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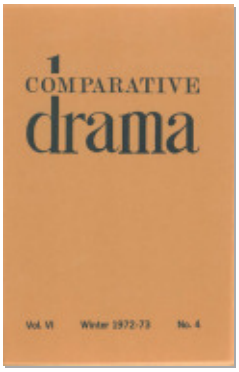

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With the exception, perhaps, of a few works of Hebbel and Kleist, the Romantic movement in Germany produced little for the dramatic stage. From the time of Goethe and Schiller, prior to the development of Romanticism, to the later works of Wagner there are few significant excursions into the field of the drama. One of the reasons, perhaps, why German Romantic stage productions exhibited relatively little growth was that the philosophical and aesthetic ideals of German Romanticism were difficult to express solely in terms of the drama: the delight in musical effects, fantasy, mysticism, and moods; the desire to express longing and the unconscious; and the doctrine of *Synaesthesia.* These are goals which are not easily achieved in the traditional form of the drama. Many German Romantic literary figures such as Wackenroder, Jean Paul, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Mörike, and the Schlegels prophesied that the spirit of German Romanticism would only be fully expressed by artists equally gifted in music and poetry. Mörike, for example, in his poem, "Der junge Dichter," described music as the poet's second soul. Schumann along with Hoffmann and Wagner fulfilled this prophecy.

Robert Schumann's formative years were devoted primarily to literary endeavors. His father, a bookseller, founder of a publishing house, writer, and translator of Shakespeare into German, profoundly influenced young Schumann's great love of literature. By the time he was thirteen he had contributed articles to his father's publications, had written large anthologies of poetry and a five-act tragedy, and had translated many Latin works into German. Before he turned seriously to music, Schumann made several further excursions into the field of the novel and the drama (*Coriolan, Leonhard und Mantellier,* etc.). Even

in his later life Schumann's activity was not confined primarily to music. He wrote articles for several German periodicals, including *Der Komet, Leipziger Tageblatt, Deutsche allgemeine Zeitung,* and was the editor of a well-known music journal, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik,* long before he became known to the world as a composer.

Schumann's youthful love of writing drama and poetry found an outlet in his later life in the field of the opera libretto. He had attempted several libretti on a variety of subjects over a period of years, but for one reason or another only one of these projects ever materialized into a completed opera, *Genoveva* (1847-48), for which the composer wrote both music and drama. As a youngster, Schumann became acquainted with the medieval legend of Genoveva through Ludwig Tieck's dramatized fairy tale, *Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva* (1799). It did not occur to him, however, to write an opera based on this tale until he saw, in 1847, another version of the eighth-century Rhenish legend, Hebbel's morbid play, *Genoveva.* Schumann subsequently asked Robert Reinick, poet, painter, and personal acquaintance of the composer, to sketch a libretto for him. Reinick's efforts, however, did not please him; no novice in the field of libretto writing and infinitely more knowledgeable in literary matters than any composer before him, Schumann was not easily satisfied. He began rewriting Reinick's work and upon completion of the first act wrote to Hebbel for advice. Despite the composer's written requests and an actual visit with the dramatist in July 1848, Hebbel refused to have anything to do with the libretto. Reinick also, seeing how Schumann had so greatly altered his efforts, renounced all claims to the authorship of *Genoveva.* Schumann then took it upon himself to write the text for his opera.

On the title page of his work, the composer had written: *Genoveva an Opera in Four Acts after Tieck and Hebbel.* When Schumann began the task of writing his own libretto, he decided to use as his source material both the Hebbel and Tieck versions of the Genoveva legend. This was an approach which differs little from Wagner, whose *Tannhäuser,* for example, combines elements from Heine and E. T. A. Hoffmann. Schumann's wish to take what he felt to be the best from each source, however, was a factor in preventing his reaching any kind of an agreement with either Reinick or Hebbel. Nevertheless, the composer

seems to have seen in these two widely different adaptations of the same Rhenish legend important features which, when combined, could give him a truly great German Romantic drama.

