem and the musical form, a number of features of the musical text are dictated by the specifics of the verbal one. It determines the common features that illustrate all three selected works at the level of overall composition. Thus, "*Kennst du das Land*" by J. Goethe is constructed of three stanzas, which is embodied in a three-phase verse (S. Moniuszko) or verse-variant (F. Schubert) and mixed with features of verse-variation, verse-through and refrain (H. Wolf) form of the future vocal work. Each stanza of Goethe's text is conventionally divided into two unequal parts (4 lines/2 lines) – the first depicts a "landscape" – a region with blooming citrines (I); a building with marble statues (II) or a mountainous area (III); while the second is the heroine's appeal to her "beloved"/"*Geliebter*", "patron saint"/"*Beschützer*" or "father"/"*Vater*". This division in the musical text is interpreted by all composers as a verse-chorus structure (*ab*). Moreover, in all three samples, despite the different "addressees" that are present in Mignon's address, the "chorus" remains unchanged, while the "chorus" illustrates the process of updating the musical material in the first half of the stanza (F. Schubert, H. Wolf) in accordance with the poetic original. Schematically, the simplest lapidary organization is illustrated by The Song of S. Moniuszko (*ababab*), somewhat more complex – of F. Schubert (*ababa'b*) and H. Wolf's (*aba'bc*). Changes in the musical material in the third stanza – the fret verse of the same name by F. Schubert and new musical material (also in the same name F sharp minor) in H. Wolf – already justified by the semantic features of the text of J. Goethe. In the third stanza, which researchers describe as the most "dynamic and dramatic"⁹ we are talking about the ravishment of the heroine. Some scholars even see in the content of the poem "the outlines of Dante's picture of the world: Paradise, purgatory, hell"¹⁰, which also gives the last stanza a special dramatic load.

The system of repetitions in Goethe's poem is revealed in internal (inside stanzas) and cross-duplication (between stanzas). Each stanza begins with the question phrase "You know..."/"*Kennst du...*", identical and fifth lines (this line in the graphic entry is often divided into two) – "do you

⁹ McCrory, Jennifer A. Goethe's "Kennst du das Land": Eight musical settings. (Master of Music). The North Texas State University. Denton, Texas, 1977, p. 67.

¹⁰ Lebedeva, Olga. "The receptive history of the poem by J. W. Goethe's 'Mignon' in Russian literature of the 19th – 20th centuries". *Euro-Asian Intercultural Dialogue: "ours" and "aliens" in the national identity of culture*. Tomsk: Tomsk University Publishing House, 2007, p. 229.

know them? Over there! Over there!”/“*Kennst du es wohl? Dahin! Dahin*”. An important technique is to repeat the last two lines in variants: “Do you know them? Over there! Over there! They would fly away, my dear, forever” (translated by M. Rylsky) / “*Kennst du es wohl? Dahin! Dahin / Möcht’ ich mit dir, o mein **Geliebter**, ziehn*”, where only the addressee changes (*Geliebter/ Beschützer/ Vater*). It is accompanied by a change in the meaningful content, subtext, because the appeal to different “characters” corresponds to different plot motives of “Wilhelm Meister”. In the musical implementation of all three works, constant repetition is the interrogative formula in the middle of the stanza, which is emphasized by an unstable melodic-harmonic turn with a stop on the dominant (F. Schubert, S. Moniuszko, H. Wolf), is distinguished by caesuras (F. Schubert, H. Wolf), switching to a minor key (F minor), and reviving the pace (H. Wolf). At the same time, the beginning of the stanzas is the same in all three verses only in S. Moniuszko, in F. Schubert – in the first two stanzas, and in H. Wolf it is preserved only partially (the beginning of the second stanza is presented in variations). Interestingly, the greatest correspondence between the two repetitions of the poetic text is observed in the song by S. Moniuszko due to the fact that all three verses are identical. At the same time, the variation of the “chorus” (i.e., the last two lines) is not reproduced in any of the vocal works (except for the ballad format by H. Wolf).

