

# “Du meine Seele, du mein Herz”

## Self, Other, and Hermaphroditic Union in the Music of Robert (and Clara) Schumann

Benedict Taylor

In einem vielzitierten Brief, den Robert Schumann im Juni 1839 an Clara Wieck schrieb, freut er sich auf ihre spätere Ehe, die er nicht nur als physische oder rechtliche Verbindung sieht, sondern als Verschmelzung von Herz und Geist, eine schöpferische und geistige Durchdringung. »Wir werden auch vieles unter unseren beiden Namen veröffentlichen« schreibt Schumann, »die Nachwelt soll uns als ein Herz und eine Seele betrachten und nicht herausfinden, was von dir und was von mir ist.« Dieser Artikel untersucht das Verschwimmen des Subjekts in der Musik der Schumanns, insbesondere den fließenden Übergang zwischen dem Selbst und dem Anderen und das Potenzial, beides zu vereinen. Dieser Gedanke ist von besonderer Bedeutung in Bezug auf das Problem des gespaltenen Ich, das das idealistische und romantische Denken durchzog. Durch die Verschmelzung des Selbst mit einem Anderen könnte das individuelle Subjekt die scheinbar unüberbrückbaren Spaltungen in seiner eigenen Konstitution überwinden, ein Prozess der Selbstreflexion im Anderen, der zur vollständigen Kenntnis des Selbst führen kann. Eine solche Dynamik ist implizit in den virtuellen Persönlichkeiten einiger Instrumentalwerke Robert Schumanns enthalten, wird aber darüber hinaus in mehreren Liedersammlungen explizit thematisiert. In *Liebesfrühling*, einem bemerkenswerten Beispiel für die schöpferische Zusammenarbeit zwischen den frisch verheirateten Robert und Clara Schumann, wird das Thema der verschwimmenden Gender-Unterschiede und der hermaphroditischen Vereinigung im Text auffällig in den Vordergrund gestellt und in der Vertonung reflektiert. Auch andere Lieder wie z. B. aus *Frauenliebe und Leben*, *Myrthen* und dem Eichendorff-*Liederkreis* deuten darauf hin, dass der Weg zum Selbstbewusstsein im virtuellen Subjekt der Musik offenbar durch die gegenseitige Reflexion von Selbst und Anderem ermöglicht wird.

In a much-cited letter Robert Schumann wrote to Clara Wieck in June 1839, he looks forward to their eventual marriage, one that not only is a physical or legal union but a fusion of heart and mind, a creative and spiritual interpenetration. “We will also publish many things in both our names,” Schumann writes; “posterity should regard us as one heart and one soul and not find out what is by you and what is by me.” This article explores the blurring of subjective voice in the music of the Schumanns, specifically the fluidity between self and other, and the potential for uniting the two. This idea assumes particular significance in relation to the problem of the divided self that haunted Idealist and Romantic thought, whereby through fusing the self with an other the individual subject might overcome the seemingly irreparable divisions in its own constitution, a process of reflection-in-the-other or self-recognition that can lead to full self-knowledge. Such a dynamic is arguably implicit in the virtual personas of some of Robert Schumann’s instrumental works, but it is furthermore explicitly thematized in several song collections. In *Liebesfrühling*, a notable instance of creative collaboration between the newly married Robert and Clara Schumann, the theme of blurred gender distinctions and hermaphroditic union is conspicuously foregrounded in the text and reflected in the musical setting. And other songs from *Frauenliebe und Leben*, *Myrthen*, and the Eichendorff *Liederkreis* suggest that the path to self-consciousness in the music’s virtual subject may be enabled through the mutual reflection of self and other.

SCHLAGWORTE/KEYWORDS: Clara Schumann; gender studies; hermaphroditism; Hermaphroditismus; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff; Lied; Marianne von Willemer; Robert Schumann

## DUETS, REAL OR IMAGINED

The *Andante cantabile* of Robert Schumann's Piano Quartet, Op.47 (1842), is for its greater part given over to a lyrical theme characteristic of the composer's most unabashed flowering of romantic sentiment (Ex. 1). Given at the start to the cello, the melody is heard in the warm middle register of the (male) human voice, unmistakably vocal, the very sound of the musical self. Initially the mood is very much of a day-dreaming subject; Marshall Brown in fact references this movement as a pertinent example of the state of self-conscious reverie he finds newly emergent in music of the time.<sup>1</sup> But as the cello approaches the end of the melodic phrase we become aware of a new voice that has entered: the violin has taken up the melody, overlapping its extended two quarter-note upbeat with the cadential progression of the cello. As the music continues, the cello responds to its new partner by quasi-imitation a fourth lower, the two melodic lines intertwining gracefully around each other. What had started out as a solitary reverie has now unmistakably turned into a romantic duet. One subject has become two: the self has been joined by an other.

If the cello is readily associated with the male voice, the higher-pitched violin is clearly ordained to play the female partner in the musical romance that unfolds here. (For a composer for whom life and art seemed so often interlinked, not least in popular reception, such musical gendering may easily be conflated with an autobiographical scenario involving Robert and Clara Wieck, one which can quickly descend into mawkishness.)<sup>2</sup> Yet it is the feminine violin that has taken the lead, and has in fact done so right from the start of the movement.

The four opening bars present a cadential approach to the tonic B $\flat$  decorated by a chromaticized melodic flourish in the violin that overlaps with the entry of the cello theme in measure 3; it is only with the end of the cello's phrase that the listener realizes this initial figure, related in contour to the principal theme, is essentially the tail segment of its melody. Perhaps this other voice – the voice of the other – has been gently calling the tune all along; at the very least, there is a strange symbiosis between the two musical personae.

As the movement progresses, the duetting continues between piano and viola, albeit with a syncopated variant of the theme. Already the subjects of this music have become more blurred; formerly distinct, they are heard now as something more akin to the inner reverberation of the self.<sup>3</sup> This process is taken further in the movement's ensuing central section (mm. 48–72). Contrasting in its chordal, homophonic writing syncopated across the bar lines and hushed dynamic, this section takes up a tone of subjective interiority familiar from late Beethoven (a conspicuous influence throughout this quartet). Even more clearly we have returned to a more purely singular subject. There is only the sense of a musical self now; the other voice has disappeared.

1 Brown 1981, 695.

2 See, for instance, the strand of reception history documented by Braunschweig 2017.

3 Yonatan Malin has pertinently remarked on how such "reverberant doublings of a single voice" in Schumann's lieder create "an expansion and deepening of inwardness, a resonant space within the self." Malin 2010, 123–124.

