

5 Schubert and his poets: issues and conundrums

Susan Youens

Lieder begin with words; they are born when a composer encounters poetry. If the statement seems obvious, it is not reflected in writings on music, which tend to “skip over” the literary surroundings in order to arrive more swiftly at musical matters. Considerations of historical context are customarily confined to discussions of the composer and the music rather than the poet and the poetry, even in those instances where the poet and composer knew one another. Although scholars have, on occasion, probed questions of transmission – how a composer found a particular poetic repertory and, more commonly, Schubert’s “reading” of those poems he set to music – many issues remain tantalizingly fertile areas for investigation. There are even basic enigmas of identification yet to solve – who was “A. Pollak,” whose name appears on the title page of the late song *Frühlingslied* (D919). Who wrote the texts for *Auf den Sieg der Deutschen* (D81) or the beloved *Wiegenlied* (D498)? Song composers tend to search a variety of sources for new and old poetry to convert into Lieder; if they do so in special ways and for specialized reasons, they are nonetheless active participants in the literary milieu of their day.

The gravitational forces that draw a composer to a particular poet, poetic circle, or specific anthology are multitudinous and shift into new configurations at each encounter with a body of poetry. Proximity to local writers, access to poetic works from Germany as well as Austria, friends with wide-ranging philosophical and literary interests, literary fads and fashions (the Walter Scott craze, the Ossian enthusiasm, and the like), and various crises in life all play a part in Schubert’s adoption of a poem for musical purposes – as long as the poem had music in it, *his* music. This evocative phrase, difficult to define, is at the heart of the songwriting enterprise and is one of its most intriguing mysteries. What constitutes music-in-poetry for this composer? Why did Schubert find music in certain poems by Goethe, to cite only one example, and reject far more as not “komponabel”? Did he not encounter the poetry of Joseph von Eichendorff and the anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, or did he not like them? In other words, why are certain staples of early nineteenth-century

German song composers not to be found in this Austrian composer's repertory? As Schubert's musical development proceeded, his tastes in poetry altered – in what ways and at what times? How did Schubert feel entitled or emboldened to emend the poetry he selected? Who were his poets? What gave rise to their poetry? What standing did they have in the literary community of their day and place? What might be the political backdrop to certain poetic sources in an age of anti-liberalism, censorship, and police spying on the citizenry? What circumstances conspired to bring these poets and this composer together? How did Schubert come by poems not published in his lifetime and written by non-Viennese poets (the Pomeranian schoolmaster Karl Lappe's *Im Abendrot* [D799] and *Der Einsame* [D800], for example)? Why did Schubert gravitate to particular poems at particular times in his compositional life?

If the number and variety of issues at stake seem overwhelming, so does the roll-call of Schubert poets: there are some 110 of them, ranging from the eighteenth-century provider of operatic poetry, Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782), to Heinrich Heine, with occasional forays into a more distant past represented by translations of Petrarch, Shakespeare, and the Greeks; Franz von Bruchmann's poem *An die Leyer* (D737) is a free paraphrase of a work attributed to the sixth-century B.C. poet Anacreon, and a Viennese Shakespeare edition of 1825 (translations by August Wilhelm von Schlegel, supplemented by Eduard von Bauernfeld and Ferdinand Mayerhofer) provided Schubert with the texts for the *Trinklied* (D888), *Ständchen* (D889), and *An Sylvia* (D891). Surveying the list of authors, one can detect certain patterns, whatever the influence of fortuitous circumstance or the composer's love of experiment. In numerous instances, Schubert set only one or two poems by a given poet (unlike his later successor Hugo Wolf's practice of setting numerous texts from a few poetic sources): *Frühlingsglaube* (D686) is Schubert's single solo Lied to a text by Ludwig Uhland, and there are only two songs to texts by Karl August Graf von Platen-Hallermünde, both masterpieces (*Die Liebe hat gelogen* and *Du liebst mich nicht*, D751 and 756 respectively). Friedrich Kind, Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter, Karoline Louise von Klenke, Johann Nepomuk Ritter von Kalchberg, Georg Friedrich von Gerstenberg, Johann Ludwig Ferdinand von Deinhardstein, Josef Karl Bernard, Karl August Engelhardt, Josef Franz von Ratschky, Friedrich von Köpken, Count Johann Majléth, Michael Lubi, Christian Ludwig Reissig, Gottlieb Conrad Pfeffel, and Gottlieb von Leon are numbered among those who provided Schubert with only a single song text. There are relatively few poets represented by ten or more songs, sometimes clustered together chronologically (twenty-two of the twenty-three songs to poems by Ludwig Höltz belong to 1815–16, and twenty of the

twenty-one songs to texts by Ludwig Theobul Kosegarten were composed in 1815), sometimes more widely distributed over a period of several years. Notably, it is the better poets – Goethe, Schiller, and Schubert’s friend Johann Mayrhofer – whom Schubert revisited at different times in his brief compositional life.

