

Winterreise / Winter Journey

texts: Wilhelm Mueller

music: Franz Schubert, Op. 89 Nr. 1-24, Vienna 1827

translation: Celia Sgroi

Translator's Note

You may ask yourself, with all the translations that already exist, why would anyone undertake to make yet another translation of "Winterreise" anyhow? I don't think it ever would have occurred to me if Emily Ezust hadn't been looking for translations for her website. The idea is to voluntarily provide song-text translations that are not bound by copyright that can be used by the general public or reprinted for nothing in concert programs. All the translator is entitled to is to have their name attached to the translation if it is used. In the event, my "Winterreise" translation did not end up on the song-texts website (someone else submitted one first), but I am still glad that I did it because I learned a great deal about "Winterreise," not to mention about the art of translation.

I am not a translator by profession. The few translations I have done before "Winterreise" were of technical items or interviews, things that did not require an enormous effort to "get things exactly right." In those cases, if the translator fudged a little or conveyed the sense of what was being said instead of the actual words, it didn't matter in the least. But translating a literary work is another question all together. There getting things exactly right is extremely important, and a great deal more effort and care were required. I had the luxury of being able to take as long as I wished to do the job I had undertaken. I am not satisfied with my "Winterreise" translation, but my respect for the job that translators of literary works do has increased enormously. God bless you all!

A year or more ago, when *lieder-I* was still in its infancy, I posted a query to *opera-I* asking what listeners of art songs were looking for in a translation of song-texts. The replies were very enlightening. For one thing, I discovered that many more listeners were entirely dependent on translations of song-texts than I had imagined. For another, most people who replied to my query said that they preferred to have line-by-line translations that were as faithful to the original text as possible. The majority of art-song enthusiasts wanted to be able to understand why a particular word in the song text



Franz (Peter) Schubert (1797-1828)

received particular emphasis, or why a line or a stanza received the treatment it had from the composer or performers. I tried to let those concerns guide me in doing my own translation of "Winterreise." Now you can decide whether I was successful. I think that in some cases I was, but I am painfully aware of the many instances in which I was not. Maybe next time ...

So, what did I have in mind when I made my "Winterreise" translation? First, I tried to provide line-by-line translations wherever possible and be as faithful as I could to the original text. Second, I wanted to confine myself to what the text actually said without injecting my own "interpretation" into the translation. And third, I wanted to provide a translation that would not sound silly to an American audience at the tail end of the 20th century. I wanted to eschew the self-consciously "poetic" without producing something that looked like bad prose arbitrarily made to look like poetry. No easy task, as it turned out. I made it a point not to look at other translations of "Winterreise" until I had completed a working translation of every poem because I didn't want to find myself cribbing from another translations, consciously or unconsciously. When I reached that point, I did consult about a half dozen translations. The one I liked the best is Richard Wigmore's, which appears in his book of Schubert song translations and is also used in the Hyperion Schubert Edition. Of course, my version does not correspond to his in every particular. What was most helpful in doing the translations was repeated listening to the songs themselves. Schubert knew what Müller was saying, and that was often of great assistance.

On the face of it, Wilhelm Müller's "Winterreise" poems don't appear to present an enormous challenge to the translator. The poems are generally simple and straightforward, quite naive and folksong-like, in fact. His vocabulary is fairly limited, his sentence structure is reasonably simple, and, as Fischer-Dieskau once observed somewhat dryly, the poems do not contain much in the way of serious intellectual content. However, it soon became clear to me that a translator can make a mess of a simple poem as easily as a complicated one, and awkwardness in a simple poem is even more glaringly evident than it would be in a poem that is more complex. Moreover, turning German into reasonably normal English while maintaining a line-by-line translation is an enormous problem. Things that still look quite normal in contemporary spoken or written German may look antiquated at best in contemporary English. At worst, they simply look bizarre. In addition, although Müller's vocabulary is limited, his use of words and images is very deliberate and

demands something equally deliberate and careful from the translator. If the reader of a song-text translation is to have the greatest opportunity to understand what the composer was responding to when he set the poem, the poet's text has to be rendered as faithfully as possible. With this in mind, I would like to mention a number of specific difficulties I encountered while making my translation.