Andante cantabile

*f*  $\rightarrow$  *p*  $\leftarrow$  *p*

*f*  $\rightarrow$  *p* *p*

*f*  $\rightarrow$  *p* *mf*

*f* *p*

8

*mf* cantabile e poco a poco cresc.

poco a poco cresc.

poco a poco cresc.

poco a poco cresc.

15

21

Ex. 1: Robert Schumann, Piano Quartet in Eb, Op. 47, third movement, opening (continued on next page)

Ex. 1 (continued from previous page)

On the return to the music of the A section, the main theme in viola is decorated with filigree sixteenth-notes in the violin tracing a delicate embroidery around the melody. Whereas the presentation in the opening section between cello and violin seemed undeniably to constitute a true duet, however, here on the reprise the effect is of an ornamented single subject amidst a web of gentle pulsations. And even when the violin and viola share the theme from m. 88 (now modified to imitation at the second, with a strong subdominant emphasis that suggests imminent formal closure), there is no longer the same romantic feeling; the lyrical continuity resulting previously from the overlapping of melodic phrases is absent too. Possibly one of the reasons for this perception is bound up with the earlier close sonorous identification of the cello's singing voice with the music's primary subject (the voice of a quasi-authorial "Schumann" as it were), for when the cello subsequently returns with the theme it had played at the movement's start there is a clear sense of return to the initial subjective persona, alongside a similar sense of formal rounding off. Now, however, its song goes unanswered: its vocal partner is missing.

But, with the cadential arrival at m. 118, a new, surprising sonority greets our ears: a low B $\flat$  in the cello undergirds the movement's final thirteen measures. Pitched a tone lower than its lowest normal note, the cello's C string has been re-tuned during the initial stages of the reprise in order to accommodate this sound. A mundane explanation may of course be at hand for this unusual step: the movement is in B $\flat$ , and Schumann might simply have wanted a low tonic pedal in the strings to support the piano's new canonic idea presented in the treble above (a figure prophetic, as it will turn out, of the beginning of the finale). But still, the decision is quixotic, and invites hermeneutic interpretation. In playing a note that, as Brown observes, "ordinarily does not exist," the musical subject has suddenly revealed new and unexpected depths. By finding this "ethereal fundamental," the self has ventured into unsuspected regions, initiating a decisive movement from reverie to action (the finale, prefigured at this precise point in the other instruments).<sup>4</sup> In the cello's re-tuning, the musical subject has effectively re-tuned its own self in light of its experiences across the movement. It is with this return to the voice of the self, following the encounter with the voice of the romantic other, that the music has been able to attain this deepened condition of selfhood.

4 Brown 1981, 695. Brown interprets the moment as one of clarification, "as if a preconscious state were yielding to a conscious one."

In this example from the Piano Quartet, Schumann's music seems to slip at ease between its representation of a single lyrical subject and at least two distinct subjects heard interacting in musical dialogue. Such fluidity of subjective voice is indeed typical of his chamber music: a similar ambiguity may be glimpsed, for instance, in the slow movement of the Piano Trio No. 1, Op. 63 (1847). Here, following a rhapsodic arioso in the violin that comes to a temporary rest on a dominant-functioning fourth chord (m. 10), the newly entering cello takes over the instrumental line from the same pitch (E4), and for several bars plays the primary line above the violin, relegating the latter to a subdued lower voice barely distinguishable from its partial doubling in the inner parts of the piano. The effect is of the continuity formed by a single voice, with minimal change in tone-color as the violin is succeeded by the cello. Only gradually – hinted first in the violin's brief registral overreaching at m. 16 – do we become conscious that the initial line and the soliloquizing solitary subject have been joined at this point by a second voice. With this dawning awareness, too, the music moves away from the troubled searching of the opening *Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung* and into a more animated and lyrically forthcoming passage in the submediant major (*Bewegter*, m. 20) in which all three instruments respond to each other as if at last liberated from earlier inhibitions.<sup>5</sup>

Or take the slow movement of the Second Piano Trio, Op. 80 (composed likewise in 1847), in which imitative murmurings in cello and piano support a romantic melody of Schumannesque sweetness and *Innigkeit* in the violin, a conception calling to mind the subjective plenitude associated earlier with the feeling of pure self-possession, from which the cello gradually becomes an ever-more equal partner, entwining itself lovingly around the violin's sighing phrases. The fact that the melody played seems already to refer to one that had appeared unexpectedly in the development section of the first movement – a theme which itself appeared to allude to an earlier song, "Intermezzo" ("Your beautiful image / I hold in the depths of my heart"), Op. 39 No. 2 – and will presently grow into this same theme, strongly supports these romantic associations.

Such examples not only suggest the formation of a lyrical voice that might signify the emergence of a (virtual) musical subject, but the emergence of a *second* voice, of an other, out of the self – one that seems deeply bound up with this subject and yet qualitatively different from the divided or multiple subject familiar from Schumann's piano music of the 1830s.<sup>6</sup> But such readings are hermeneutically fragile. In the cases above are we really hearing a duet, or are we perhaps hearing an imaginary duet – the fantasy of the solitary self, dreaming of an ideal love object in which it sees itself mirrored? Has the alterity of the encounter with the other voice really initiated the coming to selfhood of the musical subject, in this manner tracing a typical idealist movement of self-consciousness through the mutual recognition of self and other, or are we merely witnessing a narcissistic subject prone to ventriloquism? Of course there are true vocal duets, where there indisputably are two people or protagonists involved, and Schumann wrote several good examples of these. But what is more interesting for this present investigation are those moments when one subject becomes two, when two subjects conversely appear to become one, and most of all when a single subject implies the presence of an other, the image of the beloved, within itself.

5 Especially significant at this point appears to be the piano's movement from *una corda* to *tutte corde*.

6 In this understanding of subjective voice, I am building on the work of earlier scholars including Cumming 1997 and 2000, Johnson 2009, Taylor/Owen 2017, and Hatten 2018.

This article explores the blurring of subjective voice in the music of Robert (and in one case Clara) Schumann, specifically the fluidity between self and other, and the potential for uniting the two. As we have just seen, such a dynamic is arguably implicit in instrumental works, but it is furthermore explicitly thematized in several of Schumann's song collections, which show how a path to full self-consciousness and a deeper sense of subjecthood may be obtained through the mirroring or fusion of self with other. It shows that if the reflection of the self-in-other in these pieces holds out the possibility of successful coming-to-self consciousness, the danger of narcissism lurks here nevertheless.

