

Romance and Reverie: An Anthology of German Poetry

Tia Caswell
University of Nottingham

Introduction

This anthology of German poetry translations offers a new poetry corpus featuring the works of Joseph von Eichendorff, Edouard Mörike, Heinrich Heine, Rosa Maria Assing and Louise Brachmann. Mörike and Heine are two widely published poets in both the literary and musical world. Influential figures, Mörike's and Eichendorff's lyrical poems reflect themes of unrequited love, nature and intense emotion: typical themes associated with the Romantic era. Similarly, although less well-known, Brachmann's and Assing's poems allude to themes of love and nature. Unrequited love is to a certain extent idealised and presented as a natural process by both Brachmann and Assing; this is particularly the case in Assing's "Wunsch" ("Wish").

Heine, though stylistically very different, is interesting to consider in relation to Brachmann, Assing, Mörike and Eichendorff. Heine did not belong to the movement of High Romantic poets. He was a socially

critical writer of both prose and poetry; some of his poetry is political in intent as well as ironic or even sarcastic in tone. Heine's sarcastic tone is evident in the poem "Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen" ("A Young Man Loves a Maiden"). The song-like rhyme of the poem appears to downplay or diminish the emotion associated with unrequited love. Heine's approach to themes of nature and love contrasts starkly with the styles and approaches of Mörike, Eichendorff, Brachmann and Assing. As such, I have decided to present the approaches of Mörike, Eichendorff, Brachmann and Assing in one anthology with the skopos of presenting three different approaches to the theme of unrequited love: the romantic, the idealised and the sarcastic or ironic.

Translation, as a practice, should be defined as both an art and a science. From a scientific perspective, a successful translation should convey the original meaning, tone and approach according to the original author's intentions. It is a given, therefore, that a translation must also remain grammatically correct and concise. From an artistic perspective, on the other hand, translation practice does not only require the literal translation of a prose but also the re-creation of an image, a message and to a certain extent, an emotion. The notion that the role of the translator should encompass more than the literal translation of words on a page has been highlighted in Pound's theory:

Pound's 'theory' was based upon a concept of energy in language; the words on the page, the specific details, were seen not simply as black and white typed marks on a page representing something else, but as sculptured images -words engraved in stone (Gentzler, 19).

Pound's theory suggests that words are not simply marks on a page, but that words encompass a certain degree of power and energy. It is the skopos of the translator to ensure that the energy is translated as well as the words on the page. By energy, Skopos may have been referencing the emotions and experiences of the original author. Although the scientific aspect of a translation is important in that the result should be grammatically correct and coherent, the translator should ensure that the "sculptured images" are translated too. These "sculptured images" or the "stone" which the words are metaphorically

engraved in, could reflect the cultural ties and values of the original author. As translator of this new anthology of German poetry, it was therefore highly important that I sought to not only translate but to replicate the original poetic image and emotion.

Source Text (ST)

"Lied: In einem kühlen Grunde" by Joseph von Eichendorff

In einem kühlen Grunde,
Da geht ein Mühlenrad,
Mein' Liebste ist verschwunden,
Die dort gewohnen hat.

Sie hat mir Treu versprochen,
Gab mir ein'n Ring dabei,
Sie hat die Treu gebrochen,
Mein Ringlein sprang entzwei.

Ich möcht' als Spielmann reisen
Weit in die Welt hinaus,
Und singen meine Weisen
Und gehn von Haus zu Haus.

Ich möcht' als Reiter fliegen
Wohl in die blut'ge Schlacht,
Um stille Feuer liegen
Im Feld bei dunkler Nacht,

Hör ich das Mühlrad gehen,
Ich weiß nicht, was ich will,
Ich möcht' am liebsten sterben,
Da wär's auf einmal still.

Translated Text (TT)

"In a cool valley" by Joseph von Eichendorff

In a cool valley,
A mill wheel turns,
Gone, is my darling,
Who once lived there.

She promised to be faithful,
As a token, gave me a ring,
She broke her promise,
And my ring cracked in two.

I'd like to travel as a minstrel
Into the wide world out there,
And sing my melodies
As I roam from door to door.

I'd like to fly like a horseman
Into the bloody battle,
Lie down near the calm fires
In the field in the dark of night.