DIE WETTERFAHNE: This poem is a killer, IMHO, and has done in many a translator in the past. The first major headache is the last line of the first stanza: "Sie pfiff den armen Flüchtling aus." The meaning is clear enough: "Auspfeifen" in this context means expressing disapproval by whistling or hissing. In the theatre, "jemanden auspfeifen" would mean to hiss or boo someone off the stage. Given that a literal translation would look like nonsense, the best solution would seem to be: "That it mocked the poor fugitive," which is what I used. However, that solution does not acknowledge the principal image that Müller creates in the first stanza of his poem. The wind turning the weathervane makes a sound that the wanderer interprets as mockery of his plight. That is what draws his attention to the weathervane in the first place, and he then elaborates on the weathervane as a symbol of inconstancy or fickleness in the following stanzas. (A similar image is invoked by Gottfried von Strassburg in his epic poem "Tristan und Isold," when, in the context of a trial by ordeal, he remarks that God is as fickle as a windblown sleeve.) The protagonist should have paid better attention to the symbol displayed so prominently on his erstwhile sweetheart's house. If he had, he would never have made the mistake of expecting to find a faithful woman living there. The other problem comes in the first two lines of the final stanza: "Der Wind spielt innen mit den Herzen/Wie auf dem Dach, nur nicht so laut." At least one translation I have seen had the inhabitants of the house up on the roof with the weathervane. I don't think that is what Müller had in mind. The image is actually clear enough. The people in the house change directions just as readily as the weathervane on the roof, but they are a bit more subtle about it. But there you are, faced with the same problem that cropped up in the first stanza: If you didn't give a literal translation of "auspfeifen" in the first stanza, he "nur nicht so laut" in the last one doesn't make much sense. So you either end up with yet another "interpretation" of the symbol or a reference to a noise that you didn't make the reader aware of in the beginning. A mess, no way to get around it.

ERSTARRUNG: The last stanza is very difficult to translate. The first line reads "Mein Herz ist wie erstorben"[dead] (instead of "erfroren" [frozen]) even though the sense of the

rest of the stanza rests on the images of freezing and thawing. My first impulse was to go with "frozen" in line one in defiance of what is actually written. Then I decided to interpret "kalt startt" in line 2 as "frozen," so that I could give a more accurate translation of line one. This may seem like much ado about nothing, but the original text of the stanza sets up a dichotomy that is very important. Even though being numb or frozen [with grief] may seem like a bad thing for the protagonist, giving up his grief [thawing] will signify the ultimate loss of the beloved. That is reflected in the image of the final stanza: My heart seems to be dead, the beloved's image is frozen within it. Should my heart ever thaw, my beloved's image will be lost forever. (The same image of freezing and thawing or ice and fire recurs in both "Wasserflut" and "Auf dem Flusse.")

DER GREISE KOPF: And what does "Der greise Kopf" mean? The adjective "greise" means "hoary [white with age], elderly, venerable." The text of the poem is very clear: The wanderer wakes up with snow on his head, making it look as if his hair has turned white and he has become an old man. Some translators use the title "The Hoary Head." Accurate? Surely. A bit silly sounding to a contemporary audience?. You bet. What was that again? The horny head? The whore-y head? The hairy head? Does anybody use the word hoary these days? I don't think so. (And not only that. For me personally, it has unpleasant associations with the "hairy hand," a case U.S. law students are baffled by in their first-year Contracts class.) My first idea was to use "The Gray Head" as the title, but snow is not gray (well, not in most places, anyway). Finally, I decided to use "The Old-Man's Head" (even though the word "greise" with a small "g" is an adjective and not the same as "Greise" with a capital "G", which is a word for an old man). However, now the translator is faced with the first two lines of the final stanza: "Vom Abendrot zum Morgenlicht/Ward mancher Kopf zum Greise." There "Greise" specifically means "old man," but what person in English would say "between sunset and dawn many a head becomes an old man"? So I translated it as "many a head turns white." It's like being in quicksand and sinking ever deeper with nothing in sight to hang onto. All I can say is that this is one instance in which I thought that sense had to prevail over literalness. Others may disagree...

TÄUSCHUNG: There are no enormous obstacles in this poem, but a couple of things are worth noting. The last two lines of stanza 2 can pose a bit of a problem. How to translate "Graus"? Fear, horror? Seems a bit strong to me. Why "Graus"? Well, it rhymes with "Haus." I went with "fear." I

don't like it, but what can you do? Then there is the final couplet. I confess that I took a bit of a liberty. "liebe Seele" means "dear" or "beloved" soul, not "loving," but I kind of wanted two syllables. You see, I had these two lines with the same meter and they rhymed, and, and ... "Nur Täuschung ist für mich Gewinn" means, literally, "only illusion benefits me," but "Only illusion lets me win" conveys the sense, and, and ... Well, you get the picture. I got carried away.