## ROBERT, CLARA, AND THE MYTH OF ROMANTIC HERMAPHRODITISM

In a much-cited letter Robert Schumann wrote to Clara Wieck in June 1839, he looks forward to their eventual marriage, one that not only is a physical or legal union but a fusion of heart and mind, a creative and spiritual interpenetration. "We will also publish many things in *both our names*," Schumann writes; "posterity should regard us as one heart and one soul and not find out what is by you and what is by me."<sup>7</sup> This idea of the two being of "one heart and one soul" occupied Schumann's thoughts greatly during this period: only the next month, speaking of a composition Clara had sent him, he comes to a similar conclusion concerning their spiritual and creative oneness: "In your Romance I heard once again now that we must become man and wife. You complete me as a musician, as I do you. Each of your ideas comes from my soul, just as I have to thank you for all my music."<sup>8</sup>

In earlier works like *Carnaval* and the *Davidsbündlertänze*, as well as in many of his songs from 1840 (most notably the two Heine cycles), Schumann famously appears to be playing with the divided, fractious subject, seeing aspects of the self as effectively an other to itself.<sup>9</sup> This theme of the impossibility of self-apperception was one that was commonplace in early nineteenth-century German intellectual culture, and one that was playfully treated by two of Schumann's favorite authors, Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffmann. An alternative and more radical step, however, might be to embrace alterity. If the self is ever fated to be split, at least when attempting to know itself, the path to full self-possession might well be through reaching out to the other. By fusing the self with an other, the individual subject might overcome the seemingly irreparable divisions in its own constitution. In engaging with this idea, Schumann is tapping into a theme that had also assumed major importance in early German Romanticism: the myth of lost hermaphroditic unity.

In Plato's *Symposium*, the character of Aristophanes famously tells a story of humankind's primal hermaphroditic nature to explain the nature of love, the topic under discussion. Once – so his somewhat tongue-in-cheek account goes – humans were double, with

7 Letter of 13 June 1839 ("Wir geben dann auch Manches unter *unsern beiden Namen* heraus; die Nachwelt soll uns ganz wie ein Herz und eine Seele betrachten und nicht erfahren, was von Dir, was von mir ist"), Schumann 2008, 5:544 /Schumann 1984–2001, 2:571, emphasis in original.

8 Letter of 10 July 1839 ("An Deiner Romanze hab' ich nun abermals von Neuem gehört, daß wir Mann und Frau werden müssen. Du vervollständigst mich als Componisten, wie ich Dich. Jeder Deiner Gedanken kömmt aus meiner Seele, wie ich ja meine ganze Musik Dir zu verdanken habe." Schumann 1984–2001, 2:629). Schumann also returns to this theme in yet another letter from this time: "Und dann heißt es Du und ich, und Dein und Mein, und Klara und Robert sind eines, ein Herz und eine Seele" (Letter of 18 July 1839, Schumann 1984–2001, 2:651).

9 See for instance Kramer 2002, Reiman 2004, and Perrey 2002.

four legs, four arms, and two sets of sexual organs, fused at their ribcage with two faces that could see both directions at once. But hybris befell these beings. Such creatures – termed hermaphrodites, after the mythic son of Hermes and Aphrodite, who fused with a nymph with whom he was enamored and became both male and female – were too powerful and threatened the order of the gods. Zeus, fearful of their capacity, ordered Apollo to split the primal hermaphrodites in two (and in doing so, turned their heads around to face the current way), thus drastically weakening them. Now divided, humans wander the earth searching for their lost other half to make themselves complete once more. Such is the cause of love – “the name given for our desire and pursuit of wholeness.”<sup>10</sup>

Aristophanes’ story forms a key mythic illustration of a subject that is already split, and seeks completion by fusing with an other. In this view, the individual subject is inherently only half of a larger originary unity, and thus positively needs another object, the beloved, for completion. Variants of this idea, most commonly associated with a heterosexual fusion of male and female, can be found throughout history – in Cabbalistic interpretations of the Old Testament, in the Hermetic writings of Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg – and readily align with Gnostic or Neoplatonic myths of a primal wholeness, followed by a division into multiplicity which is *de facto* a fall into evil, and the attempted regaining of this originary unity.<sup>11</sup> But the notion of hermaphroditism (or androgyny as it is sometimes termed) becomes especially prevalent in Romanticism, where it assumes a status approaching a grounding tenet.<sup>12</sup> For Romantics, the hermaphrodite symbolizes the overcoming of painful divisions that beset the modern subject, the union of subject and object, self and other, male and female, an idea particularly prominent in writers such as Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel (already associated by some commentators with Schumann’s Romantic aesthetics).<sup>13</sup> In Schlegel’s view, humanity is fundamentally hermaphroditic and aspires once more to the progressive union of the sexes. Marriage should not be a legal contract but rather, ideally, the overcoming of distinctions and difference, in which two become one (an idea transmitting a socially emancipatory message that strongly resonated with more politically engaged Romantics).<sup>14</sup> For Novalis, responding to the latent solipsism of Fichte’s philosophy in which alterity is entirely dependent on the self, a construct resulting from its own primary act of self-positing, the point of “absolute indifference” in which difference is paradoxically both maintained and overcome can only be attained in the hermaphroditic union of the self with the other in which this self is reflected.<sup>15</sup> As A.J.L. Busst, in his classic study of Romantic androgyny, explains, “at

10 Plato 1997, 189d–193e, quotation from 193a.

11 See Abrams 1971, 154–163.

12 Béguin 1937 identifies androgyny as the foundational myth of the Romantic era ; see MacLeod 1998 for a good account of this topic. The terms “hermaphrodite” and “androgynous” are often interchangeable in the literature, though in the following account I prefer to use the former to refer to the Platonic archetype of a union of two individuals into one (an ideal, after the mythic figure Hermaphroditos), whereas the latter will designate a single individual with characteristics of both, neither, or indeterminate gender.

13 See especially Friedrichsmeyer 1983. John Daverio, for one, has suggested close parallels between Schumann’s outlook and those of the above authors. Daverio 1993, 49–88.

14 Such ideas are found, for instance, in Schlegel 1795 and 1799.

15 See especially Novalis 2003; the image of love as an overflowing or interpenetration of self into other recurs throughout Novalis’s writing: it may be found conspicuously for example in the relationship between Heinrich and Mathilde at the end of book one of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in Novalis 1837. On this topic see also Strand 1998, 7–21.

the same time as the hermaphrodite symbolizes the union of the sexes, it represents in addition the self-sufficient narcissist union with the self. [...] The beloved not only reflects the self, but in fact *is* the self. The union of a couple, then, is not the fusion of two distinct entities, but the revelation of an underlying unity.”<sup>16</sup>

Schumann had already attempted to divide his own personality into two through the imaginary personas of Florestan and Eusebius.<sup>17</sup> But conversely, in the similarly fictional figure of Raro – formed from the last two letters of the name Clara and the first two of Robert – he had also taken imaginative steps towards the fusion of two separate individuals into a single persona that united both. Significantly, this was a fusion of himself with the person who would become the object of his love. Clara – or her *imago*, her internalized, idealized image – provided a love-object, an outlet or in some ways perhaps a safety valve for Schumann in the years up to 1840.<sup>18</sup> This interest in a genuine external subject, we might speculate, may well have helped Schumann steer clear of a dangerous Romantic solipsism, avoiding becoming too wrapped up in his own psyche by identifying his ego with and demanding recognition from something really existing in the outside world.

