



# **Wilhelm Muller: The Poet of the Schubert Song Cycles: His Life and Works (The Penn State Series in German Literature)**

*Cecilia C. Baumann*

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Considered a German Byron by his contemporaries, Johann Ludwig Wilhelm Muller (1794-1827) is usually remembered today as the German Romantic poet whose lyrics Franz Schubert set to music in *Die schone Mullerin* and *Die Winterreise*. A philhellene who wrote impassioned lyrics in support of the Greeks in their struggle for independence from the Turks, Muller also collected and edited Italian and modern Greek folk songs. Goethe very likely became acquainted with Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* through Muller's 1818 translation of that work. Muller was an influential critic and scholar of the Romantic Era, a creative public librarian and publisher's consultant (with the prestigious firm of F. A. Brockhaus in Leipzig), a respected teacher, and a popular author of travel books - all this despite his sudden and somewhat mysterious death at 32. The son of a guild tailor in the duchy of Anhalt-Dessau and a precocious and sometimes rebellious student, he nonetheless received lifelong aid from the ducal family, including a scholarship to the new University of Berlin. Muller left the University before completing his studies and spent two years as a volunteer in the Prussian Army fighting Napoleon. During this time, he had an unhappy love affair in Brussels. At 26, Muller married into one of the leading Dessau families, and at 30 he was granted the title Hofrat. In this first comprehensive study of Muller, Dr. Baumann presents a lively and vivid profile of the poet, prose writer, translator, critic, editor, philhellene, and traveler whose life reflects the landscape of literary concern from the Romantic movement to *Junges Deutschland*. A complete bibliography of works by and about Muller is included. This work in the words of one reader should interest 'any person with a general concern for the complex interrelationship of cultural and socio-political forces and the contact of key persons in German-speaking culture with one another during the late 18th and early 19th centuries . . . as a veritable 'window' into the period of Goethe.'

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