DIE NEBENSONNEN: Here again, the title poses some difficulties. It is often translated as "The Mock Suns" but I opted for "The False Suns" in order to stress both the hallucinatory character of the image and the falsity of the beloved. Nit-picking, I suppose, but it satisfied me better.

A final comment. In furtherance of the contrast between light and darkness that runs through the "Winterreise" cycle, Müller uses the word "hell" in a number of poems, and sometimes more than once in the same poem. Rarely does it receive the same translation twice. A versatile word!

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1. Gute Nacht

Fremd bin ich eingezogen,
Fremd zieh' ich wieder aus.
Der Mai war mir gewogen
Mit manchem Blumenstrauss.
Das Mädchen sprach von Liebe,
Die Mutter gar von Eh'—
Nun ist die Welt so trübe,
Der Weg gehüllt in Schnee.

Ich kann zu meiner Reisen
Nicht wählen mit der Zeit,
Muss selbst den Weg mir weisen
In dieser Dunkelheit.
Es zieht ein Mondenschatten
Als mein Gefährte mit,
Und auf den weissen Matten
Such' ich des Wildes Tritt.

Was soll ich länger weilen,
Dass man mich trieb hinaus?
Lass irre Hunde heulen
Vor ihres Herren Haus;
Die Liebe liebt das Wandern—
Gott hat sie so gemacht—
Von einem zu dem andern.
Fein Liebchen gute Nacht!

Will dich im Traum nicht stören,
Wär schad' um deine Ruh'.
Sollst meinen Tritt nicht hören—
Sacht, sacht die Türe zu!
Schreib im Vorübergehen
Ans Tor dir: Gute Nacht,
Damit du mögest sehen,
An dich hab' ich gedacht.

1. Good Night

I came here a stranger,
As a stranger I depart.
May favored me
With many a bunch of flowers.
The girl spoke of love,
Her mother even of marriage—
Now the world is so gloomy,
The road shrouded in snow.

I cannot choose the time
To begin my journey,
Must find my own way
In this darkness.
A shadow of the moon travels
With me as my companion,
And upon the white fields
I seek the deer's track.

Why should I stay here any longer
So that people can drive me away?
Let stray dogs howl
In front of their master's house;
Love loves to wander—
God made it that way—
From one to the other,
My dearest, good night!

I don't want to disturb your dreaming,
It would be a shame to wake you.
You won't hear my step,
Softly, softly the door closes!
I write in passing
On your gate: Good night,
So that you may see
That I thought of you.

2. Die Wetterfahne

Der Wind spielt mit der Wetterfahne
Auf meines schönen Liebchens Haus.
Da dacht' ich schon in meinem Wahne,
Sie pfiff den armen Flüchtling aus.

Er hätt' es eher bemerken sollen,
Des Hauses aufgestecktes Schild,
So hätt' er nimmer suchen wollen
Im Haus ein treues Frauenbild.

Der Wind spielt drinnen mit den Herzen
Wie auf dem Dach, nur nicht so laut.
Was fragen sie nach meinen Schmerzen?
Ihr Kind ist eine reiche Braut.

2. The Weathervane

The wind plays with the weathervane
On my lovely darling's house.
And I thought in my delusion,
That it mocked the poor fugitive.

He should have noticed sooner
The symbol displayed on the house,
So he wouldn't ever have expected
To find a faithful woman within.

The wind plays with the hearts inside
As it does on the roof, only not so loudly.
Why should they care about my grief?
Their child is a rich bride.

3. Gefrorene Tränen

Gefrorene Tropfen fallen
Von meinen Wangen ab:
Ob es mir denn entgangen,
Dass ich geweinet hab'?

Ei Tränen, meine Tränen,
Und seid ihr gar so lau,
Dass ihr erstarrt zu Eise
Wie kühler Morgentau?

Und dringt doch aus der Quelle
Der Brust so glühend heiss,
Als wolltet ihr zerschmelzen
Des ganzen Winters Eis!

3. Frozen Tears

Frozen drops are falling
Down from my cheeks.
How could I have not noticed
That I have been weeping?

Ah tears, my tears,
And are you so tepid
That you freeze to ice
Like cool morning dew?

Yet you burst from the wellspring
Of my heart so burning hot,
As if you wanted to melt
The entire winter's ice!