Schumann preferred, for example, the type of drama which we associate with Hebbel rather than that of Tieck. The libretto of *Genoveva* is cast in the popular form of the fairy drama, a type of German Romantic literature in which the laws of time, place, and causation have no application, but where human conflict and character portrayal are cultivated to a high degree. This form of stage production draws upon German medieval legends, which are served up in the guise of fairy tales with all the Romantic paraphernalia of witchcraft, visions, sorcery, knights, and colorful pageantry. Kleist's drama, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* (1808), is perhaps one of the earliest successful examples of this genre. Käthchen emerges from the realm of dreams, the fanciful, and the supernatural as a very real portrait of a young girl so deeply devoted to Count von Strahl and so overcome by blind passion that she will endure any hardship to be with him. Hebbel's *Genoveva* (1840-41) is a later example of the fairy drama combining, as it does, the world of the imagination and the magical with intensely realistic character delineation. Hebbel's drama, like Kleist's *Käthchen,* is also an almost expressionistic study of human passion.

Only in the hands of such skilled dramatists as Kleist and Hebbel did the fairy drama manage to satisfy most of the demands of the stage: in *Käthchen* and *Genoveva* the motivation and character portrayal are lucid and convincing, the structure is tightly-knit and well-defined. Tieck's *Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva* represents, however, the more radical departure from traditional drama as seen in the works of Friedrich Schlegel, von Arnim, and Brentano. In Tieck's work all dramatic form is dissolved, there are no scenes or acts, and all kinds of metres are employed and mixed together. As in the dramas of Friedrich Schlegel, assonance and alliteration abound. In Tieck's *Genoveva* the constant repetition of the "ang" sound, for example, is quite noticeable in Winfreda's conversation with Siegfried (Vogelgesang/ Drang/ bang/ Zwang). *Leben und Tod* is primarily a series of moods, medieval mystical scenes in which the characters are submerged in a sea of sorcery, miracles, and long nostalgic descriptions of the wonders of nature. In his deliberate intention to break with all traditional theatrical devices,

Tieck's drama in some respects foreshadows the so-called Theatre of the Absurd of our own day.

Despite its novel dramatic form, Schumann was interested in several aspects of Tieck's interpretation of the Genoveva legend, especially its musical nature. It is significant that Tieck called his *Genoveva* an "Opera." Many parts of his play have a great resemblance to opera libretti. Schumann, for example, adopted from Tieck the idea of using hunting horns to announce the coming of Siegfried at the end of the opera. In the earlier version of the legend, Genoveva hears the sound of the hunting horn and then sees Siegfried approaching from the distance. In the opera, just as Balthasar raises the sword to strike Genoveva, the sound of horns is heard from the orchestra and a band of hunters led by Siegfried appears on the heights. Schumann also copied from Tieck the idea of opening and closing his opera with a hymn for Siegfried's troops. Similarly, the rowdy chorus of the vassals in the second act of the opera is very much like the chorus in Tieck's play. Schumann's portrayal of Golo as a zither player and singer was influenced by Tieck; in Hebbel, Golo is not a musician.

One of the most striking features of Schumann's opera might also very well have had its origin in Tieck. Schumann's opera, although divided into four acts, contains, like Tieck's version, no scene divisions; the music and action, with the exception of the three tableaux, are continuous throughout each act. The composer indeed is responsible for the first use of continuous music in opera. This feature, which greatly puzzled Schumann's contemporaries, was, however, to become the hallmark of the Wagnerian music drama.

The action of certain parts of Schumann's *Genoveva* also closely parallels Tieck. The happy ending of the opera in which the truth is revealed and Siegfried and his wife are reunited is missing in Hebbel's original version.[1] The scene in which Golo entertains Genoveva with his singing closely follows Tieck as well. The characters of Charles Martel, referred to in the opening chorus of Act I, and Hidulphus, Bishop of Treves, who appears in the opening and closing scenes of the opera, are historical personages taken from Tieck, not Hebbel. In Tieck and Schumann it is Margaret, the wicked foster mother of Golo, who helps bring the disaster upon Genoveva. In Hebbel, Margaret is the wicked sister of Golo's nurse, Katharina.

Three basic differences, however, clearly distinguish Schumann's drama from Tieck's earlier play: the verse structure, the role of Golo and the plot condensation. The composer did not allow himself to copy any of Tieck's lines, avoiding his free use of unrestricted metres and the jumbling together of various metric schemes. Schumann's drama consists primarily of traditional poetic forms. In many respects the style of his poetry is closer to Wagner's *Tristan,* which is written throughout in rhymed and unrhymed verse. In his choral sections Schumann favors the quatrain (or two quatrains together) with the rhyme scheme ababcdcd (chorus of the Vassals, Act II). Margaret's folksong, "Du lässt die arme Frau allein," is also a quatrain with the rhyme scheme, aabb. Schumann very often employs trochaic tetrameter, a common metric practice in German Romantic drama.[2]