It is evident from the dispatch with which Schubert discovered poetic sources that he and his friends looked assiduously for new poetic wellsprings from which to create *Lieder*. For example, the songs *Abendbilder* (D650), and *Himmelsfunken* (D651) of February 1819 are settings of poems by Johann Peter Silbert, a professor of French at the Vienna Polytechnic Institute, whose poetic anthology *Die heilige Lyra* was published that same year by the Viennese firm Strauß – did Schubert receive the poems in manuscript before publication or seize immediately upon a newly published source? As a result of the quest for new poetry, those German and Austrian poets now relegated to second-class status or worse but who enjoyed a season in the sun during Schubert’s lifetime are amply represented in his songs. For example, the *Poetisches Tagebuch* (Poetic Diary) of Ernst Konrad Friedrich Schulze (1789–1817) was highly praised in its day, and Schubert chose ten poems from it in 1825–26, only two years after the diary was published posthumously in 1823; the exquisite *Im Frühling* (D882) and the powerful *Über Wildemann* (D884) seem in retrospect as foreshadowings of *Winterreise* in 1827. The fact that song composition is dependent upon the existence of bodies of lyric poetry, that the *Lied* springs from the renaissance of lyricism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is crystal-clear in Schubert’s oeuvre.¹

The issue of literary discrimination and “bad poetry”

Disparagement of Schubert’s taste in poetry-for-music is a commonplace nowadays, but it was not always so: critics in the 1820s and 1830s often praised Schubert’s choice of poetry and his ability to “translate” his chosen poems into music. The composer’s first biographer, Heinrich Kreissle von Hellborn, pointed out that Schubert first gravitated to the “sweetly sentimental” poetry of Hölty, Matthisson, Salis-Seewis, and Kosegarten because those poets were much loved at the time, but that his friends Johann Mayrhofer, Franz von Schober, and Johann Michael Vogl then “worked on his choice of poems,” and he thereafter favored texts by authors such as Goethe and Schiller.² Later scholars, less impressed with the composer’s taste in texts, have simultaneously “explained” the phenomenon of so much mediocre poetry in the Schubert song corpus and apologized for it by observing that poetry apt for music and poetry

destined for literary greatness are not necessarily one and the same. Schubert himself would seem to affirm the assertion when he fashions a beautiful song from Franz von Schober's *An die Musik* (D547) – purest cotton candy in verse, but it summed up a central fact of Schubert's existence and therefore appealed to his musical imagination. Eduard von Bauernfeld (1802–90), a later member of the Schubert circle and a professional writer himself, vigorously refuted Kreissle's charge that the composer was indiscriminating in his choice of poetry:

Moreover in literature, too, he was anything but unversed and the way he understood how to interpret, with inventiveness and vitality, the different poetic individualities, like Goethe, Schiller, Wilhelm Müller, J[ohann] G[abriel] Seidl, Mayrhofer, Walter Scott and Heine, how to transform them into new flesh and blood and how to render faithfully the nature of each one by beautiful and noble musical characterization – these recreations in song should alone be sufficient to demonstrate, merely by their own existence and without any further proof, from how deep a nature, from how sensitive a soul these creations sprang. A man who so understands the poets is himself a poet. (SMF 230)

In his reminiscences of Schubert, Anselm Hüttenbrenner recalls Schubert saying on one occasion when Hüttenbrenner had praised a newly composed song (which one, we do not know): “Yes, there you have a good poem; then one immediately gets a good idea; melodies pour in so that it is a real joy. With a bad poem one can't make any headway; one torments oneself over it and nothing comes of it but boring rubbish. I have already refused many poems which have been pressed on me” (SMF 182–83). “There is nothing of music in this poem” (again, we do not know which one), Schubert once complained to Johann Gabriel Seidl (1804–75), a popular Austrian poet whose verse this composer discovered immediately upon its publication in 1826 (although he did set eleven poems by Seidl in the last years of his life, including *Das Zügelglöcklein* [D871], *Bei dir allein* [D866, 2], *Der Wanderer an den Mond* [D870], *Die Taubenpost in Schwanengesang* [D957, 14], and the beautiful *Im Freien* [D880]). Schubert also refused poems by Friedrich Rochlitz and Joseph Freiherr von Zedlitz, and he found little to suit his taste in the poetry of such well-known providers of texts for song composers as Friedrich Baron de La Motte-Fouqué. What a composer chose *not* to set from among the repertoires current and fashionable at the time is as revealing as the texts he found of worth. For instance, given the keen interest in folk poetry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the premium placed on *Volkstümlichkeit* (folksong style) and *Sangbarkeit* (singability) by the Berlin song composers of the preceding generation, Schubert's lack of attraction to this popular body of verse is all the more

notable. One looks in vain for a single setting from Achim von Arnim's and Clemens Brentano's anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806–08). It was not until 1827 that he set Johann Gottfried Herder's translation of the Scottish ballad *Edward* from the *Stimmen der Völker in Gesang* in a homorhythmic, chordal style which demonstrates his knowledge of the conventions of *Volkstümlichkeit* (D923); even so, one observes the repeated unharmonized D's in measures 1–2 of the piano introduction and the mediant relationship of tonic G minor and the B flat minor to which Schubert turns in mid-strophe and hears *echt* Schubert. For his exercises in folksong transmogrified into art song, he preferred the artistry of Goethe, Wilhelm Müller, and Mozart *imitating* and transforming folk poetry and folk melodies to the real thing, as in *Heidenröslein* (D257); even his near-hundred strophic songs composed between 1814 and mid-1816 are settings of Goethe, Matthisson, and Hölty, not of folk poetry. Schubert, it seems, not only exercised literary discrimination, but was conscious of doing so and prided himself on it.