4. Erstarrung

Ich such' im Schnee vergebens
Nach ihrer Tritte Spur,
Wo sie an meinem Arme
Durchstrich die grüne Flur.

Ich will den Boden küssen,
Durchdringen Eis und Schnee
Mit meinen heissen Tränen,
Bis ich die Erde seh'.

Wo find' ich eine Blüte,
Wo find' ich grünes Gras?
Die Blumen sind erstorben,
Der Rasen sieht so blass.

Soll denn kein Angedenken
Ich nehmen mit von hier?
Wenn meine Schmerzen schweigen,
Wer sagt mir dann von ihr?

Mein Herz ist wie erstorben,
Kalt start ihr Bild darin;
Schmilzt je das Herz mir wieder,
Fliesst auch ihr Bild dahin!

4. Numbness

I search the snow in vain
For the trace of her steps.
Where she, arm in arm with me,
Crossed the green meadow.

I want to kiss the ground,
Penetrate ice and snow
With my hot tears,
Until I see the soil.

Where will I find a blossom,
Where will I find green grass?
The flowers are all dead,
The turf is so pale.

Shall then no momento
Accompany me from here?
When my pains cease,
Who will tell me of her then?

My heart is as if dead,
Her image frozen cold within;
If my heart ever thaws again,
Her image will also melt away!

5. Der Lindenbaum

Am Brunnen vor dem Tore
Da steht ein Lindenbaum;
Ich träumt' in seinem Schatten
So manchen süßen Traum.
Ich schnitt in seine Rinde
So manches liebe Wort;
Es zog in Freud' und Leide
Zu ihm mich immer fort.

Ich musst' auch heute wandern
Vorbei in tiefer Nacht,
Da hab' ich noch im Dunkeln
Die Augen zugemacht.
Und seine Zweige rauschten,
Als riefen sie mir zu:
Komm her zu mir, Geselle,
Hier find'st du deine Ruh'!

Die kalten Winde bliesen
Mir grad' ins Angesicht;
Der Hut flog mir vom Kopfe,
Ich wendete mich nicht.
Nun bin ich manche Stunde
Entfernt von jenem Ort,
Und immer hör' ich's rauschen:
Du fändest Ruhe dort!

5. The Linden Tree

At the well by the gate
There stands a linden tree;
I dreamed in its shadow
Many a sweet dream.
I carved in its bark
Many a word of love;
In joy and in sorrow
I was always drawn to it.

Again today I had to travel
Past it in the depths of night.
There even in the darkness
I closed my eyes.
And its branches rustled,
As if they called to me:
Come here to me, friend,
Here you'll find peace!

The cold winds blew
Right into my face;
The hat flew off my head,
I didn't turn around.
Now I am many hours
Distant from that place,
And I still hear it whispering:
You'd find peace here!

6. Wasserflut

Manche Trän' aus meinen Augen
Ist gefallen in den Schnee;
Seine kalten Flocken saugen
Durstig ein das heisse Weh.

Wenn die Gräser sprossen wollen
Weht daher ein lauer Wind,
Und das Eis zerspringt in Schollen
Und der weiche Schnee zerrinnt.

Schnee, du weisst von meinem Sehnen,
Sag', wohin doch geht dein Lauf?
Folge nach nur meinen Tränen,
Nimmt dich bald das Bächlein auf.

Wirst mit ihm die Stadt durchziehen,
Muntre Strassen ein und aus;
Fühlst du meine Tränen glühen,
Da ist meiner Liebsten Haus.

6. Flood Water

Many a tear from my eyes
Has fallen in the snow;
Its cold flakes absorb
Thirstily the burning woe.

When it's time for the grass to sprout
There blows a mild wind,
And the ice will break apart
And the soft snow melt away.

Snow, you know about my longing,
Tell me, where does your course lead?
If you just follow my tears,
The brook will soon receive you.

You will flow through the town with it,
In and out of the busy streets;
When you feel my tears burning,
There is my sweetheart's house.

7. Auf dem Flusse

Der du so lustig rauschtest,
Du heller, wilder Fluss,
Wie still bist du geworden,
Gibst keinen Scheidegruss.

Mit harter, starrer Rinde
Hast du dich überdeckt,
Liegst kalt und unbeweglich
Im Sande ausgestreckt.

In deine Decke grab' ich
Mit einem spitzen Stein
Den Namen meiner Liebsten
Und Stund' und Tag hinein:

Den Tag des ersten Grusses,
Den Tag, an dem ich ging;
Um Nam' und Zahlen windet
Sich ein zerbroch'ner Ring.