The update in the content of Goethe’s poetic text is due not only to the variation of the “addressee” of each stanza, but also to a change in the “landscape”, that is, text-visual images. Their meaning is revealed in the context of “Wilhelm Meister” – Mignon veiled describes his native country (meaning sunny Italy). This process of renewal is reflected only in the musical versions of F. Schubert and H. Wolf, while in S. Moniuszko there is an opposition “the text is renewed – the music repeats”. Last but not least, this is due to the specific translation of A. Mickiewicz, who changes the meaning of Goethe’s poetry and makes all the “choruses” absolutely identical, bringing the Goethe ballad closer to an elegy with memories of lost love: “Oh, there, oh my dear, there was my paradise while you were with me!” / “*Ach, tam, o moja miła, Tam był mi raj, pókiś ty ze mną była!*”. The closest thing to S. Moniuszko’s approach in this regard is F. Schubert, who alleviates changes in the content of the first two stanzas by using an unwritten repetition. However, in the last verse, the composer not only presents the material in a minor key of the same name (A minor), but also introduces textured and rhythmic innovations to the piano part — dotted rhythms, compacted chord texture with bass laid out in an octave give the music a pathetic touch. In contrast to F. Schubert, H. Wolf in the second stanza presents the material in a variant way — here individual intonation turns in

the vocal part change while preserving the main melodic skeletons. At the same time, the piano part is dynamized – instead of pulsating chords with syncope, the composer introduces a triol pulsation of eighths on the first dhol. In the third stanza the composer offers a new tonality (F sharp minor), a new thematism of the vocal part (an upward movement along the sounds of the tonic quartersextacord, a large dotted line) – determines a sense of greater scope and determination, and the trembling accompaniment of the piano part gives the music expressiveness. However, the final chorus is identical to the previous ones, which brings H. Wolf closer to Schubert's interpretation.

So, the compositional structure of the original source and the system of its “repetitions” form more or less constant principles of its musical embodiment in the musical versions of F. Schubert, S. Moniuszko, H. Wolf, however, the system of “updates” illustrates another picture — the branching of compositional approaches, in which the static-verse version of S. Moniuszko stands out. According to the four possible options for text and music repetition based on the opposition “repeat — update” pair¹¹, it can be noted that in H. Wolf the music is renewed after the text, and also there are textual-musical reprises caused by the original source, as well as in the refrain through the repetition of the “chorus”; in S. Moniuszko the music is repeated contrary to the renewal of the poetic text; and F. Schubert finds a balance between the approaches of S. Moniuszko and H. Wolf, illustrating three pairs of oppositions: the text is renewed — the music is renewed; the text is renewed, the music repeats, verbal repetition — musical repetition.

The ways in which a poetic text is transformed into a poetic and musical text for each of the composers are also different. Among the techniques that characterize the process of transforming a poetic primary source into a vocal miniature, the modern theory of textual and musical form distinguishes duplications, bills, inserts, permutations, substitutions. Reasons for duplication, bills, inserts, according to researchers¹² they can be caused by both structural and semantic reasons, while permutations and substitutions indicate a special meaning that is given to a particular word. Thus, duplications are justified by the specifics of the deployment of the musical form, which “often goes beyond the structural facets defined by the text and requires the continuation of the text series”, as well as “the special significance of a word”¹³. Notes of individual words are characteristic, first of all, for choral polyphonic music and are due to the fact that “some voices

¹¹ Rymko, Grigory. Theoretical problems of the text-musical form (Ph.D. dissertation in Arts). Moscow, 2013, p. 217.

¹² Rymko, Grigory. *idem*.

¹³ Rymko, Grigory. *Idem*, p. 146.

sing a line of text in full, but others who enter later do not have time to do this and are forced to reproduce it partially”¹⁴. Inserts, in turn, act as another means of “continuing” the text series. Substitutions, as a rule, “are caused not so much by the requirements of shaping as by the individual idea of the composer”¹⁵. Also, substitutions occur “under the influence of semantic factors: the composer, having a certain musical image in his mind, considers it necessary to correct the text for the greater correspondence between the semantic content of the text and the music created on its basis.”¹⁶.