In “Widmung” (“Dedication”), the opening song of the Op. 25 collection *Myrthen* given to Clara as a bridal gift on the day of their wedding (12 September 1840), Robert sets a poem by Friedrich Rückert singing the praise of the beloved, framed revealingly by the lines “Du meine Seele, du mein Herz...Mein guter Geist, mein bess’res Ich” (“You my soul, you my heart...My good spirit, my better self”). From his letters, it is clear that Schumann viewed his relationship with Clara as a both a union of soulmates and as a means to fill a disturbing void in his own psyche, in which opposing tendencies were threatening to pull his personality apart. “Within Schumann’s mental life,” Anne Burton comments, “the ever-present image of Clara served such an integrating function.”<sup>19</sup> Already it seems during a particularly depressive episode in October 1833, in which Schumann claimed he had feared taking his life, the doctor had calmed him down with the advice: “Medicine is no help here; find yourself a woman, she will cure you at once.” Tellingly, this story is related in 1838 by Robert to Clara herself – the woman whom he now hoped would provide this remedy for him.<sup>20</sup> But this tendency is perhaps most evident in some poetic verses he wrote to Clara later that year which, as Burton observes, “frankly assign to Clara the task of integrating his warring self-divisions.” These tiny poems tell of Robert’s frustrations of waiting

16 Busst 1967, 62–63.

17 The two alter egos were introduced in the composer’s diary entry of 1 July 1831. Schumann 1971–1982, vol. 1: 344.

18 The term “*imago*” (simply the Latin for “image”) was introduced into psychoanalytical language by Carl Gustav Jung, but has since been modified by Lacan and post-Lacanian psychologists such as Kristeva, often being associated with the image of the self in the early mirror stage of psychic development or a semi-narcissistic projection of the self onto an external love object. Confusingly, for Schumann “Raro” could also stand for Friedrich Wieck. The identification of the hermaphroditic union of self and beloved with a surrogate father figure might appear distinctly peculiar, though one could note that the *imago* in Jungian psychoanalysis is generally associated with an internalized parental super-ego.

19 Burton 1988, 212.

20 Schumann, letter to Clara of 11 February 1838 (“Medizin hülfe hier nichts; suchen Sie Sich eine Frau, die curirt sie gleich.” Schumann 1984–2001, I:96). A few years earlier Schumann had apparently fastened on Ernestine von Fricken for fulfilling this role: “She, I thought, is the one: she will save you. I wanted to cling with all my might to a female being” – or so he justifies his earlier relationship in the same letter to Clara (“die, dachte ich, ist es; die wird Dich retten. Ich wollte mich mit aller Gewalt an ein weibliches Wesen anklammern.” Ibid., 96).



before subsequently idealizing Clara and her power to uplift his spirits as the composer “pins his hopes for happiness completely on his ‘Klärchen’.” Yet fear and anger return: unable to integrate the figures of Florestan and Eusebius a despairing Schumann calls upon Clara to do so for him. Calming down once more, he finally “reveals that his soul mirrors hers; she may look inside him and find herself.”<sup>21</sup>

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Oft gönnt' ich einen Blick Dir mir in's Innere | Oft have I let you to look inside myself  |
| Und sah, wie Du beglückt an Deinem Blick.      | And saw how you delight in your gaze.     |
| Nicht wahr, was Du gesehn in diesem Innern,    | Is it not true, that what you saw inside, |
| Es warf etwas von Deinem Selbst zurück.        | Threw back something of your self?        |

Schumann's need for finding himself reflected in and fusing his identity with Clara Wieck was not just confined to his occasional poetic writing, though: it permeated his musical output. Putting aside the disputed notion of a musical theme supposedly formed from a cipher of Clara's name, this is seen most clearly in the pair's shared use of material from each other's compositions.<sup>22</sup> As Eric Jensen claims, “nearly every major composition created by Schumann during his courtship of Clara contains references to her work. He was thus able musically to join himself and Clara in a marriage of sorts.”<sup>23</sup> Most openly, the two are musically associated in Robert's *Impromptus on a Theme by Clara Wieck*, Op. 5, and in his portrait of the young Clara, “Chiarina,” from *Carnaval* – though both examples are relatively early works, before the romance between the two had in fact started.<sup>24</sup> But subsequent instances of borrowing or creative interweaving can be found in Schumann's works of the later 1830s – in the *Concert sans orchestre* (the second-movement theme being based on an unpublished *Andantino* by Clara), the Sonata Op. 11 (whose introduction stems from the fourth of Clara's *Quatre Pièces caractéristiques*, Op. 5), the *Davidsbündlertänze* (based on a “Motto by C.W.” taken from a mazurka in Clara's *Soirées musicales* Op. 6), and the *Novelletten*, named obliquely after Clara, with its famous “Stimme aus der Ferne” derived from the “Notturmo” of Clara's *Soirées musicales* (which may or may not be further alluded to in the opening theme of the *Fantasie*, Op. 17). The relation was also reciprocal: Robert returned the favor by helping orchestrate Clara's A minor Piano Concerto of 1833–1835, and several years later Clara would write her own *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann*. As implied in the letter of July 2, 1839, cited above, the fact that both of them had in several cases been able to come up

21 Burton 1988, 222–224. I can't help observing that the closing stages of *Davidsbündlertänze* – a work written jointly by Schumann's two personae, “F” and “E” – possess something of this same quality. In the penultimate No. 17, the recall of the melancholic second piece of the cycle leads into an increasingly angry and frenetic close in a dark, Neapolitan-inflected B minor (Eusebius presumably being succeeded by Florestan in this jointly authored number). Miraculously, however, the C major of the “entirely superfluous” final number rescues the opus as a whole, returning to and ultimately liquidating the motivic substance of Clara's opening theme that served as a source for much of the work. Schumann told Clara that he had conceived his *Davidsbündlertänze* as telling of a *Polterabend* (eve-of-wedding celebration), and the way in which the final C major redeems the split between Florestan and Eusebius matches the verse he wrote a year later uncannily well (see Schumann's letter of 7 February 1838, *SB* I.4:215 / Schumann 1984–2001, 1:93).

22 Eric Sams developed the idea of the “Clara” theme in a series of short articles in the *Musical Times* from the late 1960s (see Sams 1965, 1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1970), and it became disseminated widely in Sams 1993, 22–25. The most detailed critique of Sams is given by Daverio 2002.