Mein Herz, in diesem Bache
Erkennst du nun dein Bild?
Ob's unter seiner Rinde
Wohl auch so reissend schwillt?

7. On the River

You who thundered so cheerfully,
You clear, untamed river,
How quiet you have become,
Give no word of farewell.

With a hard stiff crust
You have covered yourself,
Lie cold and unmoving,
Outstretched in the sand.

In your covering I inscribe
With a sharp stone
The name of my sweetheart
And the hour and day, as well.

The day of the first greeting,
The day on which I left;
Around name and figures winds
A broken ring.

My heart, in this stream
Do you now recognize your image?
And under its crust
Is there also a raging torrent?

8. Rückblick

Es brennt mir unter beiden Sohlen,
Tret' ich auch schon auf Eis und Schnee,
Ich möcht' nicht wieder Atem holen,
Bis ich nicht mehr die Türme seh'.

Hab' mich an jedem Stein gestossen,
So eilt' ich zu der Stadt hinaus;
Die Krähen warfen Bäll' und Schlossen
Auf meinen Hut von jedem Haus.

Wie anders hast du mich empfangen,
Du Stadt der Unbeständigkeit!
An deinen blanken Fenstern sangen
Die Lerch' und Nachtigall im Streit.

Die runden Lindenbäume blühten,
Die klaren Rinnen rauschten hell,
Und ach, zwei Mädchenaugen glühten.—
Da war's gescheh'n um dich, Gesell!

Kommt mir der Tag in die Gedanken,
Möcht' ich noch einmal rückwärts seh'n.
Möcht' ich zurücke wieder wanken,
Vor ihrem Hause stille steh'n.

8. A Look Backward

It burns under both my feet,
Even though I walk on ice and snow;
I don't want to catch my breath
Until I can no longer see the spires.

I tripped on every stone,
As I hurried out of the town;
The crows hurled chunks of snow and ice
On my hat from every house.

How differently you received me,
You town of inconstancy!
At your sparkling windows sang
The lark and nightingale in competition.

The bushy linden trees bloomed,
The clear streams murmured brightly,
And, oh, two maiden's eyes glowed—
Your fate was sealed, my boy!

Whenever that day enters my thoughts,
I want to look back once more,
I want to turn back again
And stand still before her house.

9. Irrlicht

In die tiefsten Felsengründe
Lockte mich ein Irrlicht hin;
Wie ich einen Ausgang finde,
Liegt nicht schwer mir in dem Sinn.

Bin gewohnt das Irregehen,
's führt ja jeder Weg zum Ziel;
Uns're Freuden, uns're Wehen,
Alles eines Irrlichts Spiel!

Durch des Bergstroms trockne Rinnen
Wind' ich ruhig mich hinab,
Jeder Strom wird's Meer gewinnen,
Jedes Leiden auch sein Grab.

9. Will o' the Wisp

Into the deepest mountain chasms
A will o' the wisp lured me;
How to find a way out
Doesn't worry me much.

I'm used to going astray,
And every way leads to the goal.
Our joys, our sorrows,
Are all a will o' the wisp's game!

Through the mountain stream's dry channel
I wend my way calmly downward.
Every river finds its way to the ocean,
And every sorrow to its grave.

10. Rast

Nun merk' ich erst wie müd' ich bin,
Da ich zur Ruh' mich lege;
Das Wandern hielt mich munter hin
Auf unwirtbarem Wege.
Die Füße frugen nicht nach Rast,
Es war zu kalt zum Stehen;
Der Rücken fühlte keine Last,
Der Sturm half fort mich wehen.

In eines Köhlers engem Haus
Hab' Obdach ich gefunden.
Doch meine Glieder ruh'n nicht aus:
So brennen ihre Wunden.
Auch du, mein Herz, in Kampf und Sturm
So wild und so verwegen,
Fühlst in der Still' erst deinen Wurm
Mit heissem Stich sich regen!

10. Rest

Now I first notice how tired I am
As I lay myself down to rest;
Walking kept me going strong
On the inhospitable road.
My feet didn't ask for rest,
It was too cold to stand still,
My back felt no burden,
The storm helped to blow me onward.

In a charcoal-burner's tiny house
I have found shelter;
But my limbs won't relax,
Their hurts burn so much.
You, too, my heart, in strife and storm
So wild and so bold,
Feel first in the silence your serpent
Stir with burning sting!