Tieck's earlier play keeps quite close to the old legend. With an eye toward superior character delineation, Schumann, using the method Wagner was to adopt later in *Tristan,* deleted many of the details of the medieval legend and omitted over half of the numerous characters employed by Tieck. The legend of Genoveva, which is based on history, tells of a good wife unjustly accused of adultery, who is miraculously saved, and who in the end, after many years of suffering, shows compassion for her accuser. Schumann, however, was far more interested in presenting the interplay of the characters Golo and Genoveva than he was in portraying the morality and compassion of the maid of Brabant. Thus Golo is given far more attention than he receives in the earlier drama of Tieck. In a letter to Dorn (November 1849) the composer had written, "Genoveva! But don't imagine it's the old sentimental one."[3] Set in a Gothic fairy world with all the appropriate trappings, the plot centers around the conflict between Golo and Siegfried's wife; this in essence is what the opera is all about. The part which dealt with Genoveva's child and subsequent trials in the forest—a part which is included in Tieck and which Reinick could not see taken out—had no value for Schumann.

Despite these similarities to Tieck's earlier drama, however, the overall action of Schumann's opera bears a closer resemblance to Hebbel. The scene in the first act in which Genoveva faints in the arms of Golo, the plotting of Margaret and her foster son, the murder of Drago, and the imprisonment of Siegfried's wife are all based on incidents taken from Hebbel's ver-

sion of the Rhenish legend. Similarly the action of the third act of the opera from the meeting of Golo and Siegfried in Strassburg to the appearance of Drago's ghost finds its counterpart in the fifth and sixth scenes of Hebbel's fourth act. The words of Margaret's song, "Ich sah ein Kind im Traum," which provide the only exact imitation Schumann made of any lines of either Hebbel or Tieck, are taken from this part of *Genoveva* (IV.vi). The role of Angelo, one of Siegfried's servants, is almost identical to Hebbel's Klaus. Angelo, God's instrument in the opera, saves Genoveva from Balthasar as Klaus does in Hebbel's drama.

In its outward optimism, its verse structure, and its interpretation of the characters of Golo and Genoveva, Schumann's drama nevertheless bears little resemblance to Hebbel. The dramatist's *Genoveva* ends brutally: Genoveva, who has borne a son in captivity, manages to escape into the woods, but is never reunited with Siegfried; Katharina, because of her share in the evil plot, commits suicide; Golo murders Balthasar, then, unable to bear the guilt of his crimes, puts out his eyes before he is stabbed to death by Caspar. All of these gloomy events are omitted by Schumann. Hebbel's drama is written throughout in unrhymed verse, a procedure the composer also did not adopt.

The most striking difference between Hebbel and Schumann is their interpretation of the roles of Siegfried's wife and his steward. Hebbel's *Genoveva* is a morbid psychological study of the motives of Golo; the drama primarily deals with how the knight's overwhelming love for the unobtainable wife of Siegfried turns his otherwise noble character into criminal madness. Golo represents as well Hebbel's own pessimistic world-woe philosophy; helplessly driven by the world's will to diabolical actions from which there is no reprieve, no salvation, the steward eventually cannot tolerate his crimes and inflicts a heinous punishment upon himself. Golo is thus the real hero of Hebbel's tragedy; he occupies the foreground throughout the entire play. In contrast, Genoveva is weakly drawn: unaffected inwardly by the actions of others and with little will of her own, she seems to accept her fate and all that befalls her without struggle. Hebbel's Genoveva also lacks the mystical and supernatural qualities associated with her portrayal in the medieval legend.

It is in the character delineation of Golo and Genoveva that the greatest strength of Schumann's drama lies. In creating

the role of his heroine, for example, the composer was able to change her personality sufficiently to create the perfect foil for Golo and at the same time preserve the mystical and otherworldly character she obtained in medieval times. The heroine of the opera as Schumann conceived her is thus a synthesis of the real and unreal. Like Lohengrin, Genoveva has a mysterious supernatural quality about her. Wagner's hero, however, has been initiated into the miracles of the spiritual world and no longer belongs to this earth. Schumann's Genoveva, on the other hand, represents both the spiritual and material worlds: she is symbolic of the spiritualizing power of medieval Christianity and at the same time the earthly symbol of the chaste wife falsely accused by a rejected suitor. She can in one scene literally swear at Golo and in another be the only person to perceive the mystical ray of light shining down upon the cross in a mass of rock in the forest. For these reasons Schumann's Genoveva was as difficult to understand in the nineteenth-century as Caravaggio's portrayal of Saint Matthew dressed in the garb of a common peasant had been in 1598.