Where Schubert's poetic source was an entire large anthology of one poet's verses, it is interesting to notice both how choosy the composer was and how his choices changed over time when he revisited a former source. For example, in 1815, Schubert selected three specimens of late eighteenth-century nature poetry from the works of Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg (*Morgenlied*, D266; *Abendlied*, D276; and *An die Natur*, D372); when he went back to the same well the next year, he set four poems about love (the unfinished ballad *Romanze*, D144; *Daphne am Bach*, D411; *Stimme der Liebe*, D412; and *Lied in der Abwesenheit*, D416). On his final visit to this poet's works in 1823, he chose two poems on death, including the exquisite *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (D774) – it was in the summer of 1823, one recalls, that a gravely ill Schubert was hospitalized for the syphilis diagnosed in late 1822 or early 1823. Further examples of Schubert's careful choices of poetry from a larger collection include Schulze's *Poetisches Tagebuch*, containing a hundred poems, from which Schubert chose ten of the best. (Another issue that comes to the surface in this case is the way in which the composer's knowledge of the larger body of poetry colors his approach to the individual specimens. Schulze was mentally disturbed, obsessed with love for two women who did not return his love, and the poetic diary is the record of that obsession, however altered by its conversion into art. Schubert, I believe, incorporates his awareness of the pathology unfurled throughout the entire diary into his Schulze songs.³)

One must always keep in mind the literary situation of the day, including what was praised at the time. Posterity may have condemned the likes of Ernst Schulze, the Collin brothers, Ladislaus Pyrker, and many other

Schubert poets to obscurity or outright oblivion, but in their own day, they won considerable local acclaim because their poems addressed then-current literary and other issues, whether in Vienna alone, other areas of Austria, or the wider German-speaking world.⁴ Schubert may have realized that Karl Gottfried von Leitner or Johann Georg Jacobi were no match for the likes of Goethe, but Leitner was well regarded in the early 1820s by those with influence on Schubert, and the result was a group of remarkable songs composed in late 1827 and early 1828 (including *Der Kreuzzug*, D932; *Des Fischers Liebesglück*, D933; *Der Winterabend*, D938; and *Die Sterne*, D939). Ewan West has observed that the major Austrian writers were more devoted to the theater than to lyric verse (Franz Grillparzer exemplifies the phenomenon) and that the local lyrical tradition was of uneven quality, with only Nikolaus Lenau's reputation surviving intact to the present day.⁵ Nonetheless, Austrian poets such as Seidl were often lauded at the time in terms worthy of Goethe or Schiller, as many reviews confirm. Composers might naturally be influenced by such praise. The brothers Heinrich and Matthäus von Collin, both Schubert poets, exemplify all of the phenomena West discusses: they were highly regarded in their own day as dramatic poets, their lyric output small by comparison but significant for Schubert, whose settings of Matthäus von Collin's *Der Zwerg* (D771), *Wehmut* (D772), and *Nacht und Träume* (D827) are among his beautiful Lieder. Similarly, Caroline Pichler (1769–1843, the poet of *Der Sänger am Felsen*, D482; *Lied [Ferne von der grossen Stadt]*, D483; and *Der Unglückliche*, D713) is little known now outside of Austria and seldom read, except by scholars, but in her day she was a significant literary lioness in Vienna.⁶ Schubert was among the visitors to her salon in the early 1820s – did he, one wonders, know the full context of *Der Unglückliche* in her novel *Olivier*?⁷

A case-history of changing tastes: the poets of Schubert's youth

Schubert's tastes, not surprisingly, changed as he grew older, as he met writers and read newly published works, and as different compositional issues engaged his attention. He began his prodigious song oeuvre by inheriting Mozart's poetic sources – Gabriele von Baumberg (1766–1839), known as the “Sappho of Vienna,” was the poet of Mozart's Lied *Als Luise die Briefe ihres unvertrauten Liebhabers verbrannt*, K. 520 – and the pre-Romantic and early Romantic poets of the late eighteenth century, such as the pietistic Ludwig Theobul Kosegarten (1758–1818), mentor to the artists Philipp Otto Runge and Caspar David Friedrich. Kosegarten

was a favorite with Austrian and Prussian song composers, and Schubert joined the long procession of Kosegarten composers with twenty strophic songs composed between June and October 1815, plus a final, more complex creation two years later in May 1817, *An die untergehende Sonne* (D457). The lyric verse of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1742–1803), who spellbound an entire generation of writers by making, in Schiller’s phrase, “everything lead up to the infinite,” was also a source for thirteen Schubert songs in 1815–16, including *Das Rosenband* (D280), a lovely specimen of Anacreontic lyricism, and the dialogue-song *Hermann und Thusnelda* (D322). The latter is notable for the foreshadowing in the accompaniment to measures 84–111 of the principal accompanimental figure in *Ellens Gesang I*, both songs poetic celebrations by fictive women of heroic male exploits (the poets are male and so is the point of view), and for the exquisite A flat major cantilena “Ruh’ hier, ruh’ hier, dass ich den Schweiß von der Stirn’ abtrockne und der Wange das Blut!” (“Rest here, that I may wipe the sweat from your brow and the blood from your cheeks”). “Hermann” is Arminius, the hero of the battle of the Teutoberger Wald in 9 A.D.; he became the archetypal German hero, and Schubert’s choice of such texts as *Hermann und Thusnelda*, reflects the fervent nationalism of the day.