11. Frühlingstraum

Ich träumte von bunten Blumen,
So wie sie wohl blühen im Mai;
Ich träumte von grünen Wiesen,
Von lustigem Vogelgeschrei.

Und als die Hähne krächten,
Da ward mein Auge wach;
Da war es kalt und finster,
Es schrien die Raben vom Dach.

Doch an den Fensterscheiben,
Wer malte die Blätter da?
Ihr lacht wohl über den Träumer,
Der Blumen im Winter sah?

Ich träumte von Lieb um Liebe,
Von einer schönen Maid,
Von Herzen und von Küssen,
Von Wonne und Seligkeit.

Und als die Hähne krächten,
Da ward mein Herze wach;
Nun sitz' ich hier alleine
Und denke dem Traume nach.

Die Augen schliess' ich wieder,
Noch schlägt das Herz so warm.
Wann grünt ihr Blätter am Fenster?
Wann halt' ich mein Liebchen im Arm?

11. Dream of Spring

I dreamed of many-colored flowers,
The way they bloom in May;
I dreamed of green meadows,
Of merry bird calls.

And when the roosters crowed,
My eye awakened;
It was cold and dark,
The ravens shrieked on the roof.

But on the window panes—
Who painted the leaves there?
I suppose you'll laugh at the dreamer
Who saw flowers in winter?

I dreamed of love reciprocated,
Of a beautiful maiden,
Of embracing and kissing,
Of joy and delight.

And when the roosters crowed,
My heart awakened;
Now I sit here alone
And reflect on the dream.

I close my eyes again,
My heart still beats so warmly.
When will you leaves on the window turn gree?
When will I hold my love in my arms?

12. Einsamkeit

Wie eine trübe Wolke
Durch heit're Lüfte geht,
Wenn in der Tanne Wipfel
Ein mattes Lüftchen weht:

So zieh ich meine Strasse
Dahin mit tragem Fuss,
Durch helles, frohes Leben
Einsam und ohne Gruss.

Ach, dass die Luft so ruhig!
Ach, dass die Welt so licht!
Als noch die Stürme tobten,
War ich so elend nicht.

12. Solitude

As a dreary cloud
Moves through the clear sky,
When in the crown of the fir tree
A faint breeze blows,

So I travel my road
Onward with sluggish feet,
Through bright, happy life,
Lonely and unrecognized.

Oh, that the air should be so still!
Oh, that the world should be so light!
When the storms still raged,
I was not so miserable.

13. Die Post

Von der Strasse her ein Posthorn klingt.
Was hat es, dass es so hoch aufspringt,
Mein Herz?

Die Post bringt keinen Brief für dich.
Was drängst du denn so wunderbarlich,
Mein Herz?

Nun ja, die Post kommt aus der Stadt,
Wo ich ein liebes Liebchen hat,
Mein Herz!

Willst wohl einmal hinüberseh'n
Und fragen, wie es dort mag geh'n,
Mein Herz?

13. The Post

From the highroad a posthorn sounds.
Why do you leap so high,
My heart?

The post does not bring a letter for you,
Why the strange compulsion,
My heart?

Of course, the post comes from the town,
Where I once had a dear sweetheart,
My heart!

Would you like to take a look over there,
And ask how things are going,
My heart?

14. Der greise Kopf

Der Reif hatt' einen weissen Schein
Mir übers Haar gestreuet;
Da glaubt' ich schon ein Greis zu sein
Und hab' mich sehr gefreuet.

Doch bald ist er hinweggetaut,
Hab' wieder schwarze Haare,
Dass mir's vor meiner Jugend graut—
Wie weit noch bis zur Bahre!

Vom Abendrot zum Morgenlicht
Ward mancher Kopf zum Greise.
Wer glaubt's? und meiner ward es nicht
Auf dieser ganzen Reise!

14. The Old-Man's Head

The frost has spread a white sheen
All over my hair;
I thought I had become an old man
And was very pleased about it.

But soon it melted away,
And now I have black hair again
So that I am horrified by my youth—
How long still to the grave!

From the sunset to the dawn
Many a head turns white.
Who can believe it? And mine
Has not on this whole journey!

15. Die Krähe

Eine Krähe war mit mir
Aus der Stadt gezogen,
Ist bis heute für und für
Um mein Haupt geflogen.