I hear the mill wheel turning,
My desires I know not,
I'd like most of all to die,
Everything would suddenly stop.

Source Text (ST)

"Mondnacht" by Joseph von Eichendorff

Es war, als hätt' der Himmel
Die Erde still geküßt,
Daß sie im Blüten – Schimmer
Von ihm nun träumen müßt'.

Die Luft ging durch die Felder,
Die Ähren wogten sacht,
Es rauschten leis die Wälder,
So sternklar war die Nacht.

Und meine Seele spannte
Weit ihre Flügel aus,
Flog durch die stillen Lände,
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

Translated Text (TT)

"Moonlit Night" by Joseph von Eichendorff

It was as though Heaven
Had kissed the Earth softly,
In her gleam of blossoms,
She would only dream of him.

The breeze spread through the fields,
The ears of corn gently swayed,
The woods rustled softly,
The night was clear with stars.

And my soul spread
her wings out wide,
Soared across the silent land,
as though she was flying home.

Source Text (ST)

"Verschwiegene Liebe" by Joseph von Eichendorff

Über Wipfel und Saaten

In den Glanz hinein -

Wer mag sie erraten,

Wer holte sie ein?

Gedanken sich wiegen,

Die Nacht ist verschwiegen,

Gedanken sind frei.

Errät' es nur eine,

Wer an sie gedacht

Beim Rauschen der Haine,

Wenn niemand mehr wacht

Als die Wolken, die fliegen -

Mein Lieb ist verschwiegen

Und schön wie die Nacht.

Translated Text (TT)

"Silent Love" by Joseph Von Eichendorf

Over treetops and cornfields

In the glimmer of light

Who may seek them?

Who will catch up with them?

Thoughts sway,

The night is silent,

Thoughts are free.

If only she could guess,

Who was thinking of her

Amongst the whispers of the groves,

When no one else is awake

As the clouds, O they fly-

My love is silent

And beautiful like the night.

Source Text (ST)

"Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen" by Heinrich Heine

Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen

Geh' ich im Garten herum.

Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen,

Ich aber wandle stumm.

Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen,

Und schau'n mitleidig mich an:

„Sei unsrer Schwester nicht böse,

Du trauriger, blasser Mann.“

Translated Text (TT)

"One bright Summer's morning" by Heinrich Heine

One bright summer's morning

I walk around the garden.

The flowers whisper and talk.

Though, I walk without a sound.

The flowers whisper and talk,

And look at me with great sympathy:

"Do not be angry with our sister,

You sad, pale man."

Source Text (ST)

"Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen" by Heinrich Heine

Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen,
Die hat einen andern erwählt;
Der andre liebt eine andre,
und hat sich mit dieser vermählt.

Das Mädchen heiratet aus Ärger
Den ersten besten Mann,
Der ihr in den Weg gelaufen;
Der Jüngling ist übel dran.

Es ist eine alte Geschichte,
Doch bleibt sie immer neu;
Und wem sie just passiert,
Dem bricht das Herz entzwei.

Translated Text (TT)

"A young man loves a maiden" by Heinrich Heine

A young man loves a maiden,
who chose instead, another;
The other loves another yet,
and wed instead the other.

In anger the maiden wed
The first suitor, second best,
That came along instead;
The young man was vexed.

It is a story, so old,
Yet remains always, new;
And whomever this fate beholds,
His heart will break in two.

Source Text (ST)

"Das verlassene Mägdlein" by Eduard Mörike

Früh, wann die Hähne krähn,
Eh' die Sternlein schwinden,
Muss ich am Herde stehn,
Muss Feuer zünden.

Schön ist der Flamme Schein,
Es springen die Funken;
Ich schaue so darein,
In Leid versunken.

Plötzlich, da kommt es mir,
Treuloser Knabe,
Dass ich die Nacht von dir
Geträumet habe.

Träne auf Träne dann
Stürztet hernieder;
So kommt der Tag heran—
O ging' er wieder!

Translated Text (TT)

"The Foresaken Servant Girl" by Eduard Mörike

Early, when the cockerels crow,
Ere' the tiny stars recede,
To the hearth I must go,
I must light the fire.

So beautiful is the flame's glare,
O, the sparks how they fly,
I cannot help but stare,
Drowning in misery.

