

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**TCLC 270**

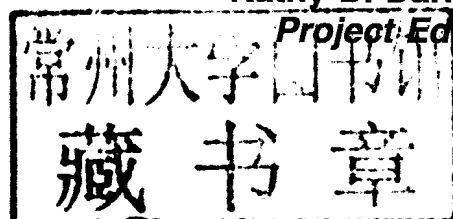
TOPICS VOLUME

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Commentary on Various Topics  
in Twentieth-Century Literature, including Literary  
and Critical Movements, Prominent Themes and  
Genres, Anniversary Celebrations, and Surveys  
of National Literatures**

**Kathy D. Darrow**

*Project Editor*



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# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Topics Volume



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# Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

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- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it originally appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
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## Indexes

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Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." In *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*, edited by Reginald M. Nischik, pp. 163-74. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2007. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 206, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 227-32. Detroit: Gale, 2008. The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009. Print); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

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# Modernist Lyric Poetry

The following entry presents critical discussion of modernist lyric poetry through 2011.

## INTRODUCTION

A lyric poem is traditionally understood as a relatively brief, rhymed verse expressed from the point of view of a single speaker, the poet, who addresses the reader directly. The lyric poet portrays his or her feelings and thoughts, sometimes recalling personal experience, and attempts to discover the meaning of those perceptions in hopes of revealing it to the reader as well. Modernist conceptions of the lyric are interpreted as a reaction against the flowering of the form as it developed in the works of the nineteenth-century Romantics. Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge are often associated with an intensely subjective "I" that turned its back on the social order to focus exclusively on personal emotion. Many poets of the early twentieth century rejected this ahistoricism, as well as the Romantic concentration on musicality, insisting instead on a poetry that looked outward to the world and displayed a greater complexity of thought.

The changed conception of poetry in the early twentieth century drew much of its ideology from the larger current of cultural modernism, which demanded that writers and artists come to terms with the social and economic changes wrought by industrialization and new technologies, especially as these advancements contributed to the chaos and destruction of World War I. The new modernist poetry, as T. S. Eliot described it in his influential essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), was to be "not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." Practitioners of lyric poetry in the modernist age almost universally defended the form as suited to intellectual inquiry into the ills of the times, but they responded in varying degrees to Eliot's directive. Some poets, such as Wallace Stevens and Hart Crane, chose to innovate upon the conventions of the Romantic lyric while others, such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, favored more radical experimentation. Themes of the modernist lyric are as diverse as the technique. For example, William Butler Yeats turned to ancient Irish sagas and pagan spiritualism to advance the cause of Irish nationalism; W. H. Auden attempted to use verse to discover a way to reconcile homosexuality with Christian belief; Hart Crane and Lorine Niedecker voiced strong objections to

the American capitalist ethos. A few, fairly well-defined schools of modernist poetry emerged. Writers linked with the Imagist movement championed free verse and everyday speech over ornate diction and prevailed upon poets to create exact, hard-edged images reminiscent of sculpture. The Objectivist school of the 1930s developed out of the tenets of Imagism but placed greater emphasis on using the objects of ordinary life as the subjects for poetry. For the most part, however, modernist poets ascribed to no established criteria. Poets widely differed in their proclivities for addressing their own private dilemmas; in their methods of addressing philosophical, social, and political issues; and in their attention to matters of rhythm, sound, and language.