Krähe, wunderliches Tier,
Willst mich nicht verlassen?
Meinst wohl, bald als Beute hier
Meinen Leib zu fassen?

Nun, es wird nicht weit mehr geh'n
An dem Wanderstabe.
Krähe, lass mich endlich seh'n
Treue bis zum Grabe!

15. The Crow

A crow has accompanied me
Since I left the town,
Until today, as ever,
It has circled over my head.

Crow, you strange creature,
Won't you ever leave me?
Do you plan soon as booty
To have my carcass?

Well, I won't be much longer
Wandering on the road.
Crow, let me finally see
Loyalty unto the grave!

16. Letzte Hoffnung

Hie und da ist an den Bäumen
Manches bunte Blatt zu seh'n,
Und ich bleibe vor den Bäumen
Oftmals in Gedanken steh'n.

Schaue nach dem einen Blatte,
Hänge meine Hoffnung dran;
Spielt der Wind mit meinem Blatte,
Zittr' ich, was ich zittern kann.

Ach, und fällt das Blatt zu Boden,
Fällt mit ihm die Hoffnung ab;
Fall' ich selber mit zu Boden,
Wein' auf meiner Hoffnung Grab.

16. Last Hope

Here and there on the trees
There's a colored leaf to be seen.
And I stop in front of the trees
Often, lost in thought.

I watch a particular leaf
And pin my hopes on it;
If the wind plays with my leaf
I tremble from head to foot.

Oh, and if the leaf falls to earth,
My hopes fall along with it.
I fall to earth as well
And weep on the grave of my hopes.

17. Im Dorfe

Es bellen die Hunde, es rasseln die Ketten;
Es schlafen die Menschen in ihren Betten,
Träumen sich manches, was sie nicht haben,
Tun sich im Guten und Argen erlaben;

Und morgen früh ist alles zerflossen.
Je nun, sie haben ihr Teil genossen
Und hoffen, was sie noch übrig liessen,
Doch wieder zu finden auf ihren Kissen.

Bellt mich nur fort, ihr wachen Hunde,
Lasst mich nicht ruh'n in der Schummerstunde!
Ich bin zu Ende mit allen Träumen.
Was will ich unter den Schläfern säumen?

17. In the Village

The dogs are barking, the chains are rattling;
The people are sleeping in their beds,
Dreaming of things they don't have,
Refreshing themselves in good and bad.

And in the morning all will have vanished.
Oh well, they had their share of pleasure
And hope that what they missed
Can be found again on their pillows.

Drive me out with your barking, you vigilant dogs,
Don't let me rest when it's time for slumber.
I am finished with all my dreams.
Why should I linger among the sleepers?

18. Der stürmische Morgen

Wie hat der Sturm zerrissen
Des Himmels graues Kleid!
Die Wolkenfetzen flattern
Umher im matten Streit.

Und rote Feuerflammen
Zieh'n zwischen ihnen hin;
Das nenn' ich einen Morgen
So recht nach meinem Sinn!

Mein Herz sieht an dem Himmel
Gemalt sein eig'nes Bild—
Es ist nichts als der Winter,
Der Winter kalt und wild!

18. The Stormy Morning

How the storm has torn asunder
The heavens' grey cover!
The cloud tatters flutter
Around in weary strife.

And fiery red flames
Dart around among them;
That's what I call a morning
That really fits my mood!

My heart sees in the heavens
Its own image painted—
It's nothing but the winter,
Winter cold and wild!

19. Täuschung

Ein Licht tanzt freundlich vor mir her,
Ich folg' ihm nach die Kreuz und Quer;
Ich folg' ihm gern und seh's ihm an,
Dass es verlockt den Wandersmann.

Ach! wer wie ich so elend ist,
Gibt gern sich hin der bunten List,
Die hinter Eis und Nacht und Graus,
Ihm weist ein helles, warmes Haus.

Und eine liebe Seele drin.—
Nur Täuschung ist für mich Gewinn!

19. Illusion

A light does a friendly dance before me,
I follow it here and there;
I like to follow it and watch
The way it lures the wanderer.

Ah, a man as wretched as I am
Is glad to fall for the merry trick
That, beyond ice and night and fear,
Shows him a bright, warm house.

And a loving soul within—
Only illusion lets me win!

20. Der Wegweiser

Was vermeid' ich denn die Wege,
Wo die ander'n Wand'rer geh'n,
Suche mir versteckte Stege,
Durch verschneite Felsenhöh'n?