Turning to the song of F. Schubert, among the changes in the poetic primary source, it is necessary to highlight, first of all, the method of duplication, which has both structural and meaningful meaning. In the musical and poetic text, the word “There” / “*Dahin*” is repeated eleven times in a chorus that remains unchanged throughout all three stanzas. Combined with a brisk pace (*etwas geschwinder*), triol figures of the sixteenth and active beated formulas (including quart intonation), it embodies the idea of a romantic impulse, a sincere unrestrained desire of the heroine to return to her native country. This deepens the contrast between the two parts of the stanza, forming the opposition “passivity — activity”, “narration — effectiveness”. From the point of view of structure, duplication serves as an extension of the second half of the Goethe stanza (4/4 instead of 4/2), which allows to balance chants and choruses on a large scale.

The method of duplication brings F. Schubert closer to the interpretation of S. Moniuszko, however, here there is a need to distinguish between the metamorphoses that Goethe’s text experiences in the translation of A. Mickiewicz and, through it, already in the song of S. Moniuszko. A. Mickiewicz uses the substitution technique, generalizing the images of “beloved”, “patron”, “father”, to the collective – “my dear” (here there is also a replacement of the gender of the hero of the song, which distances the text from the Goethe image of Mignon). The chorus acquires a melancholic and nostalgic tone, as the active “There” is removed and replaced by the passive “There was my paradise” (the image of lost paradise and lost love). In turn, S. Moniuszko, referring to the text of A. Mickiewicz, complements these changes with the techniques of duplication (four-time “there was my paradise” and two-time “while you were with me”) and substitutions¹⁷ as a

¹⁴ Rymko, Grigory. Idem, p. 148.

¹⁵ Rymko, Grigory. Idem, p. 149.

¹⁶ Rymko, Grigory. idem.

¹⁷ “Ach, tam, o moja miła / Tam był mi raj, pókiś ty ze mną była!” (A. Mickiewicz) / “Ach, tam, o moja miła, **tam był mi raj!** / Tam był mi raj, pókiś ty ze mną była **tam był mi raj, tam był mi raj** pókiś ty ze mną była!” (S. Moniuszko, composer’s duplications and inserts are highlighted in bold).

result, two poetic lines turn into four (which allows to expand them to the chorus format, as in F. Schubert).

From the point of view of the general “quantitative” structure of the poem, H. Wolf leaves the text in the most intact form compared to its predecessors. The expansion of the stanza to a symmetrical (in the context of the balance of singing and chorus) construction is carried out by him through instrumental fragments that highlight the interrogative form and highlight the line “Over there...”, as well as complete the stanza. The only duplication that the composer refers to is double repetition “*Kennst du es wohl?*” with a variant laid out descending motif from F₅ and from C₅ and a stop on the dominant to F minor. Lowering the texture when repeated causes a sense of increased doubt and sadness, which increases the rhetorical coloring of this question — the heroine does not expect anyone to respond to her appeal.

At the same time, considering the transformation of the iambic structure of Goethe’s poem, it should be noted that H. Wolf moves as far as possible from the rhythm of the poetic original source, shifting the accents in poetic phrases, breaking them with pauses, while F. Schubert and S. Moniuszko in different ways – through the bipartite dimension 2/4 or quadrilateral 12/8 (in the first edition it was also bipartite – 6/8), retain the iambic basis. Least of all, the musical component interferes with the syntax of the poem in S. Moniuszko. In addition to the initial piano introduction and the two-stroke transition from one stanza to another, there are no pauses in the vocal part, which serves to preserve the integrity of the poetic text. In turn, F. Schubert together with H. Wolf distinguish an interrogative formula, and the latter does it twice, alternating two vocal lines with two piano ones (2 + 2 + 2 + 2 tact). In general, the second half of H. Wolf’s stanza is devoid of integrity, since there is also a double tonal switch – from the original one G flat major to F minor (Vol. 21) and D flat major (Vol. 32), as well as deviations from the main tempo (*Belebt – Ruhiger*) with a subsequent return to the main one (Vol. 32), so the term “chorus” can only be applied to this section with a certain amount of convention.