Beginning in the 1930s, the lyric poem became the favored genre of scholars associated with the school of New Criticism. New Critics, focusing on form and structure, regard any work of art as an object whose meaning exists apart from biographical or temporal context. Thus, despite the efforts of modernist lyric poets to detach their writings from the legacy of nineteenth-century Romanticism, the lyric poem once again became identified with ahistoricism and escapism. In the decade of the 1990s, critic Mark Jeffreys (see Further Reading) wrote at length about the damage done to the reputation of modernist lyric poetry by virtue of the New Critics' adoption of it. Jeffreys noted that ambiguities in the definition of lyric poetry had resulted in a default conception of the genre as its Romantic embodiment, a conception given weight by the New Critics and perpetuated by subsequent generations of critics. For example, Jeffreys observed that "deconstructionists . . . have explicitly connected lyric to the imperial assertion of self, the programmatic exclusion of otherness or difference, and the logocentric quest for presence, connections that depend on a late-Romantic conception of lyric and lyric subjectivity." In a 2011 essay devoted to the poetry of Wallace Stevens, Rachel Cole portrayed the devaluation of lyric poetry in much the same terms, making reference to Jeffreys. Cole remarked, "In the last decades of the twentieth century, just as literary studies began to reconsider its relation to ethical inquiry, the lyric attracted considerable critical hostility, in large part because of its association with closure. Defining the lyric on New Criticism's terms, with reference to a single speaker ensconced in hermetically composed space, some post-structuralist critics judged it guilty of a 'programmatic exclusion of otherness of difference.'"

Attempts have been made to disassociate the modernist lyric from the claims made for it by the New Critics.

The commentary of Theodor Adorno was especially important to reclaiming the idea of the lyric's commitment to social and political reform. In a 1957 radio broadcast entitled "Lyric Poetry and Society," Adorno depicted the modernist lyric as a product of industrial capitalism that was at once a rejection of society and yet inextricably linked to society through the universal medium of language. Critic Howard Caygill quotes from a translation of the broadcast: "The lyric spirit's idiosyncratic opposition to the superior power of material things is a form of reaction to the reification of the world, to the domination of human beings by commodities that has developed since the beginning of the modern era, since the industrial revolution became the dominant force in life. . . . Through its configurations it [language] assimilates itself completely into subjective impulses. . . . But at the same time language remains the medium of concepts, remains that which establishes an inescapable relationship to the universal and to society." Though only isolated and scattered at first, efforts to extract new meaning from modernist lyric poetry have gained increasing currency, offering a response to the challenge of Jeffreys: "Under what compulsion must anyone continue to believe that short, expressive lyric poetry need turn from social realities at all or even that, of all the genres, lyric is peculiarly prone to such evasions?" Jeffreys has been joined by other critics in insisting upon the openness of the modernist lyric to multiple interpretations. Modernist lyric poetry has been reevaluated from a variety of perspectives—feminist, queer, psychoanalytic, semiotic, reader-response. In a 2006 critical study devoted to the lyric "I" entitled *Lyric Poetry: The Pain and Pleasure of Words*, Mutlu Konuk Blasing (see Further Reading) returned to Adorno's idea that lyric poetry is a very public discourse formed by the relationship between the speaking subject and the communal history of language. Blasing writes, "While the sorrows of the bourgeois 'individual' may be a historically specific resonance of the lyric subject's discourse of alienation, the alienation in poetic language is not specific to lyrics of bourgeois subjectivity: it is the enabling condition of subjectivity in language. The concept and status of an a priori 'individual' are always already in question in a language that foregrounds the rules of the linguistic and formal codes; a subject is historically formulated in language precisely by subjection to a preexisting system that at once socializes and individuates it. . . ."

---

## REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

W. H. Auden  
*Poems* 1930  
*Another Time* 1940  
*Some Poems* 1940

*Collected Poems* 1991

Hart Crane

*White Buildings* 1926

*The Bridge* 1930

*Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose* (poetry, letters, and essays) 1966

*O My Land, My Friends: Selected Letters* (letters) 1997

T. S. Eliot

*\*The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (essays) 1920

*The Waste Land* 1922

Lorine Niedecker

*My Life by Water: Collected Poems 1936-1968*

*Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works* (poetry, plays, and prose) 2002