23 Jensen 2001, 149, who provides several examples of such practice (149–161).

24 *Carnaval* also contains a “Valse Allemande” that is derived from Clara's *Valses romantiques*, Op. 4.

with near identical musical ideas suggested to Robert that external distinctions between the two in time and space fell away. Art may both provide a symbolic means of fusing self and other, and, Robert seems to have felt, may actually be a product of a deep and mysterious symbiosis between his and Clara's souls.

As we saw, in 1839, as he was considering marriage, Schumann spoke of the future couple publishing pieces together as "one heart and one soul." And indeed he was as good as his word: within a few months of their marriage, the two had embarked upon a unique joint opus, the *Zwölf Gedichte aus F. Rückerts Liebesfrühling*, published in 1841 as Robert's opus 37 and Clara's opus 12. In this collection, the most notable instance of creative collaboration between the pair, the theme of blurred gender distinctions and hermaphroditic union is conspicuously foregrounded in several places in the text, and reflected still further in the musical setting and arrangement.

## ANDROGYNY AND SYMBOLIC UNION IN *LIEBESFRÜHLING*

*Liebesfrühling* consists of twelve songs, drawn from Rückert's collection of that name. Though the title page of the first edition bore simply the designation "by Robert and Clara Schumann" with no indication as to the identity of the author of individual numbers, three songs were in fact written by Clara (Nos. 2, 4, and 11), with the remaining nine being contributed by Robert. Urged on by her new husband, Clara had turned her hand to song composition in December 1840; while none of these attempts related to the eventual Rückert collection, Robert was nevertheless spurred on to complete his own nine Rückert settings in the first weeks of January 1841, and subsequently encouraged Clara to set some of this poet's verse. After some setbacks and delays, Clara offered four of these settings to Robert for his birthday in June. Robert reciprocated by presenting the published score of the joint opus as a surprise birthday gift to Clara on 13 September, the day after the couple's first wedding anniversary.<sup>25</sup>

Schumann wrote to his publisher that the songs were related to each other as question and answer, and previous commentators have explored the collection as being structured as a series of responses between male and female protagonists, drawing out possible indeterminacy or ambiguity in the implied gender of the narrative voice in certain songs.<sup>26</sup> However, the hermaphroditic subtext of the cycle goes well beyond this: in fact the whole work is suffused with verbal and musical blurring of gender and distinctions between self and other, resulting in a spiritual union of male and female personas at its close.

25 See Hallmark 1990, 4–13, for further details on this work's genesis.

26 Schumann, letter to Breitkopf und Härtel, 23 June 1841 (Schumann 1904, 431). See especially Boyd 1999, 145–162, who observes how "the gender identity of the poetic voice is often ambiguous" in this collection, and is, moreover, an element which both Robert and Clara recognized and exploited in their settings (146). The question of gender or androgyny is comparatively unexplored in Schumann's output, certainly in relation to existing scholarship on some of his contemporaries such as Wagner and Chopin (see, for instance, Nattiez 1993, 111–127, and Kallberg 1996, 78–86). One of the few accounts beyond Boyd's article is given by Jacques 2011 in her examination of the later dramatic works. It is also worth noting that the question of gender may not have been as pronounced in nineteenth-century performance of Lied as it became later; see Borchard 2020.

**Einfach** *p*

Der Him - mel hat ei - ne Thrä - ne ge - weint, die hat sich in's Meer ver -

lie - ren ge - meint. Die Mu - schel kam und schloss sie ein: Du sollst nun mei - ne

Per - le sein. Du sollst nicht vor den Wo - gen za - gen, ich will hin - durch dich

ru - hig tra - gen. *ritard.* *mf* O du mein Schmerz, - du mei - ne Lust, du

Him - mels - thrän' in mei - ner Brust! Gieb, Him - mel, das ich in rei - nem Ge - mü - the den

Ex. 2: Robert Schumann, "Der Himmel hat eine Träne geweint" (Rückert), *Liebesfrühling*, Op. 37 No. 1 (continued on next page)

21  
 rein - - sten dei-ner Tro-pfen hü - te, den rein-sten rein-sten dei-ner Tro - *ritard.*

25  
 - - pfen hü-te. *ritard.*

Ex. 2 (continued from previous page)

The opening song, Robert's "Der Himmel hat eine Träne geweint," is replete with highly gendered symbolism. Heaven wept a tear, which intended to lose itself in the sea. But the mussel came and enclosed it: "you shall now be my pearl. You shall not fear the waves, for I shall carry you calmly though them." Earlier commentators have interpreted the meaning of these lines autobiographically: the loving Robert will support his fragile new wife's attempts at composition; together they will produce precious musical offspring.<sup>27</sup> Schumann's setting of the mussel's speech brings out this sense of privileged interiority, slipping unexpectedly to the flattened mediant  $C\flat$  from the dominant  $E\flat$  and enclosing the lines within a fourfold plagal oscillation, before a linear descent in the bass ( $E\flat 4-B\flat 3$ ) guides the music back over shoals of diminished sevenths to the safety of  $E\flat$  harmony for the entry of the second verse (Ex. 2). But, as Melinda Boyd observes, there is a peculiar gender reversal present here.<sup>28</sup> Traditionally the heavens are denoted as masculine, fertilizing the feminine earth with its life-giving rain. Greek myth, for instance, tells of Ouranos' coupling with Gaia as a mystical sexual union between heaven and the earth; more graphically, one might also recall Zeus, ever-resourceful when it came to mortal affairs, impregnating Danaë with a shower from heaven. Even the German definite articles point to this: the sperm-like tear is admittedly feminine (die Träne), but it falls from the masculine heaven (der Himmel), while the mussel is clearly only

27 Johnson 2000, 52. Many writers also interpret the mussel more generally as the male poet offering his loving protection to his female beloved. Sams 1993, 179, and Desmond 1972, 42.

28 Boyd 1999, 154–156, whose article provides a more detailed account of the often ambiguous gender symbolism throughout the cycle than I can give here. Though relying in part upon Eric Sams's discredited positing of a "Clara motive," Boyd's conclusion resonates strongly with my current concerns: that "the 'implicit' or gender-neutral songs appear to acknowledge – or perhaps even yearn for – a more reciprocal, flexible, and less binaristic relationship" between the sexes, concluding thereby that "the ambiguity of Rückert's poetry proved ideally suited to Robert's concept of 'one heart and one soul'" (Boyd 1999, 158).

ever going to be feminine (die Muschel). From this perspective, an androgynous Schumann appears to be the womb-like mussel enclosing Clara's fragile seed. At the very least, the masculine element in this poem appears to be strangely passive, utterly reliant on the feminine for its sustenance.