Composers always respond to other composers, and Schubert therefore gravitated to two related late eighteenth-century – early nineteenth-century poetic repertoires popular with other song composers: the poetry of Friedrich von Matthisson (1761–1831) and Johann Gaudenz Freiherr von Salis-Seewis (1762–1834). (One of Beethoven’s most popular works was his song *Adelaide*, Op. 46, to a poem by Matthisson, and Schubert too composed a setting of this famous text, D95, in 1814, despite fears that he would “have to write it exactly as Beethoven did” [SMF77].) Matthisson was also a favorite of Schubert’s song-writing predecessor Johann Rudolf Zumsteeg (the teenage Schubert immersed himself in Zumsteeg’s ballads and songs and announced his intent to modernize the model inherited from that composer),⁸ and twenty-seven of Schubert’s twenty-nine Matthisson songs belong to the early years 1812–16. Salis-Seewis’s single volume of verse, first printed in 1793, was reprinted in Vienna in 1815; the very next year, Schubert began setting his poems to music, culminating in the masterpiece *Der Jüngling an der Quelle* (D300) (this song also exemplifies Schubert’s willingness to emend his chosen poems, as Salis-Seewis’s final line “Elisa! mir zu” becomes Schubert’s haunting “Louise, dir nach,” its liquid -l, open -a vowel, comparative lack of consonantal emphasis, and contrasting dark-bright vowels [-ou followed by -i] more “musical” than the original).⁹

Still another instance of Schubert’s early reliance on the literary

enthusiasms of an older generation is the group of nine Ossian settings, composed between June 1815 and February 1816. The Ossian poems, one of the most notorious of all literary frauds, were the creation of James MacPherson (1736–96), a Scotsman obsessed with Scottish nationalism who invented a Gaelic Homer¹⁰ – the blind and elderly bard Ossian who sings massive, mournful verse-tales of the battles of his father, King Fingal of Morven (north-west Scotland), of his own dead son Oscar, and of past glory – and insisted upon its “authenticity” in the teeth of doubts raised almost immediately by skeptics. The litany of exotic names that ring throughout the ballads – Cuthullin, Trenar, Dermid, Caruth, Branno, Gormur – do not ultimately disguise their creation by an eighteenth-century pre-Romantic sensibility, but the night mists, moonlight, and ghosts of MacPherson’s imagination enflamed all of Europe for a time, with Napoleon among the devotees of Ossian. In 1815, when Schubert composed six of his Ossian ballads (*Kolmas Klage*, *Ossians Lied nach dem Falle Nathos*, *Das Mädchen von Inistore*, *Cronnan*, *Shilrik und Vinvela*, and the first version of *Lorma*, D217, 278, 281, 282, 293, and 327, respectively), he was both still attracted to the large-scale ballad composition of his earliest youth and had rediscovered Goethe, whose Werther is passionate about Ossian. The popularity of this poetry was still so great in the late 1820s and 1830s that Anton Diabelli began the publication by installments (*Lieferungen*) of the Schubert *Nachlass* in July 1830 with the Ossian ballads.

The young Schubert and his circle of friends were devoted with particular intensity to the two giants of the era, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) and Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805): there are seventy-four Goethe Lieder – more than any other poet – and forty-four Schiller Lieder. David Gramit has even speculated convincingly that the Dioscurii, or twin stars, in Mayrhofer’s poem “Schiffers Nachtlid” (Schubert set it to music as *Lied eines Schiffers an die Dioskuren*, D360) are Goethe and Schiller, gods to whom the reverent sailor dedicates the rudder by which he steers his course.¹¹ Of the two bodies of song, the Schiller repertory begins earlier, with Schubert’s first setting of *Des Mädchens Klage* (D6) in 1811 (two other settings would follow, D191 of 1815 and D389 of 1816); Schiller at the time was even more respected in the conservative Viennese literary community than Goethe. Schiller’s mammoth ballads, such as *Der Taucher* (D77), and small, insouciant “Come and kiss me, sweet-and-twenty” spring songs, such as *An den Frühling* (D283 and 587), were the composer’s most frequent choices from the poetry of a writer whose aesthetic philosophy was the pole star of the youthful Schubert circle. If Schubert had his manifest difficulties with Schiller’s poetry and therefore set many of the Schiller poems two

and three times in an attempt to capture “the right tone” (for example, *Der Jüngling am Bache* [D30] of September 1812, was recast three days later and then again seven years later, in 1819),¹² he also had wonderful successes, such as *Die Götter Griechenlands* (D677) and *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus* (D583; first attempted in 1816, the second version completed in 1817).¹³

Goethe, in his magnitude and multiplicity, was even more a catalyst for stylistic experiment on Schubert’s part; it is, after all, with *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (D118) and *Erkönig* (D328) that a hitherto unprecedented power appears in German song. This poet, who fittingly coined the word “Weltliteratur” (“world literature”), wrote poetry that ranges from dithyrambic odes to the distilled perfection of the *Roman Elegies*, from the Baroque richness of *Faust* to mastery of the short lyric, from Anacreontic playfulness to the furies of the *Sturm und Drang*, from reflective classicism to, at last, a symbolism which unites all of his earlier tendencies.¹⁴ It is his incomparable achievement to have imposed the unity of dominant concerns on a massive body of work so heterogeneous in style and form, to have found a way of experiencing and writing in which the thing experienced is always interfused with the emotions of the experiencing subject and is therefore rendered symbolic. But curiously, Schubert’s engagement with Goethe’s poetry has not yet received the scholarly attention it deserves; even the Goethe songbooks now in the Vienna City Library and the Paris Conservatoire collection merit renewed study. What of Goethe’s lyric repertory did Schubert choose and what did he shun? How and why did the composer’s youthful obsession with Goethe dwindle over the years? What are the possible correlations between the choice of certain Goethe poems and the compositional, or even biographical, issues at that time in Schubert’s life? (For example, Schubert set *Ganymed*, D544, in 1817 at a point when he was most interested in composing tonally progressive songs. He was also at the time in close contact with his friend Johann Mayrhofer [1787–1836], who was a student of the Greek classics, who venerated Goethe and was, perhaps, homosexual; personal resonances might well cluster about this song of a youth beloved by Zeus.) What more should be said of Schubert’s long struggle with the Harper’s and Mignon’s songs in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*? An entire book on the topic of Schubert and Goethe is surely overdue.¹⁵