Ezra Pound

*The Cantos* 1948

*The Pisan Cantos* 1948

*Selected Poems 1908-1959* 1975

*Ezra Pound: Poems and Translations* (poetry and prose) 2003

Wallace Stevens

*Notes toward a Supreme Fiction* 1942

*On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens's Longer Poems* 1969

*The Palm at the End of the Mind* (poetry and drama) 1971

Robert Penn Warren

*Thirty-Six Poems* 1935

*Selected Poems 1923-1943* 1944

*Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren* 1998

William Carlos Williams

*Sour Grapes* 1921

*Spring and All* 1923

William Butler Yeats

*Later Poems* 1922

*The Tower* 1928

*New Poems* 1938

\*This collection includes the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

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## OVERVIEWS

Howard Caygill (essay date 2006)

SOURCE: Caygill, Howard. "Lyric Poetry before Auschwitz." In *Adorno and Literature*, edited by David Cunningham and Nigel Mapp, pp. 69-83. London: Continuum, 2006.

[In the following essay, Caygill examines Theodor Adorno's philosophical commentary on the history of modern lyric poetry and its intimate connection to society.]

The World of this Spirit breaks into two. The first is the world of reality or of its self-alienation; but the other is that which Spirit, rising above the first, constructs for itself in the aether of pure consciousness. This second world, standing in antithesis to that alienation, is for that very reason not free from it; on the contrary, it is really only the other form of that alienation which consists precisely in being conscious of two different worlds, and which embraces both.

Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Adorno's 1951 proposition—'After Auschwitz to write a poem is barbaric'—provoked much contention and debate.<sup>1</sup> In spite of its forthrightness the phrase was ambiguous: it remained unclear whether it was a judgement of poetry written after Auschwitz, a *Darstellungs-verbot* on poems about Auschwitz, or a condemnation addressed to post-war art and culture in general. In his frequent returns to his dictum Adorno made more precise the nature of his claim and its implications. From these it becomes possible to recognize two important implications of the proposition. The first, implied in the idea that Auschwitz marks an 'end' to lyric poetry, is that lyric poetry has a specific history, and that this history could not be continued after the Shoah. At the same time, the horrific circumstances of the end of the history of lyric poetry underline the further implication that the history of the genre is inseparable from specific social and political conditions of possibility. In order to understand why writing a poem is barbaric after Auschwitz it is thus necessary to look at Adorno's view of the history of lyric poetry before Auschwitz and why he held it impossible for this history to continue after this event.

Adorno's formulations of the proposition linking Auschwitz with the end of lyric poetry shifted emphasis significantly between 1951 and 1968. The full first statement in 'Cultural Criticism and Society', written in 1949 and published in 1951, reads: 'Cultural criticism finds itself before the last stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism: after Auschwitz to write a poem [*Gedicht*] is barbaric [*ist barbarisch*], and that erodes also the knowledge that declares why it has become impossible today to write poems [*Gedichte*]' (*P* [*Prisms*]: 34 [trans. mod.]).<sup>2</sup> Cultural criticism at the last stage of the 'dialectic of culture and barbarism' finds itself—consistent with the last stages of the Hegelian logic of essence—in a predicament where the poles of the dialectic fall apart *and* identify with each other. Culture tries to detach itself from barbarism but finds itself falling into identification with it. Adorno situates the act of writing a poem after Auschwitz within this predicament, claiming that the same dialectic affects the knowledge of why it is impossible 'today' ('after' Auschwitz) to write poems. The knowledge that 'the conditions of possibility for writing poetry' no longer exist is itself part of the same movement of culture taking distance from but finding itself complicit with barbarism.

Reading the original statement as a reflexive dialectical proposition severely qualifies, then, the view that Adorno proposed a ban on writing poetry after or about Auschwitz. He carefully explains this in a reflection upon his proposition in the 1962 essay 'Commitment': 'I do not want to soften my proposition [*Satz*] that still to write lyric poetry [*Lyrik*] after Auschwitz would be barbaric [*sei barbarisch*]; it expresses negatively the impulse that animates committed literature' (*NL2*: [*Notes to Literature, Volume Two*] 87). While the move from the indicative, 'is barbaric', of 1951, to the subjunctive, 'would be barbaric', of 1962, does performatively soften the proposition, Adorno is careful to show the mutual implication of the positive and negative aspects of the dialectic. He carefully restricts his judgement to the positive and negative *attitudes* toward the predicament of writing, not the predicament itself: 'It is the situation of literature [*Dichtung*] itself and not simply one's relation to it that is paradoxical' (*NL2*: 88). The dialectic is objective to writing; it is part of the predicament of writing that its flight from barbarism paradoxically confirms it. Adorno's strongest example of this paradox/aporia is Schönberg's *Survivor from Warsaw*, in which, for him, the 'victims are turned into works of art, tossed out to be gobbled up by the world that did them in' (*NL2*: 88).