Comparison of the actual musical texts allows us to consider the works of S. Moniuszko and H. Wolf as polar from the point of view of purely musical content and genre nature. H. Wolf is dominated by recitative melody with elements of recitative and recitation, which corresponds to the genre of monologue. He is also the only one of the three authors who comes closest to the vocal ballad genre (and calls his work a ballad) because of the elements of end-to-end development, while F. Schubert and S. Moniuszko are dominated by melodiousness. S. Moniuszko expresses this in a frank reliance on the sounds of the main triads in the melody, the

repetition of rhythmic formulas. Moreover, the dimension is 12/8, quite a mobile pace *Moderato* allow researchers to celebrate the “Italian flavor” of this song¹⁸. F. Schubert’s version becomes an intermediary between diametrically opposite implementations in H. Wolf and S. Moniuszko. The dominance of melodiousness in the first four lines of the stanza is inferior to recitation “*Kennst du es wohl?*” (tt. 17-18), and in the chorus (tt. 19 – 39) again reigns the melodiousness in the spirit of “beautiful Miroshnikivna” (“on the road”). At the same time, H. Wolf has a choice of key (G flat major) and S. Moniuszko (F sharp major) illustrates unity based on enharmonism.

Conclusions

Thus, the specifics of the embodiment of the poetic primary source in musical versions of poetry “*Kennst du das Land*” J. Goethe is defined by both constant and variable principles for all three samples. Among the constants, there is a three-phase (three-phase) structure of the form, the division of each stanza into two parts (and their further alignment in scale in the musical text), which corresponds to the singing-chorus structure *ab*, duplication of thematicism in a repeating question figure “*Kennst du...*”, as well as identical reproduction of the variant structure of the last two lines (the text changes, but the music remains unchanged). Therefore, immutability in a poetic text generates compliance with the principles of its musical implementation.

On the contrary, renewal in a poetic text is reflected differently in a musical one. So, in S. Moniuszko it is completely leveled (three unchangeable verses), in F. Schubert it is partially reproduced (the third verse), in H. Wolf it is renewed throughout, except for the “chorus”. The musical form also becomes variable – for example, perceiving from the text of J. Goethe the dramatic tension of the last stanza – F. Schubert and H. Wolf use the minor of the same name in it, or even introduce a new thematism (H. Wolf).

Composers solve their own transformation of a poetic text into a musical and poetic one at the micro level in different ways. Thus, F. Schubert has only duplication, which performs both substantive and structural functions (eleven-fold *dahin*), in S. Moniuszko (together with the poetry of A. Mickiewicz) there are substitutions (gender of the hero of the song, three addressees for one – “my dear”), duplication (four-time “there was my paradise”, two-time “while you were with me”). H. Wolf retains the “quantitative”

¹⁸ Balsano, Maria Antonella. “Mignon in Polonia. Rielaborazioni poetiche e musicali pollacche della balata di Goethe”. *Diagonali*, l. 20, 2012, p. 18.

structure of the poetic primary source (except for the repetition of the interrogative formula), and, at the same time, its rhythmic component is destroyed, while S. Moniuszko and F. Schubert have a desire to preserve the rhythmic correspondence of the original.

So, from the point of view of the formal features of the poem – the general structure, the system of repetitions, the verse dimension – S. Moniuszko retains the greatest correspondence to the poetic text. At the same time, the system of “updates” and meaningful details are more convincingly embodied by F. Schubert and H. Wolf. At the same time, without delving into the subtleties of the syntactic and semantic structure of the text, it is S. Moniuszko who manages to recreate his leading image – the image of Italy, which stands “behind the scenes” of Mignon’s song and is associated with Goethe’s own memories of Italy. As a result, the musical version of S. Moniuszko reveals new shades in the poetic primary source, which rise in relief in comparison with the vocal works of F. Schubert and H. Wolf, which complements the overall picture of romantic interpretations of this invariably popular text by J. Goethe.

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