And so too is consideration of other aspects of Schubert’s tastes in poetry once youth was behind him. To which poets did Schubert turn in 1816–17 (among them, Christian Friedrich Schubart, Matthias Claudius, second settings of previous Schiller poems, and Mayrhofer) and why? When Schubert returned in 1816 to Hölty’s poems, after the ten Hölty songs of 1815, can one trace differences in his musical approach to the

same poet? What was the effect of Schubert's using the "emended" 1804 edition of Höltz's poems by Johann Heinrich Voss? What is the story of Schubert's involvement with the Viennese Romantics and the circle around Friedrich Schlegel? To these questions, one could add many others.

Poesia per musica and the issue of taste, part 2: Schubert and his friends

The circle of Schubert's close friends, despite changes over the years, always included writers, and Schubert immortalized several of those associations by setting his friends' poetry to music. Because most of his versifying companions were amateurs (in a city which made much of amateur performance) and cannot claim Goethean powers, this fact has lent additional credence to the charge that Schubert was indiscriminating in his choice of verse. However, his friends on occasion both introduced him to the works of better-quality poets the composer might otherwise not have known (it was through Franz von Bruchmann that Schubert discovered Friedrich Rückert's *Östliche Rosen* of 1821, from which the composer took texts for six songs) and themselves provided poetry undeniably not of the highest calibre but apt for Schubert's music. The Burgtheater actor Johann Anton Friedrich Reil's *Das Lied im Grünen* (D917 of June 1827), is an example of the phenomenon – Schubert's turn to D minor at the words "grünt einst uns das Leben nicht fürder," followed by the courageous rejection of minor-mode pessimism, is unforgettable – and there are others as well.

It is, however, possible to defend at least one of Schubert's friends against the accusation of poetic feebleness. Johann Mayrhofer was, in Brahms's words, the "ernsthafteste" ("the most serious") member of the *Schubertkreis*, the poet of forty-seven Schubert songs. Mayrhofer, who was a boyhood friend of Joseph von Spaun in Linz, met Schubert through Spaun in 1814 and subsequently became one of the dominant influences on Schubert's thought during the crucial years 1817–20. An unexplained rift between the erstwhile companions in late 1820 (was it due to Mayrhofer's temperament, difficult to endure at close range? His acceptance in 1820 of a position as a censor, contrary to his own and to Schubert's ideals? His putative homosexuality? All of the above? – no one knows) put an end to their close association. In Mayrhofer's poetry, one finds a synthesis of themes from antiquity, the yearning for an unattainable ideal realm modeled after the Platonic "heaven" of Ideas and pure Spirit, and a distinctive pitch-black pessimism born of ineradicable

psychological distress; to this is added experimental poetic forms and near-expressionistic verbal gestures. Drawn to Stoic philosophy from youth, he fought his chronic depression with considerable strength of will but could not ultimately master it, even through the poetry that, along with delight in nature, were his sole consolations for existence. He committed suicide in 1836.

One can also cite the Mayrhofer songs as an interesting example of the confluence of circumstance, poetry, and compositional imperatives; that is, a composer may well be drawn to a particular repertory at a particular time because of a correspondence with his own musical development. The Mayrhofer Lieder run the gamut from gigantic ballad-cantatas (*Uraniens Flucht*, D554) to tiny strophic songs (*Alte Liebe rostet nie*, D477), from grandiose mythological subjects through gloomy personal meditations to tender musings and more, but despite this variety, one can see, especially in the twenty songs of 1817, a certain strain of radical experimentation. Progressive tonality appears in the magnificent *Auf der Donau* (D553) – a masterpiece which should be better known than it is – and astonishing chromaticism in *Freiwilliges Versinken* (D700). Mayrhofer's complexities thus elicited musical complexities; well before Wagner, Schubert in the Mayrhofer songs anticipated tonal maneuvers that would not become commonplace until the end of the century.

Although none of his other friends provided him with quite so rich a source of poetry as Mayrhofer, they are nevertheless a significant presence in the roster of Schubert poets. Franz von Bruchmann (1798–1867), the son of a wealthy merchant, provided the composer with five song texts (*An die Leyer*, D737; *Im Haine*, D738; the exquisite *Am See*, D746; *Schwestergruß*, D762; and *Der zürnende Barde*, D785) – inferior poetry, but Schubert forged masterpieces from it in 1822–23, when everything he touched turned to gold; Bruchmann's Lon Chaney-style graveyard mists and chromo-lithographed piety in *Schwestergruß* are enveloped in some of Schubert's best music. Franz von Schober (1796–1882), a wealthy and somewhat dissolute dilettante (his habit of becoming engaged briefly and unsuccessfully to his friends' sisters, only to be warned away, is but one indication of a questionable character) who was a massive presence in Schubert's life, wrote gushing claptrap, but *Am Bach im Frühling* (D361), *Todesmusik* (D758), *Schatzgräbers Begehr* (D761), and, above all, *An die Musik*, are extremely fine songs nonetheless. Franz Xaver von Wssehrd Schlechta (1796–1875), a government employee and occasional poet, was a loyal admirer of the composer, one whose poetry is more original and more substantive than Schober's: of the seven Schlechta songs, *Fischerweise* (D881), *Widerschein* (D639), and *Totengräber-Weise* (D869) are especially notable.