Adorno's position in *Negative Dialectics* may seem at first sight to have softened even further: 'Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream: hence it may be wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems. But it is not wrong to raise the less cultural question whether after Auschwitz you can go on living' (*ND* [*Negative Dialectics*]: 362-3). Yet on closer inspection this apparent concession sharpens the original formulation, linking it to the harsh judgement of *Survivor from Warsaw*; it is barbaric to be concerned about art when the issue is survival. It is also notable that Adorno's seeming admission of error or exaggeration is only directed to the first part of his original formulation. The second part of the dialectical predicament of writing after Auschwitz—expressed modally as its impossibility—is silently confirmed, and carried over into the reformulation of the categorical imperative: unfree humanity must 'arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen' (*ND*: 365). The predicament of poetry is not exempt from this imperative—it cannot excuse itself from the responsibility to ensure that the conditions of the possibility of Auschwitz never recur. But if these conditions of possibility are also those of its own existence, then respecting the imperative requires that lyric poetry, as it has been known, must cease to exist.

Adorno emphasizes this point in one of his 1967 formulations—the essay 'Art and the Arts'—where he describes his proposition as one concerning 'the impossi-



bility of poetry after Auschwitz' (AA ['Art and the Arts']: 387; GS [*Gesammelte Schriften*] 10.1: 452). The reference to Kant—according to whom the 'conditions of possibility of experience' are also the conditions of the possibility of objects of experience—can be interpreted ontologically or ethically. According to the first interpretation the conditions of possibility of lyric poetry no longer exist; according to the second they *should* no longer exist, at least according to Adorno's reformulation of the categorical imperative. Yet it is precisely between these two positions that the proposition about poetry orients itself as a Hegelian determination of reflection. According to Adorno, works of art are by definition objects that exist in breach of their conditions of possibility—their peculiar condition of possibility is that they exceed their conditions of possibility. The impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz is its condition of possibility; yet it must establish a form of existence that affirms this impossibility, otherwise art will affirm the very conditions of possibility of a repetition of Auschwitz, transgressing the categorical imperative.

In these later reflections on the 1951 dictum the understanding of the history of lyric poetry in relation to its conditions of possibility becomes the centre of attention. In another 1967 formulation, 'Is Art Cheerful?', Adorno returned to the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz in the context of cheerful art, observing: 'Further, such impossibility was sensed almost a century before the European catastrophe in great poetry, above all in Baudelaire, then also by Nietzsche and in the George school's renunciation of humour' (NL2: 251; GS 11: 604). The view intimated here, that the impossibility of lyric poetry indeed constituted its modern history and was confirmed by Auschwitz, is filled out in a paralipomenon to *Aesthetic Theory* where Celan is discussed in the context of Valéry, Mallarmé and Baudelaire. Unfortunately Adorno did not complete a planned Celan essay, yet even the few elliptical comments in *Aesthetic Theory* show that he situated this poet writing actual but impossible poems after Auschwitz within a history of modern lyric poetry. The oblique references to this history in the last writings remain shorthand and cryptic, but the history to which they allude may be reconstructed from a series of Adorno's writings on modern poetry before Auschwitz, over all of which falls the shadow of the 'European catastrophe'.