Genoveva's highly charged encounters with Siegfried's steward, Golo, well portray the new individuality Schumann gave her. The scene in the second act of the opera, where Golo, led on by Margaret's lies, first declares his love for the maid of Brabant, is an example of such a meeting. Genoveva infuriates him beyond all reason, first treating him as if he were mad and then humiliating him by the mention of her husband's name. When, still bewildered by her unexpected reaction, Golo tries to embrace her, Genoveva's manner turns to utter scorn, and with a gesture of sheer abhorrence she cries, "Get away, you bastard." This is a significant turning point in the opera and Schumann handles it quite aptly. As Golo, visibly shaken, starts back allowing Genoveva to depart, the new motive of his hatred wells up in the violas and cellos. There is a pause, the motive is cut short, Golo is given a moment to recover himself and then mutters, "That word could hurt, that word could pierce." Since he is not yet fully in control of himself, the orchestra briefly takes over; then he utters the fateful words, "Curse you."

Genoveva's courageous, defiant behavior differs markedly from the way she is portrayed in either Tieck, Hebbel, or the medieval legend: Schumann has transformed her into another Leonore. This defiance even in the face of death is well-illustrated

in the scene in the fourth act of the opera where Golo gives the order for Siegfried's huntsmen to kill her. In the various versions of the Rhenish legend she pitifully pleads with her executioner, Balthasar, to spare her life. In the opera she faces Golo, refuses to plead with him, will not listen to his entreaties, will not even answer him. There is no more effective weapon than silence and Genoveva uses it in this scene to full advantage.

Golo as well emerges from the opera in a very different light. Unlike the Golo of Hebbel or Tieck, Schumann's knight is a pathetic, ambivalent figure, a character not unlike Hamlet.[4] Golo has most often been criticized, in fact, for the inconsistency he betrays in his actions. Like Hamlet the contradictory elements in his nature are the result of intense internal suffering and conflict. This is brought out in the very opening of the opera, where, in his first solo, a new element is introduced into the plot: Golo's conflict between the sense of duty he keenly feels toward Siegfried, whom he calls his "second father," and his love for Genoveva. Schumann takes great pains to develop this side of the knight's personality. Golo appears as a poet, a highly sensitive musician-minstrel to whom the acts of treachery and murder are intolerable from the very beginning. Ensnared unwillingly by Margaret's lies, the knight adopts a course of action which is completely alien to his character. His feelings of guilt towards Siegfried cause him great sorrow and remorse. His emotional predicament is most clearly dramatized in the scene in the third act of the opera in which he gives Siegfried the Chaplain's letter that contains the false account of Genoveva's affair with Drago. The knight upon seeing the Count's reaction utters several times the phrase, "Oh if only I could retrace the desperate path to which Margaret has led me." At the last repetition of these words, Schumann introduces a highly poignant version of the musical motive associated with Golo's guilt. The steward's ambivalence is well illustrated here: no longer able to bear Siegfried's great grief, he cries, "He who wrote the letter lied."

Intensifying this conflict is Golo's love for Genoveva, a love which is thoroughly timely and romantic. As in Hebbel's drama, the knight cannot overcome it; his is a passion not unlike Heinrich von Ofterdingen's intense longing for Mathilde, the Blue Flower of Novalis' novel. Golo's love is, however, far more honorable than that of the infamous villain of the medieval tale or Hebbel's drama. It is a secret love, long hidden in his soul, which

never would have been revealed had Margaret not led him into believing that Genoveva cared for him. This highly significant change which Schumann made in the story makes Golo a character with whom the audience can more easily sympathize. The steward is the victim of circumstances which he is unable to control and which intensify his inner conflict. He is actually Margaret's pawn, the means through which she will eventually try to destroy her enemy, Siegfried. Genoveva's expression of contempt and anger also leaves him no opportunity of turning back; he must now discredit her in the eyes of the count or be ruined himself.