Suddenly, it comes to me,
Unfaithful lad,
During the night, O you my dear,
A dream of you, I had.
Tear after tear,
Trickling down,
The dawn of day doth' appear,
O' if only it would go away.

Source Text (ST)

"Wunsch" by Rosa Maria Assing

„Die Sterne, die begehrt man nicht,
Man freut sich ihrer Pracht.“
Der Dichter sagt's, und manchesmal
Hab ich's ihm nachgedacht.

Am reichen Himmel dieser Welt
Sah ich manch strahlend Licht
Umleuchten mich in hehrer Pracht,
Doch ich begehrt's es nicht.

Doch seit du, meiner Liebe Stern,
Mit deinem lichten Schein
In's trübe Leben mir gestrahlt,
Seufz' ich: ach wärst du mein!

Translated Text (TT)

"Wish" by Rosa Maria Assing

"The stars, one does not desire,
One enjoys their splendour."
Says the poet, and many a time
I have thought of it.

In the rich skies of our world
I saw many a bright light
Illuminating me in sublime splendour,
Although I did not desire it.

O since you, star of my love,
With your bright light
Shone upon my dull life,
I sigh: O if only you were mine!

Source Text (ST)

"Ich bin wie jene Blume" by Rosa Maria Assing

Ich bin wie jene Blume,
Die heiß die Sonne traf,
Sie senkt das Haupt, sie neigt sich,
Nicht Ruhe ist's, nicht Schlaf.

Nein, sehnendes Ermatten
In Weh und Liebesqual; —
Aus deinen dunkeln Augen
Traf mich ein solcher Strahl!

Translated Text (TT)

"I am like that flower" by Rosa Maria Assing

I am like that flower,
Which the hot sun struck,
She lowers her head, she nods,
There is no silence, no sleep.

No, yearning languish
In pain and pangs of love; -
From your dark eyes
I was struck by such a beam!

Source Text (ST)

"Ach wie Blumen sich entfärben" by Louise Brachmann

Ach, wie Blumen sich entfärben,
Wenn ein Hauch den Schmelz entführt,
Muß der Liebe Blüte sterben,
Von der Sünde Hauch berührt.

Edles Feuer schöner Jugend,
Bebe vor der Schuld zurück!
Lieb' ersiegt allein die Tugend,
Nur der Unschuld blüht das Glück.

Translated Text (TT)

"O, how flowers fade" by Louise Brachmann

O, how flowers fade,
If a breath can take away their lustre,
The blossom of love must die,
Touched by the sinful breath.

Noble fire of beautiful youth,
Retreat from your guilt!
Virtue is won by love alone,
Happiness only from innocence blooms.

Source Text (ST)

"Was die Erde schönes kennet" by Louise Brachmann

Was die Erde Schönes kennet,
Was sie hold und lieblich nennet,
Was sie hoch und selig glaubt,
Reicht nicht an des Vaters Haupt.
Balsam strömt von seinen Lippen;
Und auf wem sein Segen ruht,
Der schifft durch des Lebens Klippen,
Lächelnd ob der Stürme Wut.

Translated Text (TT)

"What the Earth knows as 'beautiful'" by Louise Brachmann

What the Earth knows as 'beautiful'

What she defines as fair and sweet,

What she regards high and delightful,

Does not reach the head of the Father.

Balsam streams from his lips;

And he on whom the Father's blessings rest,

Sails round the cliffs of life,

Smiling at the storm's rage.

Commentary

The success of a translation lies in the ability of the translator to produce not only a literal translation of a literary piece, but also in their capacity to recreate an image, an idea, and an emotion. Poetry allows one to contemplate one's experiences of the world and as such, it is the role of the translator to convey the author's experiences in another language. In the words of Matiu:

Poetry is neither just words, nor just metre. Translators and theoreticians characterise it as music of words, as a way of seeing and interpreting the world and our experience of it and of conveying to the listener a heightened awareness of it through an intense concentration of metaphor and words in which the natural flow of speech sounds is moulded to some kind of formal pattern. Such patterns can never be the same after the act of translation. Pattern, obviously, is governed by the rules of syntax and prosody existent in one particular language (Matiu, 127).

The notion that poetry offers an alternative way to interpret the world and is therefore more than just words or metre, as argued by Matiu, echoes Pound's suggestion that words contain energy. As translator of this anthology of German poetry, I worked to the best of my ability to ensure that the original image of the poem remained prominent in the translated text.