An important testimony to Adorno's history of modern lyric poetry is the 1957 radio broadcast 'On Lyric Poetry and Society'. After an opening statement of complicity with the distaste of an imagined audience at the prospect of a sociology of modern poetry, Adorno presents a number of thoughts on the ways in which lyric poetry might be related to its social conditions of possibility. These largely revolve around the thought that lyric poetry is an individual form of expression directed against society, a thought which Adorno—consistent

with his Hegelian scepticism concerning abstract revolt—insists is itself social. The separation of the lyrical 'I' from society is implicated in what it refuses:

The lyric spirit's idiosyncratic opposition to the superior power of material things is a form of reaction to the reification of the world, to the domination of human beings by commodities that has developed since the beginning of the modern era, since the industrial revolution became the dominant force in life.

(NLI [*Notes to Literature, Volume One*]: 40 [trans. mod.])

The individuality of the lyrical 'I' and the desire for a pure language are themselves socially mediated, but in a way, Adorno quickly concedes, that may appear to some to have wholly 'sublimated' the relation of lyric poetry and society out of a fear of 'crude sociology' (NLI: 42).

Adorno responds to the charge of excessive subtlety by approaching again the question of the relation of lyric poetry and society, this time through the double-aspect of language:

Through its configurations it [language] assimilates itself completely into subjective impulses; one would almost think it had produced them. But at the same time language remains the medium of concepts, remains that which establishes an inescapable relationship to the universal and to society.

(NLI: 43)

Adorno situates lyric poetry between the two aspects of language, or more precisely through the impossibility of their becoming identified with each other. After some thinly disguised critical comments on Heidegger's 'ontological language theory',<sup>3</sup> Adorno ventures a considered statement of the character of the relation between lyric poetry and society. He prepares for it by restating the incommensurability of the two aspects of language in the sociological terms of individual and society: 'It is not only that the individual is inherently socially mediated, not only that its contents are always social as well. Conversely, society is formed and continues to live on only by virtue of the individuals whose quintessence it is' (NLI: 44). The individual and the collective, as well as the individual and collective aspects of language, mutually determine each other without becoming fully identified—they are, in short, Hegelian concepts of reflection. Adorno makes more precise this reference to Hegel as he moves from the sociological terminology of individual and society into the philosophical one of subject and object:

Classical philosophy once formulated a truth now disdained by scientific logic: subject and object are not rigid and isolated poles but can be defined only in the process in which they distinguish themselves from one another and change. The lyric is the aesthetic test of that dialectical philosophical proposition.

(NLI: 44)

In Hegel's *Logic* apparent oppositions such as subject and object are resolved into a process of mutual reflection and determination. Adorno situates lyric poetry on the crux of this movement which is also that of individual and society and, more proximally, that of expressive and communicative language. Lyric poetry is thus situated between the poles of subject and object, becoming cast as a medium of reflection.<sup>4</sup> It is a medium, however, that is subject to fluctuation according to the balance of power between the two poles.

Adorno's locating of lyric poetry in this way amounts to a deduction of its conditions of possibility. Lyric poetry is possible because of the process of mutual reflection between subject and object, individual and collective, expressive and communicative language. This allows him to embark on a historical typology of lyric poetry according to the various calibrations possible within the general conditions of possibility. At either extreme is the abolition of the conditions of possibility represented by complete identification, of the individual with the social or the social with the individual. One reading of the Auschwitz dictum, for example, might regard the conditions of possibility of lyric poetry as having been abolished by the total identification of the individual with the collective in administered society. In the context of his analyses of lyric poetry Adorno rarely concedes this condition, although intimations of its possibility are an important factor in his interpretation of many of the formal choices adopted by modern lyric poetry. The complex calibrations of individual and collective that he finds in modern poetry are ultimately governed by a predicament of loneliness and loss of self in the collective.