At the close of the song a new theme emerges in the piano accompaniment as postlude; an undisguised allusion to the popular Neapolitan aria "Caro mio ben," this is the unexpected offspring of the song, the "pearl" produced by the union.<sup>29</sup> Clara had learned she was pregnant for the first time a few weeks before Schumann wrote this song, and it is undoubtedly tempting to read an autobiographical reference to the events of the couple's life here. This metaphorical association between procreation and artistic creation will also recur in several places in the cycle, most clearly in the fifth song, while the theme of fluidity, whether rain, rivers, or streaming forth, likewise runs throughout the collection, along with its associated male gendering and latent sexual subtext. In the second song, Clara's "Er ist gekommen," the male lover has come in storm and rain; for the fifth, Robert's "Ich habe in mich gesogen," the reproductive force of spring has awakened songs in the poet's breast, which stream out over the female beloved; while in No. 9, Robert's "Rose, Meer und Sonne," the beloved is like the all-encircling sea, into whose womb all rivers flow (a theme returned to in the paired tenth song, Robert's "O Sonn', o Meer, o Rose!").

The confusion between subjects found in this opening song – between male and female elements, between passive and active partners – is continued in "Er ist gekommen": did he take possession of her heart, the singer asks, or not rather she of his? Indeed, the entire opus is permeated throughout by numerous doublings and mirrorings. The final "So wahr die Sonne scheint" clearly transforms the melody of the opening song, framing the whole collection through such thematic linking, while "O Sonn', o Meer, o Rose!" reworks the material of the preceding "Rose, Meer und Sonne" just as its title and symbolism chiasmatically reflect it. Duets forming the sixth, seventh, and twelfth songs split the opus into two near-symmetrical halves, each consisting of six songs and ending with a duet (the latter starting with one too), while care has clearly been given to the tonal succession of songs. Both halves are effectively bookended by songs in A $\flat$ , (the key of Nos. 1, 3, 6, 7 and 11, and the goal of No. 2) – with the curious anomaly that, having returned to this ostensible tonic in the penultimate "Warum willst du and're fragen," the final song is raised up to E $\flat$ .<sup>30</sup> In fact, this sense of deliberate near (but not total) symmetry relates to the larger process across the collection's twelve songs, and this may be understood as a musical enactment of the two lovers' progressive growth into a higher union.

The first five songs alternate between settings by Robert (1, 3, & 5) and Clara (2 & 4), their respective songs corresponding moreover to what are plausibly contrasting male and female subject positions (even if, as we have seen, in several the gender of the subject appears deliberately obscured or distinctions between self and other partially collapsed). In the work's central two positions, however, we find the first duets in the collection. No. 6 ("Liebste, was kann denn uns scheiden?") is admittedly barely a duet; the

29 The song, by Giordani, dates from the 1780s, although which Giordani actually wrote it – Giuseppe senior, Tommaso, or Giuseppe junior – is unclear.

30 On tonal considerations and the possible genesis of the collection's ordering, see Hallmark 1990, 8–11. Questions of cyclicity and authorship are also addressed in Grotjahn 2011.

woman has little to do but dutifully offer monosyllabic agreement with her male partner's assertions and to double his final phrase in thirds, and the number could almost be given as a solo song for a male singer. But this is the first stage in a larger movement towards the ever-greater integration between the two. And (from an inevitably male-centric perspective) the attestation by the other of the subject's expression, her mirroring back of his own words to him, might be thought of as fulfilling a crucial role in his own journey to full selfhood.

Already in the seventh song, "Schön ist das Fest des Lenzes," the two are coming together in something approaching more equal status (Ex. 3). Formed for the most part as a canon between the two protagonists, this round-dance offers a celebration of nature's season of fertility, where again the man leads and the woman takes a distinct secondary part ("following at the wifely distance of a bar" as Johnson wryly puts it).<sup>31</sup> The two are finally singing as individual subjects and singing the same material, but yet there is a temporal displacement between their voices that only comes into synchrony in short passages towards the end. Only in the very last song will the two come together in the same time, and in harmonious accord.

**Einfach, nicht rasch**

Ex. 3: Robert Schumann, "Schön ist das Fest des Lebens" (Rückert), *Liebesfrühling*, Op. 37 No. 7

This concluding number is, at last, really a duet, balanced equally between the two voices (Ex. 4); indeed, it is almost too much of one, the replication of parts, for some critics, appearing exaggerated in its utter simplicity. But this is surely the point. Throughout the collection the doubling of the melodic voice a third apart has suggested the harmonious union of two subjects (it can be seen clearly in the duet passages in the sixth song and close of the seventh), and the almost constant paralleling of the two vocal lines in thirds for the initial stages of this duet offers persuasive grounds for such an interpretation.<sup>32</sup>

31 Johnson 2000, 65. This imitative treatment is continued in the following "Flügel," in which from measure 20 the vocal line chases after the piano accompaniment without ever quite catching it, just like the youth that the protagonist laments has flown away from him.

32 Only the horn-call-like fifths at the opening offer any exception to the persistent use of thirds (or tenths), imparting perhaps a suitably open-air character. The association of parallel movement in thirds with the concordance of two human subjects is longstanding; Sams 1993, 21, codifies it as "comradeship or togetherness," while Finson 2007, 23, has picked up on this idea in Op. 25's "Widmung," speaking of the accompanimental arpeggiations "running symbolically in parallel motion – two voices acting as one."

**Einfach**

So wahr die Sonne scheint, so wahr die Wolke weinet, so wahr die Flamme  
 So wahr die Sonne scheint, so wahr die Wolke weinet, so wahr die Flamme

6  
 sprüht, so wahr der Frühling blüht, so wahr hab' ich empfund, wie  
 sprüht, so wahr der Frühling blüht, so wahr hab' ich empfund, wie

11  
 ich dich halt' umwunden: Du liebst mich wie ich dich, dich lieb' ich wie du mich.  
 ich dich halt' umwunden: Du liebst mich wie ich dich, dich lieb' ich wie du mich.