Schumann's preoccupation with the interplay between his characters, incidentally, led him to adopt a system of musical imagery amazingly advanced for the time: the highly complex web of musical symbols in *Genoveva* cannot be found in Wagner until *Tristan* (1857-59). Almost the entire score is woven out of the *Leitmotif* associated with the maid of Brabant and her accuser. These themes are changed, furthermore, according to the psychological demands of the drama. There is also a marked similarity between the composer's selection of leading motives and the method Liszt employed later in his *Faust* Symphony (1854). Like the hero of the program symphony, the complexity of Golo's character is shown by the use of many themes in contrast to the unwavering Genoveva, who is portrayed by one motive alone. The theme Schumann chose for his heroine, interestingly enough, bears a close resemblance to one of his favorite musical symbols for his wife, Clara. The witch, Margaret, has no theme of her own, but is represented, as is Liszt's Mephistopheles, by mocking parodies of both the Golo and Genoveva motives which musically symbolize the ruinous effect that she has on them.

German Romantic drama of the first half of the nineteenth century is very often characterized by a striving for a distinctive national art. Nationalism during this period implied to many in Germany a turning back to the Middle Ages, a time, the Romantics believed, in which national characteristics were especially pronounced. The interest in German medievalism which began during the Napoleonic occupation of the Fatherland was also an important part of the new effort to bring about a regeneration of the German spirit. The world of the medieval forest with its magical forces and the colorful pageantry of

knights and crusades was thus never mere theatre for the German Romantics. The dramas of this school are permeated with the spirit of the Middle Ages: Hebbel's *Die Nibelungen,* Grillparzer's *König Ottokars Glück und Ende,* Kleist's *Die Familie Schroffenstein* are, like the versions of the Genoveva legend, all examples of this trend.

Medievalism is an integral part of Schumann's *Genoveva.* In the third act, which has been criticized as the weakest part of the play, it takes precedence over all else. All the author's care here is lavished upon creating the atmosphere, the fragrance, and the mood of this bygone era. Admittedly the action slows down at this point, particularly during the three magic visions, which, incidentally, are given more attention than in Hebbel's drama. Approximately one third of the entire act is concerned with the apparitions which Margaret has been able to produce by means of some strange powers. As these visions proceed, a chorus of spirits (behind the scene) provides background music interspersed with occasional comments of the onlookers. In addition to the change of pace, logical plot development also suffers in Schumann's third act as it does in Hebbel: dark mysterious forces of nature, whose actions are beyond explanation, suddenly govern the course of events. Drago's ghost, which miraculously appears following the last vision presented in the tableaux, rises out of the fragments of the mirror and forces Margaret to seek out Siegfried and confess her fraud. Prior to the first vision, a raven mysteriously appears pecking at the count's window.

If we judge this portion of *Genoveva* by the standards of German Romantic drama, then all the sorcery, miracles, visions, prophecies, and magic which appear here are proper ingredients of the libretto. Von Arnim and Brentano's stage works, for example, are noted for their sorcery, magic rings, curses, and strange forebodings; the former's *Halle und Jerusalem* ends with an apparition of three crosses of fire above the graves of the three leading characters. The dream-trance of Schumann's Margaret also bears a great similarity to the somnambulism of Kleist's dramas. Strange, unexplained happenings play an important part in the operatic works of Hoffmann, Marschner, Weber, and even Wagner. There is, for example, a strong similarity between the second act of *Der Freischütz* and the third act of *Genoveva:* Margaret calls to her magic spirits

("Erschein!") in much the same way as Caspar summons Samiel. Hoffmann's Kuhleborn *(Undine)* and Drago both make mysterious appearances on earth. Ortrud's evil magic in *Lohengrin,* like Margaret's sorcery, causes great unhappiness to innocent persons. The mystical origin of Schumann's chorus of the spirits differs little from Marschner's *Erdgeister (Hans Heiling),* Wagner's chorus of the dead sailors in *Der fliegende Holländer,* or the numerous spirits which well up out of the earth in *Der Freischütz.*

Schumann, it is true, could have portrayed Genoveva's unfaithfulness, like Hebbel, more economically. There is, however, justification for the use of three tableaux. The number three, perhaps because of its association with the Trinity, is a mystical number in the Nordic medieval legend and fairy tale. An example is found in Tieck's *Liebesgeschichte der schönen Magelone:* Peter's mother gives her son three rings, the last of which becomes the symbol of enduring love. The number three appears as well in Novalis' *Hyazinth und Rosenblütchen:* the old man stays three days with Hyazinth and on the last day leaves a book with him which no one can read and which changes the course of the young man's life. Even Wagner fell prey to this idea: Wotan's prophecy is reached through a long dialogue (one third of Act I) between Mime and the Wanderer, who wagers that he can correctly answer any three questions the dwarf may put to him. Thus in *Genoveva* it is the third magic vision which provides Siegfried with the proof of his wife's unfaithfulness.