Structurally speaking, it was not always possible to maintain the rhyme scheme as well as the intended imagery in each given poem. Thus, where possible, I tried my best to ensure that the structure of the translated text (TT) resembled that of the source text (ST), but only in situations in which I thought that the similar rhyme scheme and meter would not impair the original meaning, theme, tone and form of the poem. This sometimes proved challenging, as I was faced with the choice of maintaining the original meter, and in some cases forcing a rhyme. Evidently in these situations, I decided to omit the rhyme and meter all together and focus purely on relaying the tone, theme and imagery of the poem.

An example of an omission of the rhyme scheme includes the poem: "In einem Kühlen Grunde." The main theme of this poem is the topic of

infidelity and unrequited love. Eichendorff depicts the voice of a young man expressing his innermost thoughts and insecurities about the infidelity of his lover.

As we can see from the original German version, the form of the poem is split up into five stanzas, each with an alternate (ABAB) rhyme scheme. The poem has a steady meter: 7/6/7/6. As outlined above, it was not always possible to maintain the rhyme scheme in every poem, as was the case for the poem: “In einem Kühlen Grunde.” The structural use of enjambment was used in lines 13-14, 16-17, 18-19. I felt it necessary to maintain this poetic device in my translation, as the use of enjambment clearly emphasizes the idea of continuity – one verse flowing into the next. Similarly, in this poem, the enjambment could be representative of the lyrical voice’s life and what he could achieve if he were to carry on living. On the other hand, the lack of enjambment in the first, second and final stanza, represents something coming to an end: whether that be his lover leaving, as in the first stanza, the broken promise in the second stanza, or the end of life in the final stanza. For this reason, I decided to maintain the poetic device, enjambment, to further emphasise this contrast, thereby relaying the original image in the TT. The form of the poem further emphasises the idea of continuity, or to a certain extent the repetitive nature of the persona’s thoughts and fears. The poem is split up into five stanzas, each four lines in length, reinforcing the simplicity and continuity of the persona’s thought process.

A further example of where I felt it necessary to maintain the rhyme scheme includes the breaking of the ring. I had originally considered translating “Mein Ringlein sprang entzwei” (9) as: “So too, broke my ring,” as this fit better with the meter of the poem and emphasised the fact that the ring broke as a result of the poet’s lover breaking her promise. However, structurally speaking I felt that having the noun “two” at the very end of the second stanza, before the physical separation between stanzas two and three highlighted the “broken” image. The form of the poem had been structured in a way that reflected the metaphorical broken aspect of the persona’s ring. Therefore, I translated this phrase more literally as: “my ring cracked in two.” The

verb “cracked” worked better than the verb “broke” due to the “c”/ “ck” sounds in “cracking,” further highlighting both the metaphorical and the literal separation. In order to maintain the broken image, reinforced by the physical separation of the stanzas on the page, I thought it important that I maintain the original form of the poem.

Linguistically speaking, the repetition of the long verb and noun sounds: “kühlen” (1), “geht” (2), “Mühlenrad” (2) further emphasise the slow turning of the mill wheel, which is being used to metaphorically describe the poet’s thoughts. In my translation, I therefore felt that the adjective: “cool” (1), noun: “wheel” (2) and verb: “turns” (2) with their long vowel sounds further emphasised the slow continuity of the mill wheel and poet’s thoughts. I think that the “es” here is not only referring to the “Mühlenrad” but also the Mühlenrand as a metaphor for the poet’s never-ending thoughts and life-cycle. In this sense, because the original poem does not explicitly say: “Mühlenrad” in the final verse, it just says “es,” my reasoning for choosing to use the term “everything” was because “everything” encompasses not only the act of the “Mühlenrad” no longer turning, but it also suggests that the poet’s never ending thoughts and emotional turmoil will come to an end if the poet were to die.