Ex. 4: Robert Schumann, "So wahr die Sonne scheint" (Rückert), *Liebesfrühling*, Op. 37 No. 12, first verse

Yet, no less significantly, this model breaks down at the end of the first verse, and this will be for the crucial moment that the subjects make their mutual declaration of love. Reaching over the soprano's upper voice, in m. 12 the tenor part soars to an Eb<sup>4</sup> and the two voices mirror each other in contrary motion;<sup>33</sup> it may not seem much, but the contrast with the utter simplicity of the previous six poetic lines is striking and surely deliberate. The chiasmic structure of the text here – "Du liebst mich wie ich dich, dich lieb' ich wie du mich" – is further reflected in the prominent twofold voice-exchange (Ab–C, F–Ab) at this moment; indeed, as Rufus Hallmark has revealed, the words for the final repetition of this phrase at the end of the song were rearranged by Schumann so as to be sung against

33 Of course the tenor sings an octave lower than written, so the line is still below the soprano in pitch, despite the effect of crossing over.

each other, “du liebst mich wie ich dich” sounding simultaneously against “dich lieb’ ich wie du mich” in the two voices.<sup>34</sup> In other words, by the end of the work the protagonists are not simply singing in parallel, but their lines merge into a composite entity, forming a chiasm, intersecting and reflecting each other. Schumann’s musical images of reciprocity – his mirroring of vocal lines, contrapuntal voice-exchange and intercrossing – match the blurring and eventual identification of “I” and “you” in Rückert’s text. Upon declaring their love and mutual recognition the distinction between self and other has become annulled; two subjects have become one, and the cycle’s male and female protagonists have fused as one heart and one soul.

## THE BIRTH OF THE SELF FROM THE IMAGE OF THE OTHER

In *Liebesfrühling*, the ambiguities between subjects have led to an ultimate union that might be contextualized as hermaphroditic in its overcoming of distinctions between masculine and feminine and self and other. But likewise, taken individually, the goal of each subject has been the recognition of itself in and by the other; the route to full subjecthood has been through the union with the other. This is true above all of the female figure, whose role in the three duets has grown to become an ever more equal partner by the end of the collection.

For some Romantics, as we saw, the hermaphroditic union stood for the ideal of marriage as a fusion of equals, and in figures such as Blake and the Shelleys this understanding could be made to function in the cause of women’s emancipation.<sup>35</sup> In practice, however, this end was rarely achieved in the early nineteenth century, and women for the most part still played a subsidiary role. Robert Schumann, in his relationship with Clara, was far from domineering, and as we saw in many ways looked up to her as his “good spirit” or “better self.” But it is still clear that upon marriage he expected her to fulfil her socially determined role as a wife and mother and only then as an artist (despite the fact that Clara was by far the more famous of the two musicians at the time and the primary source of income). Moreover, it is not clear that Clara herself would have desired full emancipation in the modern sense.<sup>36</sup> Despite Robert’s poetic ideals, there was still a worldly imbalance in this union of heart and soul.

Probably the most celebrated, albeit controversial, example of such idealized but uneven conjugal union in Robert Schumann’s oeuvre is the song cycle *Frauenliebe und Leben*, written in the summer of 1840 just as the final obstacles to his marriage with Clara appeared to be falling away.<sup>37</sup> A cycle of eight songs to words by the (male) poet Adelbert von Chamisso providing a female’s perspective on her marriage to a man she venerates as being far above her, *Frauenliebe* has understandably attracted its fair share of feminist criticism. Ruth Solie, for instance, has famously charged the work as offering “the imper-

34 Hallmark 1990, 20. This modification is present in the autograph and original edition, but was wrongly corrected in the later *Gesamtausgabe*.

35 See, for instance, Bizzaro 1991.

36 As Nancy Reich has claimed, Clara “was not a feminist and it is doubtful that she sympathized with the views of those women who were just beginning the struggle for equal rights in nineteenth-century Germany.” Reich 1985, 275.

37 The songs date from July, the month in which the courts ruled in Robert’s favor against Friedrich Wieck’s opposition.



sonation of a woman by the voices of male culture, a spurious autobiographical act," although later writers, in taking up this theme, have offered more sympathetic interpretations.<sup>38</sup> Even while no one denies the artistic quality of the music or the cycle's continued presence as a cornerstone of the *Lied* repertory, there remains for some listeners an uncomfortable aspect to these songs.

While conceding that the female protagonist of this cycle is generally depicted in passive, dependent terms vis-à-vis the male figure, and that such a relation was all too typical of women's position throughout Europe in this era, we should nevertheless acknowledge that such associations between man as the active subject and woman as the passive object were hardly inviolate, not least for Schumann himself. As Elissa Gurnick notes, "Schumann's letters to Clara sometimes reflect the same devotional quality" as the protagonist of *Frauenliebe*, citing for illustration a passage from a letter of 1 December 1838 ("you're really the one from whom I receive all life, on whom I am completely dependent"), while Burton similarly observes how "frequent references to Clara as a deity or priestess signify unmistakable superego attributes."<sup>39</sup> A more flexible understanding of gender relations was already witnessed in the subjects' tendency towards androgyny and poetic symbolism of *Liebesfrühling*.

In other words, the female protagonist of Schumann's Op. 42 not only reflects aspects of its male composer's own personality, but may be taken in some respects to stand for any subject, male or female. Placing the problematic gender associations to one side, then, *Frauenliebe* offers an ideal illustration of the path to selfhood as being found through the romantic encounter with the other, seen above all in the emergence of the protagonist's subjective voice out of the image of the beloved in the opening song.

There is a curiously hesitant quality to the beginning of Schumann's cycle. "Seit ich ihn gesehen" starts with a reiterated I–IV–V<sup>7</sup>–I progression in the accompaniment in a slightly faltering, half-remembered sarabande rhythm, out of whose repetition the protagonist's voice emerges in the second measure with a doubling of the upper line (Ex. 5). The piano is very much the leading voice, from which the singer takes her bearings. Every note in the vocal line's first four bars is sounded first or concurrently in the piano, and the effect is of the subject's voice growing quasi-*parlante* out of the pre-existing accompanimental idea, entirely dependent upon it for its identity (a feature particularly apparent in the piano's linking gesture over the second two beats of m. 4). Jon Finson comments on the opening's "somewhat irregular phrase structure and shifting metrical placement, as if both singer and accompanist have been thrown off-balance," and the initial three-measure melodic phrases impart a mildly unstable quality that is only partially compensated for by their sequential continuity.<sup>40</sup> Only on the last beat of m. 6 does a first hint of melodic independence arise with the singer's B♭4 – coincidentally or otherwise occurring on the word "ich" – a note not present in the piano part until the following downbeat. Around this point, too, the music changes.

38 Solie 1992, 220. Muxfeldt 2001, 40 has countered Solie's charge in her contention that "implicit in any sincere impersonation is always also a sympathetic identification with one's subject." Hallmark 2014 has sought to contextualize the issue historically.