In the plays of Tieck and in the German Romantic *Kunstmärchen,* these mysterious visions often take place at night with the moon shining, the magic moonlight from which nothing or no one can hide. The three tableaux in *Genoveva* are just another example of this nineteenth century dream medievalism: they are magical scenes drenched with visionary moonlight. This atmosphere is especially pronounced in Tieck's *Genoveva:* the light which casts its shadow on every character, every mood of the play is invariably that of the moon. Schumann actually begins to create a similar climate long before the three tableaux begin. The entire third act of the opera takes place at night. Siegfried is refreshed by the night air. Margaret, in a trance-like state, is aroused by a dream. Half-awake she sings ("Ich sah ein Kind im Traum") about a wondrous child she saw in her dream.

The child cries out to her, and she recognizes it as the one she had drowned. Golo and the Count arrive at her house at night. Margaret's magic visions are illuminated by the moonlight. The text of the chorus which accompanies these visions is highly significant:

> While the lights on earth cease to glow, when each flower rests among her leaves, the night half reveals one fair blossom. . . .
>
> Be careful, dark and gloomy night, hide the lights that might incite.

These lines bear a marked similarity to the German Romantic cult of the night, the philosophy of which figures so prominently in Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht* and hence also in Wagner's *Tristan.*

The raven, a symbol of impending doom in medieval literature, is, like the number three, another mystical symbol which Schumann employs. In Tieck's *Magelone,* it is a raven which swoops down out of nowhere and steals the three rings from Magelone. In Schumann's opera, the sudden appearance of this bird wildly pecking at Siegfried's window signals the approach of Golo, bearing the ill-fated Chaplain's letter.

Völkisch ideology was another brand of emerging nineteenth-century German nationalism. This movement was a direct denial of all universalism, characterized, as it was, by a belief that the strength of Germany rested in the common people and their folk culture. In Kleist's comedy *Der zerbrochene Krug* and in Grillparzer's *Weh' dem, der lügt, völkisch* ideology can be seen in the high degree of importance dialect is given. Dialect was not part of the German Romantic drama before Romanticism. Crude, rustic phrases of the peasant class now became an integral part of many German Romantic stage productions. Highly popular, for example, were the Viennese folk plays of Ferdinand Raimund in which dialect is not only used to produce comic effects, but is also employed for the purpose of character delineation.

Völkisch ideology conspicuously appears in the type of rustic dialogue Schumann employed, a form of speech not seen to this extent in either Hebbel or Tieck. *Genoveva* glorifies the manner and speech of the humble folk. The language of the opera in many respects resembles the popular folk plays of the time, which, like the *Singspiel,* appealed to the earthy, not overly

refined taste of the bourgeoisie. There are several little genre scenes such as the drinking episode of the vassals (Act II) which bring to mind the paintings of Spitzweg. The dialogue of the vassals, Margaret, Balthasar and Caspar has no parallel in Wagner; comic realism was never part of his style. Even the repartee between Siegfried and Mime is far more eloquent and high-flown than anything Genoveva herself ever uttered. The closest musical parallel to Schumann's style is Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov:* Balthasar and Caspar are as disreputable a pair of vagabonds as Varlaam and Missail ever were and their language is every bit as rough. It is not surprising to find that critics unaccustomed to this type of rowdy conversation should have objected to Balthasar calling Genoveva a "foul witch" or the heroine shouting "bastard" at Golo.

There is also a conscious attempt on Schumann's part to use folk song and dialect for the purpose of character description. At the end of the first act, for example, Margaret tries to encourage Golo in his love for Genoveva. Siegfried's knight voices his distrust of the witch and his anguish in a manner which has all the poignancy of Schumann's best *Lieder.* There is an abrupt change to the folk song, however, as soon as Margaret answers him. Her little peasant tune, "Du lässt die arme Frau allein," with its simple language vividly emphasizes that the evildoer in the opera has for the moment assumed the guise of Golo's loving foster mother.