Personal ties to a poet were, on occasion, augmented by other factors as well, such as the influence of other song composers. In 1812, Schubert met Theodor Körner (1791–1813), recently arrived in Vienna and already garnering fame as a playwright for the Burgtheater; the young, enthusiastic, and charming Saxon poet made a great impression upon the Schubert circle, on Spaun and Mayrhofer in particular. On August 26th of the following year, Körner, who had joined a German volunteer regiment fighting in the War of Liberation, was killed in a skirmish at Gadebusch, and a volume of his patriotic poems, published under the title *Leyer und Schwert*, became a best-seller. But when Schubert in 1815, the year of the Congress of Vienna and a time when memorials to Vienna's adopted son were rife, set eleven Körner poems, he may also have been responding to settings of Körner's poems by the Viennese composer Stephan Franz, whose *Sechs Gedichte von Theodor Körner*, Op. 10, were published in 1814, as well as to memories of someone he knew personally and to the historical ferment of the day. Both Schubert and Franz evoke Mozart in their Körner settings: the beginning of Franz's *Sängers Morgenlied* recalls Mozart's *Abendempfindung an Laura*, K. 523, and Schubert's songs too seem like *hommages à Mozart*.

Several of Schubert's friendships with amateur writers deserve closer investigation so that we might come to know the poet as well as the songs. Johann Ladislaus Pyrker (1772–1847), the poet of *Das Heimweh* (D851) and *Die Allmacht* (D852), led an interesting life, recounted in a lively autobiography; at different times Patriarch of Venice and Archbishop of Erlau, he wrote a considerable quantity of verse. And knowledge of the poets surely includes knowledge of their other poetic works: one can better understand Matthäus von Collin's *Der Zwerg* if one realizes that he wrote at least one other poem about sexual obsession and death. Just as songs belong within the context of an entire oeuvre, so do poems.

Lieder and life: the biographical bridge

While verse by someone else does not originate from the composer's life and creative endeavors, Schubert, I would suppose, was intermittently drawn to poetry on particular subjects because those poems addressed his most pressing concerns at the time. While the dangers of speculating about such biographical issues should be obvious, adolescents and young adults, including artists in their youth, often seek a mirror of themselves in art. Schubert's first extant song-fragment is a gigantic unfinished sketch, possibly from early 1810, of an even more gigantic poem, "Lebenstraum," by Gabriele von Baumberg; it is possible that his atten-

tion was drawn to her because of a scandal the preceding year in which Gabriele's husband, the political revolutionary Janos Batsányi, fled into Parisian exile one step ahead of the State police, thus reviving her name in Viennese circles, and because the poem asserts a woman's right to Parnassian artistry. Schubert, already in contention with his father about a vocation, may have found in Gabriele's poem confirmation of his own belief that he was destined to be a composer. If a woman could make such a claim, so could he (or so one imagines a possible scenario); this is also an early demonstration, however inept and unfinished, of his musical sympathies for female poetic personae.¹⁶ The same classic adolescent struggle may have fueled his settings of Gottlieb Conrad Pfeffel's *Der Vatermörder* (D10), and Schiller's *Leichenfantasie* (D7), the latter an almost comic – were it not so true to the hurt feelings of adolescent parent-and-child misunderstandings – portrayal of the commonplace teenage fantasy that a father only realizes his son's glorious gifts after the youth has died. Graveside remorse is vividly depicted in harmonies already radical for 1811.

Adolescent self-dramatization is one thing, adult experience another. But it is difficult to imagine that the choice of poetry is entirely disinterested at all times in adulthood, that personality and circumstances do not at times direct the choice of poetry. We do not know precisely when or how Schubert discovered the *Siebenundsiebzig Gedichte aus den hinterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten* (Seven-and-Seventy Poems from the Posthumous Papers of a Journeying Horn-Player, published in Dessau in 1821) by Wilhelm Müller, an anthology which begins with the lyric monodrama *Die schöne Müllerin*, but we do know that the composition of this, Schubert's first song cycle to poetry by a fine and undervalued poet, coincides with the composer's discovery of a fatal venereal disease, with the quarantine customary for syphilitics in the initial contagious stage and the first serious medical crisis brought on by the disease. Schubert would have known that there was no cure and that his malady often culminated in horrifying paralysis or madness. That he should be drawn to a large and ambitious work in which a youth dies as a consequence of sex (whether from disease or from shock and despair is of less import than the termination in death) seems somehow logical. Four years later, he would return to the second volume of the same poet's verses for *Winterreise*, D911 (the poet's title is "Die Winterreise"), an even more bitter exploration of love, alienation, and living death. That he might have seen in Müller's numbed, paralysed hurdy-gurdy player a premonition of his own possible fate seems all too likely; that he confronted it and turned it into music of such unflinching, austere beauty seems nothing short of heroic.¹⁷

Speculations about biographical connections are possible in other instances as well, although the paucity of the Schubert documentation makes such guesswork an uncertain enterprise. It cannot presently be determined whether Schubert and the Romantic philosopher–poet–novelist Friedrich Schlegel ever met, but their groups of friends certainly overlapped. One of the sixteen songs on texts by Schlegel (and Schubert is one of the few composers to have set Schlegel’s lyric poetry to music), *Fülle der Liebe* (D854), may, according to the research of Lisa Feurzeig, be Schubert’s “last word” on his connection with the circle around Schlegel, in particular, its numerous amorous complications and involvement with magnetic healing. The slightly overblown grandiosity of this 1825 song, hints at a critique of pretentiousness, as well as the musical recognition of great beauty and grief.