Adorno's historical discussion of the developments of lyric poetry carefully avoids a unilateral developmental narrative. This is possible due to the flexibility offered by the 'conditions of possibility' form of argumentation, which concerns precisely conditions of *possibility* not *actuality*. The number of possibilities of actualization depends on the various calibrations of the conditions, some of which may crystallize into diverse poetic traditions which will intersect and mutually determine each other. In the essay on lyric poetry an exemplary point of such intersection, whose identification and description is indebted to Benjamin, is found in the poetry of Baudelaire. Following Benjamin, Adorno identifies in Baudelaire an esoteric response to the pressure of the collective on the individual, one that separates lyrical from communicative language, purifying the former and removing it from living speech. Baudelaire's use of stylized language is in this view held to have opened a path towards hermetic poetry and the work of Mallarmé. Adorno's judgement of this strain of lyric poetry is forthright: 'The elevated, poeticizing, subjectively violent moment in weak later lyric poetry is the price it has to pay for its attempt to keep itself undisfigured,

immaculate, objective; its false glitter is the complement to the disenchanted world from which it extricates itself' (*NLI*: 44-5). According to this judgement, the non-communicative language of hermetic poetry is but the complement of a reified world; however, another judgement is also possible—to regard the construction of a non-communicative language on the basis of subjectivity as the construction of a utopia, a position that Adorno approaches in his final work, *Aesthetic Theory*.

One of the reasons for Adorno's harsh judgement of hermetic poetry is his attempt in the 1957 essay to construct another history of modern lyric poetry. If the refusal of communicative language characteristic of hermetic poetry emerges from a fear of the collective, another tradition is to recognize and give shape to its claims. This tradition, identified by Adorno in Romantic poetry, recognizes that a 'collective undercurrent provides the foundation for all individual lyric poetry', and that this current gives substance to the lyric subject, a development that 'makes language the medium in which the subject becomes more than a mere subject' (*NLI*: 45). This evocation of the collective may take various forms—the 'transfusion of the collective in the individual' represented by Romantic poets' use of folk song, Baudelaire's evocation of the masses, or the evocation of 'humanity'. Common to them all is the thought that lyric poetry acts as a medium between individual and collective, registering possible (and impossible) negotiations of this predicament.

It is after these reflections that Adorno moves, in 'On Lyric Poetry and Society', to a closer analysis of two individual poems, which in the original broadcast he read out. Adorno's reading of the first by Eduard Mörike (1804-75), 'Auf einer Wanderung' ['On a Walking Tour'], begins by noting its image of the promise of happiness that, Adorno confided to his audience, can still befall visitors to small south German towns: '*In ein freundliches Städtchen tret' ich ein / In den Strassen liegt roter Abendschein*' ['I enter a friendly little town / On the streets lies the red evening light'] (cited 47). But it is precisely an image of a *promise* of happiness, not actual happiness, that is at issue.

Mörike's lyric negotiates at many levels the opposition between the near and the far: 'The poem gives the feeling of warmth and security in a confined space, yet at the same time it is a work in the elevated style, not disfigured by *Gemütlichkeit* and cosiness' (48). The simple language and the narrative, Adorno continues, 'artificially bring together [*kunstvoll in Ein zu setzen*]' the 'utopias of the most near and the most far' (48 [trans. mod.]). This logical impossibility is achieved by means of eliding subjective and objective registers—the subjectivity of the traveller entering the town and his 'strength of feeling' as he listens to a voice from 'an open window', a retrospective of the town situated be-

tween the heavens and the rushing brook. The image of the promise of happiness is a utopia; it is not a description, but describes an impossible condition of inhabiting the near in the far and the far in the near.