Völkisch ideology was not totally accepted in Germany. Schumann's opera was written at a time when German thought was divided into a school which approved cultural internationalism and allowed foreign (largely French and Italian) influence and a group which refused that influence. Schumann's strong nationalistic views, which were ultimately expressed in *Genoveva,* plunged him headlong into the very center of this dispute. The composer's admiration of Marschner and open hostility towards Auber and the Franco-Italian style of Meyerbeer greatly provoked members of the opposite camp, Rietz, Hiller, and Hanslick. The latter once remarked when discussing *Genoveva,* "Schumann has no feeling for French or Italian melodies . . . he is too strictly German."[5]

Schumann never felt that operas such as *Fidelio, Tannhäuser,* or even *Der Freischütz* were truly German. When he spoke of making German opera a reality, he meant the develop-

ment of a style which was cleansed of all foreign influence. Besides his emphasis on native folk dialect, several musical ideas of his own were added to the German elements present in varying degree in the operas of his predecessors. Preserving the Teutonic love of orchestral music within the opera, the composer then substituted the German *Lied,* authentic German folk songs, and chorales for Italian arias, recitatives, and popular melodies which were common property of the *Singspiel.*

Schumann's strong belief in *völkisch* ideology is identical with the spirit of German Romantic nationalism which flowered in the *völkisch* poetry of Arndt, Körner and Achim von Arnim in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is not similar, however, to the nationalism of Wagner or Nietzsche which was to replace it. There is nothing grandiose or other-worldly about Schumann; his art was always tied to the people. Wagner, on the other hand, did not identify with *völkisch* patriotism. His music dramas with the exception of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* do glorify the greatness of the Middle Ages, but emphasize a superhuman Teutonic race, not humble folk. The Dresden court conductor, believing in the rebirth of a great German world empire, envisioned a new *Reich* which would rule the world shining once again with all the splendor of the medieval Hohenstaufen Kingdom. Wagner loved Germany for what it had been and could again become.

The fundamental premise that the greatest effect of a work of art can only be gained through a combined effort of all the arts, which was uttered by many German Romantics before Wagner, was in itself destructive to the development of nineteenth-century German drama. The doctrine of *Synaesthesia* implied that in true Romantic art there is no place for drama alone. German Romantic dramatists such as Tieck tried to include musical effects in their plays, to make music in words as it were, but these techniques only weakened the structure of the drama. E. T. A. Hoffmann was the first literary-musical figure who proved that the doctrine of *Synaesthesia* could only be fully realized in the field of opera. His *Aurora und Cephalus* (1810), for which Hoffmann wrote both music and libretto, is, perhaps, the first *Gesamtkunstwerk.* During the composition of the opera Hoffmann wrote, "Everything must work together to produce the highest illusion, to bring the moment of action to the heart of the spectator."[6]

This theory achieved successful expression in *Genoveva.* All the arts, painting, music, and drama unite, as in the last act of Schumann's opera, to produce a vivid portrayal of the German Romantic "holy nature" motive (Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*). Schumann's directions for the staging and scenery of the final act, which are entirely his own, show a most conscientious observance of detail:

> A savage rocky scene; in the distance rise the towers of Siegfried's castle. A cloudy gloomy sky. The murmuring of a mountain streamlet is heard. To the left at the foot of a mass of rock, is a cross with an image of the Madonna, half hidden amidst the bushes.

The placing of the cross, for example, in a landscape such as Schumann describes is highly symbolic. Nature and God for the German Romantics were not separate, but part of one universal omnipresent soul *(Weltseele).* Nature was just as much an object for reverence as Christ on the cross. The scene in which Genoveva alone sees the mystical ray of light shining down upon the cross is little different from painting and incidentally bears a striking resemblance to the mystical, transcendental landscapes of Schumann's older contemporary, Caspar David Friedrich. More than once Friedrich had portrayed a cross mysteriously rising out of a mass of rock, partly concealed among the trees of a medieval forest with rays of heavenly light falling upon it ("Das Kreuz im Gebirge," 1808; "Morgen im Riesengebirge," 1811). Far in the background Friedrich often portrays a tiny human figure observing this phenomenon. Musically the appearance of the cross is also well sketched: just as Genoveva sees it, the driving rhythm of the preceding passage stops, and Schumann then scores a series of long-held, ethereal, delicate chords in the high register of the woodwinds accompanied by violins and violas.

The subject matter of Schumann's opera has often been criticized even by Wagner himself. The medieval legend that Schumann chose, however, is not only quite similar to *Lohengrin* (1848), but is a well-worn theme in German Romantic drama. The stories of Lohengrin and Genoveva originate from the same geographical area; Elsa and Siegfried's wife are daughters of the ruling families of Brabant, a province in central Belgium. The evil that befalls these two heroines is brought about through witchcraft; the functions of Ortrud and Margaret are

almost identical. The same moral is evident in both Rhenish legends: Siegfried's doubting of Genoveva's love leads to his wife's banishment and near death; Elsa loses Lohengrin because she allows her judgment to be swayed by the seeds of mistrust. The spiritualizing power of medieval Christianity is an integral part of both legends and is represented in Wagner's opera by the Grail, in Schumann's work by the cross in the forest. In the last acts of both operas Wagner's hero and Schumann's heroine are aided by supernatural powers.