Schubert as poet’s editor

The case of Schubert’s setting of Matthäus von Collin’s *Nacht und Träume* highlights several recurring challenges of Schubert song scholarship: what precisely was the textual source, and did Schubert make emendations to the poem? The matter is all the more intriguingly complex when the poet himself was prone to revision and the composer felt free to make still more alterations *en route* to the finished Lied. Schubert’s song text is as follows:

Heil’ge Nacht, du sinkest nieder;
 Nieder wallen auch die Träume,
 Wie dein Mondlicht durch die Räume,
 Durch der Menschen stille Brust.
 Die belauschen sie mit Lust;
 Rufen, wenn der Tag erwacht:
 Kehre wieder, heil’ge Nacht!
 Holde Träume, kehret wieder!

Holy night, you sink down;
 Dreams too float down
 like your moonlight through space,
 through the silent hearts of men.
 They listen with delight,
 cry out when day awakes:
 Come back, holy night!
 Fair dreams, come back!

In Collin’s *Nachgelassene Gedichte* (Posthumous Poems), published in 1827, his friend the famous Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall

includes two poems entitled “Nacht und Träume” and “Nachtfeyer” (“Celebration of Night”), poems which are actually variations of the same work. “Nacht und Träume” was perhaps written in 1813, certainly by 1814, as it appeared in Johann Erichson’s *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1814*.¹⁸

Nacht und Träume

Nacht! verschwiegne, sankst du nieder?
 Nieder durch die dunklen Räume
 Wallen heimlich jetzt die Träume
 In der Menschen stille Brust,
 Die belauschen sie mit Lust;
 Rufen, wenn der Tag erwacht:
 Kehre wieder heil’ge Nacht!
 Holde Träume, kehret wieder.

Night and Dreams

Night! quiet one, did you sink down?
 Down through the dark spaces,
 dreams secretly now float down
 through the silent hearts of men.
 They listen with delight,
 cry out when day awakes:
 Come back, holy night!
 Fair dreams, come back!

“Nachtfeyer,” which appears for the first time in the *Nachgelassene Gedichte* (was “Nachtfeyer” Collin’s title or Hammer’s?), differs from Schubert’s text only in lines 3–4: “Wie dein Licht durch diese Bäume, / Lieblich durch der Menschen Brust.” There are several possible scenarios to explain the existence of three different versions of the same poem. When Schubert composed his setting sometime before June 4, 1823, when Anton von Spaun wrote to Schober that he had heard Vogl sing *Der Zwerg, Greisengesang, and Nacht und Träume*, he could have taken the poet’s two existing versions – if one postulates that both versions existed at the time – and conflated them, replacing the dramatic, exclamatory–questioning beginning of “Nacht und Träume” with the quieter, awe-struck exhalation of both the song text and “Nachtfeyer”; perhaps he might have done so because he could find the stuff of music in images of motion, in night’s descent, but not in silence, hence the deletion of the word “verschwiegne.” Furthermore, he might have replaced Collin’s “dein Licht” with “dein *Mondlicht*,” thereby darkening the vowel sounds and rendering more gentle Collin’s succession of short words. In still another scenario, Schubert might have conferred with Collin on emendations to

the published version of “Nacht und Träume,” the result the song text which Collin then varied still further, at some unknown time, as “Nachtfeyer.” All such speculation aside, we do not know how the textual discrepancies in “Nacht und Träume” came into being, only that they exist. The problem resurfaces elsewhere in the Schubert song oeuvre as well: was it Schubert who eliminated two-thirds of Mayrhofer’s published text for *Erlafsee* (D586), or did the composer use an earlier version without the mystico-symbolic enigmas one finds in the printed poem? We do not know. The poem in its printed version is filled with an anguished symbolism that seems private and hence beyond absolute decoding.

Schubert *did* on occasion alter the poetic texts he set to music, the emendations running the gamut from slight to drastic; Kristina Muxfeldt, for example, discusses Schubert’s alterations to published poetic sources, with *Nachtviolen* (D752), *Greisengesang* and *Versunken* (D715) as specific instances.¹⁹ Schubert did so, one can speculate, for a variety of reasons, ranging from replacement of the poet’s language for better-sounding, more singable words through changes for the sake of a specific musical idea to large-scale disagreements with something in the poetic content. In Müller’s “Letzte Hoffnung” from *Winterreise*, Schubert changed the poet’s initial two lines, “Hier und da ist an den Bäumen / Noch ein buntes Blatt zu sehn” (“Here and there, yet a colored leaf can still be seen on the trees”) to the song text “Hie und da ist an den Bäumen / Manches bunte Blatt zu sehn” (“Here and there on the trees, many a colored leaf can still be seen”), to remove the “r” which interrupts and darkens the initial words “Hier und da” and to alter the singular (“Noch ein buntes Blatt”) to the many (“Manches bunte Blatt”) in accord – I believe – with his conception of many falling intervals in the piano introduction. Four years earlier, he had done something far more radical to *Die schöne Müllerin*: he eliminated not only Müller’s prologue and epilogue but three entire poems from the body of the narrative (“Das Mühlenleben,” “Erster Schmerz, letzter Scherz,” and “Blümlein Vergißmei”). When he did so, it was not because those poems were incidental to the tale and easily dispensable; in fact, what happens in the last of those omitted poems drives the miller lad to suicide. We cannot know for a certainty why Schubert deleted those poems, but elsewhere I have suggested that he did not want *his* protagonist to suffer the degrading experience Müller’s lad undergoes. Schubert not only excised three poems but also “rewrote” the poetry he did set by overwhelming the poetic indices of delusion, frenzy, and near-insanity with brighter, more buoyant music: Müller’s poem “Mein!” is “wahres Rasen” (“truly raving”), according to the famous nineteenth-century singer Julius Stockhausen, but Schubert’s

setting is all symmetry and joy, with only a few quickly suppressed hints of disturbance.²⁰