In contrast to Eichendorff’s poem, I felt that in Heine’s poem: “Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen” the rhyme scheme was somewhat necessary. As such, I attempted to reflect the original image of the poem, whilst continually maintaining the rhyme scheme and form. For example, lines 7-8 in the ST: “Den ersten besten Mann, Der ihr in den Weg gelaufen.” Evidently, if I were to translate this literally it should be translated as: “the first man who came her way,” but because I feel that the rhyme is actually a very important structural device used in this poem – the short syllables, alternate rhyme scheme and fast meter, emphasize Heine’s sarcastic, pessimistic outlook on love. The fast-paced beat of the poem downplays the pain associated with unrequited love and instead makes the poem seem in parts like a light-hearted rhyme, as opposed to a heartfelt, romantic poem. This is further highlighted in the final stanza: “Es ist eine alte Geschichte, Doch bleibt sie immer neu” – the main themes of infidelity and unrequited love are de-emphasized,

the mood of this stanza suggests that unrequited love and infidelity are merely recurring problems that many people face. For these reasons, I tried to focus more on getting the overall meaning of the stanza across, whilst ensuring that the rhyme scheme was still present. Hence the need for the terms: “second best” (7) and “instead” (8).

In order to maintain the rhyme scheme, I needed something to rhyme with the adjective “old,” and felt that the phrase: “whomever this fate beholds” was the closest idiomatic phrase that I could find without disrupting the rhyme scheme. I also thought that the noun “fate” went well with the overall mood and tone of the poem. Because the poems were originally written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, my skopos as the translator was to recreate the poems in another language, making them accessible to everyone. Therefore, I wanted to keep the original style and tone of the poem – for example keep the more dated language, as I feel that if I were to use more ‘modern’ language, this would inevitably also change the overall tone of the poem. Nouns such as “fate” and “maiden” further emphasised the time period in which the poems were originally written. In addition, the noun “maiden,” would be more specific as it implies that the girl is “unmarried,” which alludes to the overall image depicted by the poet in Heine’s “Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen.”

While Heine provided a more ironic, light-hearted approach to the theme of unrequited love, “Das verlassene Mägdlein” clearly reflects the pain and anguish associated with unrequited love and is overall more emotional. Regarding word choice, I thought that the noun “maiden” was most specific, particularly as a maiden typically implies a young, unmarried woman, and can even sometimes refer to a servant girl. I am assuming from the overall image depicted in this poem that the lyrical voice is that of a servant girl.

The final stanza was rather challenging, I had understood the last line was referring to the fact that yet another day had passed. Thus, in my original attempt, I tried to translate it as “O’ tis gone again” as I thought that this line was not only referring to the fact that another day had passed, but also that with the dawn of day breaking – the lamenter was awoken from her dream and therefore both her dream and the

vision of her lover had gone away. I felt that the dawn of day approaching and the night ending, were representative of all of these things that she had lost: her lover, her dream and the vision of her lover. This further highlights the contrast between reality and fantasy; she wants the day to pass quickly, because she is not happy with the daily reality in which she lives. However, I then acknowledged that my original translation “O’ tis gone again” did not accurately depict the grammatical use of the Konjunktiv II, as the “ging” followed by the apostrophe was indicating. Thus, I settled on the more suitable translation of: “O’ if only it would go way.” This indicates the use of the Konjunktiv II and emphasizes the fact that the maiden, as the lyrical voice, wants the dawn of day to go away again. She wants the day to pass quickly so that she can return to her dreams.

Conclusion

Since the role of translator is to both relay the literal translation of prose and also to reflect the image and emotion created by the original author, I worked hard to maintain the imagery, tone, structure and form of each poem. Evidently, the commission to translate a new anthology of German poetry was quite challenging at times, as Michael Hamburger expressed perfectly:

THE TROUBLE with this subject, even if it is narrowed down to imaginative writing or poetry, is that there is no beginning, middle or end to it, because translation is not one thing but many things, a vast range of multiple and complex processes involving choices and adjustments of which the translator may or may not be aware (Hamburger).

Hamburger's notion that translation is a collection of complex processes is important to consider when completing a translation brief. A translator does not simply translate the black words on a white page, but rather the translator must extract the energy from these words in order to re-create the intended emotion.

As translator of this new anthology of German poetry, I aspire to have contributed to the revival of eighteenth and nineteenth century German poetry centred on themes of unrequited love, nature and infidelity. My translations offer an emotive approach to natural, romantic themes and allude to the idea that translation should be considered as both an art and a science. After all, translation is not simply the act of translating the words on a single page, but rather a way of perceiving and interpreting emotion and experiences.

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