Both *Lohengrin* and *Genoveva* had all the ingredients necessary to please the taste of the German Romantics before 1850: nature, demonic forces, knights, and crusades. But after the second half of the nineteenth century these elements became obsolete. The moral power of Genoveva, which in the end saves her from death and solves the conflict between herself, her husband, and Golo, also became dated, because this solution does not involve flight from the world or redemption through love-death. Aside from *Lohengrin,* which is basically a magical tale like *Genoveva,* Wagner's early operas, *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser,* stress the concept of redemption through a woman's love, the atonement for all wrong doing and for all guilt, and the end of all mortal suffering through death-sacrifice. This theme, which was evident long before in Goethe's *Faust* and Hoffmann's *Undine,* came to replace that of heroism accomplished through the intervention of magical and supernatural forces. Because of this change in the Romantic operatic-literary tastes of the second half of the nineteenth century, *Genoveva* became dated not long after its production. *Lohengrin* might have been also if it had been the work of a composer other than Wagner. But the fact that it was a Wagner opera ensured its immortality.

The foregoing argument is an attempt to analyze and re-evaluate the libretto of Schumann's only opera, *Genoveva,* in the light of the German Romantic literary trends which influenced it. The same fate that has befallen the works of the two greatest dramatists of that period, Kleist and Hebbel, has occurred to *Genoveva.* Schumann's opera has been cast into oblivion for nearly eighty years.[7] Three important factors have contributed to the neglect of this work. First, and most important, is the style of the libretto. In 1848 the fairy drama was unheard of in opera. German Romantic opera before *Genoveva*

and its contemporary, *Lohengrin,* emphasized the world of medievalism with its magical and supernatural forces, but lacked the deep psychological insight into its characters that is the hallmark of Schumann's drama in particular and the fairy drama in general. Secondly, the overwhelming popularity of Wagner's stage productions eclipsed the few important German Romantic plays and operas written before *Tristan.* Lastly, the musical style of Schumann's opera, like the highly complex character portrayal, was too far ahead of its time. *Genoveva,* like the dramas of Tieck, Hebbel, and Kleist, cannot be judged, however, according to the standards of Wagner nor the tastes of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although Schumann's opera can stand alone as a work of art, *Genoveva* is such an integral part of German Romanticism as it developed in the early decades of the nineteenth century that a true appreciation of its merits can only be gained by relating it to the philosophical and aesthetic ideals of that movement. Unfortunately, those ideals are still little understood even today.

College of Notre Dame
Belmont, California

NOTES

1 After the performance of Schumann's *Genoveva* (June 25, 1850), Hebbel added an epilogue in 1851 in which Siegfried and his wife are reunited and Golo forgiven as in the old legend.

The editions of the Schumann, Hebbel, and Tieck versions of the Genoveva legend used in this study are as follows: Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften,* Zweiter Band (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1828). Friedrich Hebbel, *Werke,* Erster Band (München: Carl Hanser, 1952). Robert Schumann, *Genoveva.* Clavierauszug von Clara Schumann (Leipzig: F. Peters, 1850). The translations of passages from these works in this paper are mine.

2 The popularity of this form of verse was due in part to A. W. Schlegel's translation of Calderon's works into German.

3 Robert Schumann, *Briefe,* ed. F. Gustav Jansen (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1886), p. 270 (translation mine).

4 Schumann's portrayal of Golo as something of a Hamlet figure not only reflects his knowledge of the English playwright's work, but is characteristic of the German Romantic enthusiasm for Shakespeare as well.

5 Eduard Hanslick, *Die moderne Oper* (Berlin: Allgemeine Verein für Deutsche Litteratur, 1874), p. 257 (translation mine).

6 Hedwig Guggenheimer, "E. T. A. Hoffmann und Richard Wagner," *Richard Wagner Jahrbuch* (1907), II, 181 (translation mine).

7 In the last two decades, four performances of *Genoveva* have, however, taken place abroad: Florence (Maggio Musicale, 1951), Bonn (1956), Perugia (Sagra Musicale Umbra, 1968), Zwickau (1968).