Habe ja doch nichts begangen,
Dass ich Menschen sollte scheu'n,—
Welch ein törichtes Verlangen
Treibt mich in die Wüstenei'n?

Weiser stehen auf den Strassen,
Weisen auf die Städte zu.
Und ich wandre sonder Massen
Ohne Ruh' und suche Ruh'.

Einen Weiser seh' ich stehen
Unverrückt vor meinem Blick;
Eine Strasse muss ich gehen,
Die noch keiner ging zurück.

20. The Sign Post

Why then do I avoid the highways
Where the other travelers go,
Search out the hidden pathways
Through the snowy mountain tops?

I've committed no crime
That I should hide from other men—
What is the foolish compulsion
That drives me into desolation?

Signposts stand along the highways
Pointing to the cities,
And I wander ever further
Without rest and look for rest.

Before me I see a signpost standing
Fixed before my gaze.
I must travel a road
From which no one ever returned.

21. Das Wirtshaus

Auf einen Totenacker hat mich mein Weg gebracht;
Allhier will ich einkehren, hab ich bei mir gedacht.
Ihr grünen Totenkränze könnt wohl die Zeichen sein,
Die müde Wand'rer laden ins kühle Wirtshaus ein.

Sind denn in diesem Hause die Kammern all' besetzt?
Bin matt zum Niedersinken, bin tödlich schwer verletzt.
O unbarmherz'ge Schenke, doch weisest du mich ab?
Nun weiter denn, nur weiter, mein treuer Wanderstab!

21. The Inn

My way has led me to a graveyard;
Here I'll stop, I told myself.
You green mourning garlands must be the sign
That invites weary travelers into the cool inn.

What, all the rooms in this house are full?
I'm tired enough to drop, have taken mortal hurt.
Oh, merciless inn, you turn me away?
Well, onward then, still further, my loyal walking staff!

22. Mut

Fliegt der Schnee mir ins Gesicht,
Schüttl' ich ihn herunter.
Wenn mein Herz im Busen spricht,
Sing' ich hell und munter.

Höre nicht, was es mir sagt,
Habe keine Ohren;
Fühle nicht, was es mir klagt,
Klagen ist für Toren.

Lustig in die Welt hinein
Gegen Wind und Wetter!
Will kein Gott auf Erden sein,
Sind wir selber Götter!

22. Courage

If the snow flies in my face,
I shake it off again.
When my heart speaks in my breast,
I sing loudly and gaily.

I don't hear what it says to me,
I have no ears to listen;
I don't feel when it laments,
Complaining is for fools.

Happy through the world along
Facing wind and weather!
If there's no God upon the earth,
Then we ourselves are Gods!

23. Die Nebensonnen

Drei Sonnen sah ich am Himmel steh'n,
Hab' lang und fest sie angesehen;
Und sie auch standen da so stier,
Als wollten sie nicht weg von mir.

Ach, meine Sonnen seid ihr nicht!
Schaut ander'n doch ins Angesicht!
Ja, neulich hatt' ich auch wohl drei;
Nun sind hinab die besten zwei.

Ging nur die dritt' erst hinterdrein!
Im Dunkel wird mir wohler sein.

23. The False Suns

I saw three suns in the sky,
Stared at them hard for a long time;
And they stayed there so stubbornly
That it seemed they didn't want to leave me.

Ah, you are not my suns!
Go, look into someone else's face!
Yes, recently I, too, had three
But now the best two have gone down.

If only the third would also set!
I will feel better in the dark.

24. Der Leiermann

Drüben hinterm Dorfe steht ein Leiermann
Und mit starren Fingern dreht er was er kann.
Barfuss auf dem Eise wankt er hin und her
Und sein kleiner Teller bleibt ihm immer leer.

Keiner mag ihn hören, keiner sieht ihn an,
Und die Hunde knurren um den alten Mann.
Und er lässt es gehen alles, wie es will,
Dreht und seine Leier steht ihm nimmer still.

Wunderlicher Alter, soll ich mit dir geh'n?
Willst zu meinen Liedern deine Leier dreh'n?

24. The Hurdy-Gurdy Man

Over there beyond the village stands an organ-grinder,
And with numb fingers he plays as best he can.
Barefoot on the ice, he totters here and there,
And his little plate is always empty.

No one listens to him, no one notices him,
And the dogs growl around the old man.
And he just lets it happen, as it will,
Plays, and his hurdy-gurdy is never still.

Strange old man, shall I go with you?
Will you play your organ to my songs?