Striking it right: Schubert and multiple versions

Over and over throughout his brief life, Schubert made a practice of returning to a poem he had already set to music and setting it again, sometimes at a distance of a few hours or a day, sometimes years later. In certain instances, the changes are relatively minor, and in others, Schubert re-reads the poem from a different musical stance altogether and invents entirely new music; for this reason above all others, it is difficult to determine an exact “count” of Schubert’s songs. The ubiquitous habit of producing versions (which Maurice Brown defines as entirely fresh settings of a poem, such as the two settings of Goethe’s *An den Mond*, D259 and 296) or variants (defined as alterations to an existing song, the altered work written as a separate manuscript)²¹ of a single poem tells of poetry’s multiplicity – just as a poem unlocks a variety of associations in readers’ minds, so too does it impel varying musical gestures in composers’ minds – and Schubert’s perfectionism, of dissatisfaction with something in the first conception and a determination to try again, to wrest still more music from the poet’s images.

It was a habit begun early. Where the composer was, conjecturally, too displeased with the setting even to finish it, he abandoned it, left it as a fragment, and started afresh. (But how revealing it is that he kept these uncompleted youthful ruins, long after what led him to the song in the first place had vanished.) For example, Schubert made his first attempt to set Friedrich von Matthisson’s *Der Geistertanz* (D15) sometime around 1812, devising fifty-one measures of episodic-sectional, mock-horror music after the model of Zumsteeg; unhappy with the results, he tried again on a grander scale that same year (or so the Deutsch cataloguers suggest), the music replete with *Schauerballade* effects (D15A). This too failed to pass muster with the self-critical composer, and Schubert dropped the project altogether until October 14, 1814. The third time was truly the charm (D116), the composer discovering both his own sense of humor and that of the frisking ghosts. (Schubert returned to the text again in 1816 and set it as a male partsong [D494; TTBBB].)

In another example of “Schubert revising Schubert,”²² this time a study in opposites, Schubert first set Körner’s *Sängers Morgenlied* (D163) on February 27, 1815, then again (D165) on March 1, a few days later. For the initial version, Schubert took his point of departure from the first stanza of Körner’s six and created a buoyant greeting to the sun in G major, with

energetic melismas propelling the vocal line along at strategic points. One notes in particular the unison setting of the words “mit geheimnisvollen Worten” (“with secret words”) in measures 9–10 and the chromatic neighbor-notes on either side of the dominant pitch – Schubert would later signify the secretive nature of the wanderer’s thoughts in *Letzte Hoffnung* from *Winterreise* in a similar way, a gesture with antecedents in his youth. But the word “Ach” (“Ah”) at the beginning of stanza two of *Sängers Morgenlied* is the signal for a change of tone, for greater gravity. Schubert did more than merely ignore the *Sehnsucht* (“yearning”) awakened by the arrival of day in the February 27 version – he set it to the merry strains of the first verse, sound and sense thus at odds throughout the last half of the song.

Süßes Licht! Aus goldnen Pforten
 Brichst du siegend durch die Nacht.
 Schöner Tag! Du bist erwacht.
 Mit geheimnisvollen Worten,
 In melodischen Akkorden
 Grüß’ ich deine Rosenpracht!

Ach! der Liebe sanftes Wehen
 Schwellt mir das bewegte Herz,
 Sanft, wie ein geliebter Schmerz.
 Dürft’ ich nur auf goldnen Höhen
 Mich im Morgenduft ergehen!
 Sehnsucht zieht mich himmelwärts.

Sweet light! Through golden portals
 You break victoriously through the night.
 Beautiful day! You are awake.
 With mysterious words
 And melodious sounds,
 I greet your roseate splendor!

Ah, the soft breath of love
 Swells my moved heart
 As softly as a beloved pain.
 If only I could wander on golden heights
 In the fragrant morning!
 Yearning draws me heavenwards.

Presumably disturbed by the discrepancy, Schubert returned to the poem two days later in order to compose a setting whose atmosphere derives from the *second* stanza, not the first, and is therefore reflective of the bulk of the poem. This second version, marked “Langsam” and in a far more reverential mood, entirely devoid of the gaiety of the first version, is

a foreshadowing of measures 16–21 of *Morgengruß* from *Die schöne Müllerin* of 1823, at the words “So muß ich wieder gehen” (“So I must go away”). The morning *mise-en-scène* and the shared yearning, albeit for different objects, might well have impelled the harmonic, motivic, figural, and rhythmic resemblances eight years later. (One poet’s words can on occasion recall to life the music first devised to another poet’s words, as when Schubert based his setting of Matthias Claudius’s *An die Nachtigall*, D497, on his prior setting of Josef Ludwig Stoll’s *An die Geliebte*, D303.²³)

Much more remains to be brought to light regarding Schubert’s literary world, and these few pages exist more to point out issues than to provide conclusions; if some of the plethora of questions raised here cannot be fully answered, others can. When scholars approach *Lieder*, Schubert’s or anyone else’s, from the vantage point of curiosity about its origins in language and explore the poet and the literary tradition as well as the musical context, there is much, I believe, to be gained.