From the analysis of the image of the poem, Adorno moves to consider its language and rhythm, in which he identifies an 'antique element'. The language itself is aligned with the image of happiness, being both modern and near, but also containing elements from afar. The rhythmic pattern of, for example, '*wie von weit her*', of ancient Greek strophes, and the slightly archaic use of word inversions, distance the poem at the same time as its modern lexicon and syntax bring it close to the reader. A similar effect attends the apostrophe to the muse in the penultimate line—'*O Muse, du hast mein Herz berührt*' ['Oh Muse, you have touched my heart']—which renders anew the overused word 'muse' by placing it at the end, as if in the light of the setting sun. From this Adorno makes the critical judgement that 'the lyric succeeds in doing what the German epic attempted in vain, even in such projects as Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*' (48). After this definitively favourable judgement Adorno proceeds to examine the 'social significance' of such a poetic success. He shows that the poem achieves a result that was largely impossible given the social conditions of the possibility of poetry under which Mörike was writing. He first situates the poem within the context of the German classical tradition which had attempted, 'in the name of humanity', to 'release subjective impulses from the contingency that threatens them in a society where relationships between human beings are no longer direct but instead mediated solely by the market' (49). For Adorno this represented in poetry what Hegel attempted in philosophy, namely, the overcoming in the name of Spirit or the Idea of the contradictions of real life, a reconciliation in the 'high style' which was quickly revealed as hollow. The devaluation of the classical ideal in the face of the market provoked its retreat into the private sphere 'and its images':

The social force of Mörike's genius, however, consists in the fact that he combined the two experiences—that of the classicistic elevated style and that of the romantic private miniature—and that in doing so he recognized the limits of both possibilities and balanced them against one another with incomparable tact.

(NLI: 49)

For Adorno such an approach towards achieving the impossible poem accounts for many of the misrecognitions of Mörike's work by contemporaries and posterity. Praising his 'tact', Adorno describes how Mörike is 'aware of the empty and ideological aspects of elevated style as of the mediocrity, petit-bourgeois dullness, and obliviousness to totality of the Biedermeier period, in which the greater part of his lyric work falls' (49-50).

The poem acts as the medium for a fugitive synthesis of Weimar humanism and Biedermeier reality already revealed as historically impossible. Adorno's own imagistic description of this predicament enhances its precarious and precious character. As if on a narrow ridge, precarious and distant, looking down, what remains of the 'high style', namely a 'surviving memory', 'fades away'—'*Verhallend*', as in the fading away of a sound with the wind.<sup>5</sup> At the same time the signs of 'immediate life' also fade; the fading sounds of both are as if brought together by a stray wind, greeting the wandering poet only in their disappearance. Adorno's combination of metaphors of fading sound and vision is by no means coincidental, for the image of happiness that he is evoking is both aural and visual, combining evocation of memory through aural distance with visual presence. This crossing over of image and sound points to an important aspect of his analysis—lyric poetry is literally a meeting point of sound and image. The aural, indeed musical aspect of lyric poetry is emphasized by the extent to which the existence of musical setting for poetry underlined his choice and his mode of poetic analysis.

The predicament evoked in the reading of '*Auf einer Wanderung*' is described as already sharing in the paradoxes of lyric poetry in the emerging industrial epoch. Mörike's 'trembling and fragile' solutions are exemplary of those of subsequent lyrical poetry, and Adorno makes an explicit connection with Baudelaire by citing Claudel's description of his style as a mixture of Racine and contemporary journalism.<sup>6</sup> In industrial society, the lyrical idea, when confronted by opposing reality, when not dedicating itself to memories of a romantic past, becomes 'more and more something that flashes out abruptly, something in which what is possible transcends its own impossibility' (50).

Before continuing with Adorno's comments on Stefan George's '*Im Windesweben*' ['In the Winds-Weaving'] on which he ends the broadcast, it is necessary to digress into the relationship between the 'romantic' and the 'modern' solutions to the impossible predicament of modern lyric poetry. Adorno situates George's poem in a later stage of the development from lyric poetry's distancing itself by means of aural memory from the present and later lyric poetry's surmounting impossibility by means of flashes of light. Another stage of this development, discussed in another radio broadcast of the same year, was represented by the poetry of Eichendorff (1788-1857). The link between lyric poetry and music discernible in the echoes of Hugo Wolf's Mörike settings for voice and piano (1889) in the reading of '*Auf der Wanderung*' is explicitly acknowledged in 'In Memory of Eichendorff' with its coda on Schumann's *Liederkreis*. As in the reading of Mörike, Eichendorff's poetry is located as an intimation of Baudelaire. Citing *Les Fleurs du mal*, Adorno comments that 'Eichen-