39 Guralnick 2006, 590; Burton 1998, 224.

40 Finson 2007, 37.

*Larghetto* *p*

Seit ich ihn ge - se - hen, glaub' ich blind zu sein; wo ich hin nur  
bli - cke, seh' ich ihn al - lein. Wie im wa - chen Trau - me schwebt sein Bild - mir  
vor, - taucht aus tief - stem Dun - kel hel - ler, hel - ler nur em - por

*ritard.* *pp* *pp*

Ex. 5: Robert Schumann, "Seit ich ihn gesehen" (Chamisso), *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42 No. 1, first verse

One can scarcely talk of a distinct melody in the preceding bars. The vocal line at the start had been merely a doubling of the piano's upper voice, which itself had clearly arisen out of the harmonic progression, and while the continuation had grown mildly more lyrical, the sequential construction ensured it remained within the ambit of the underlying harmonic schema. But from the end of m. 7 the music blossoms forth into a true melodic idea, breaking free of the repeated harmonic model and the constraints of the limping sarabande rhythm into a conjunct, cantabile line. With this the subject is ready to venture out on her own. And now, finally, for the repetition of this phrase (m. 9), the vocal part takes wing and soars free of the piano accompaniment that has supported it thus far.<sup>41</sup> "As if in waking dreams his image hovers before me" run the lines: it is as if the image of the other has given birth to the subject. Emancipated from the accompanimental doubling that drops out at this moment, the subject has emerged as a distinct musical voice – a coming-to-lyricism out of the image of the other.

41 Most of the pitches of the vocal line are in fact doubled an octave lower in the piano, but this is submerged in an inner voice and virtually never heard (a feature which will become hermeneutically significant much later at the close of the cycle). The movement here to more regular two-measure phrase units also contributes to the increased fluency sensed at this point.

This emergence of full subjective voice is the crucial moment in the opening song (and of course, as most listeners know, this will be the same passage that will be so movingly absent in the postlude to the final song). One may see this, à la Emmanuel Lévinas, as a profound comment on how the self is constituted from the encounter with the face of the other, through a radical alterity that is always already there in the world.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, such concerns are especially noteworthy in light of the gender transitivity identified previously in Op. 37: just as in “Der Himmel hat eine Träne geweint,” where the male artist had nurtured the fragile female’s seed, the procreative force has been allocated to the man. An androgynous male has brought forth the beloved, the female protagonist, from himself, whose gestation was marked by the reiterated cycling of the opening bars. (For a critic alert to the narcissist, male-centric subtext here, this conceit is possibly little more than a male fantasy of hermaphroditic self-sufficiency and reproductive auto-ability, like Adam bringing forth Eve from his own body.<sup>43</sup>) Either way, the path to the musical subject’s attainment of a sense of self, denoted by the emergence of an independent lyrical voice, has been through the image of the beloved.

As if bearing out this reading, in the subsequent songs there is generally much more independence between the vocal line and piano accompaniment. This is evident already in No. 2, “Er, der Herrlichste von Allen,” where the piano part is largely reduced to chordal accompaniment and for its brief moments of melodic interest now follows the voice’s lead (seen in the dotted rhythm of “Holde Lippen,” imitated in m. 6 in the bass) or offers a dialogic interplay with the vocal line in the interludes following the second and sixth verses. The one major exception to this rule is the fourth song, “Du Ring an meinem Finger,” where the almost constant doubling between singer and accompaniment is clearly marked as relating to the union with the beloved, symbolized by the ring she now wears. Briefly, but no less significantly, this doubling ceases in the song for the passage speaking of the woman’s previous solitary state: “The peaceful, beautiful dream of childhood was over [*ausgeträumet*] for me, I found myself alone, lost in an empty, endless space.” Caught between a cosseted childhood and a womanhood dependent in that period upon matrimonial union, the protagonist is rescued from her loneliness by the piano, which, in offering gentle support for the final words, draws her back to their mutual coupling.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the use of interplay between voices to stand for union between the female subject and male beloved is clear in the postlude to the second song, where the intertwining of musical motives in the final four bars symbolizes their romantic attachment – the crucial development in the story between the close of No. 2 (where she observes him as if still at a distance) and the start of No. 3, “Ich kann’s nicht fassen, nicht glauben” (where all of a sudden it transpires he has promised himself to her).<sup>45</sup>

42 The idea runs throughout much of Lévinas’s work; its fullest elucidation is probably given in Lévinas 1969.

43 The biblical Adam was commonly associated with hermaphroditism in earlier writings on the topic; see Busst 1967, 7–8.

44 More briefly, the obvious doubling of the vocal line drops out at one further point in this song, in mm. 25–26 (“I want to serve him, to live for him”), though the notes do not completely disappear as before but are contained within the accompaniment’s harmonies.

45 The celebrated “wedding march” coda of No. 5, “Helft mir, ihr Schwestern,” strongly supports this interpretive strategy whereby the postlude to one song may appear to narrate or enact events properly happening *after* the end of the preceding and *before* the start of the ensuing song.

*DEIN BILDNIS WUNDERSELIG*

The examples above from *Liebesfrühling* and *Frauenliebe* have repeatedly called up a cluster of related images and themes: doubling, reflection, the movement to fusion with the other that is at the same time a deepening or fullest consummation of self. As was found – implicitly in the opening account of the Piano Quartet, more explicitly in the theme of hermaphroditic union present within Schumann’s own writings and the jointly authored Op. 37 songs – this is not merely a case of a femininely characterized subject finding completion in a male ideal (as seen in the preceding illustration of *Frauenliebe*), but may work either way, above and beyond gender distinctions. Their discussion points to the constitutive role played by the other in the notion of musical subjectivity. We might return then to the issue of how the other is necessary for the subject’s journey to full self-consciousness.

Earlier it was pointed out that the attainment of full-subjecthood, the knowledge of the self as self, faced difficulties when trying to overcome the seemingly inevitable split in the subject. Rather than dividing the self into subject and object, the present account has suggested the grounds for an alternative solution: the fusion of the self with an other, with an object which reflects the self back to itself, through which the subject may recognize itself. This, of course, is a move with enormous precedent and contemporary relevance for considering Schumann, being a key tenet of German Idealist philosophy (described most famously in the earlier stages of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*), while a more highly flowered version, steeped in occult and mystical symbolism, was contained in the Romantic notions of hermaphroditic union espoused by writers such as Novalis. It is a theme that has been implicit throughout all the preceding examples, from the fleeting appearance of a duet in the slow movement of the Piano Quartet that led to a deepened sense of self at the close, through to the emergence of the subject out of the image of the other in “Seit ich ihn gesehen.” It will be found even more strikingly, however, in two songs that Schumann wrote in the first half of 1840, his famous “year of song.”

A perfect musical instantiation of this theme is the “Lied der Suleika,” Op. 25 No. 9, a piece dating from February 1840 and forming part of the set that Robert later gave to Clara as a bridal gift.<sup>46</sup>

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Wie mit innigstem Behagen,<br>Lied, empfind’ ich deinen Sinn!<br>Liebevoll du scheinst zu sagen:<br>Daß ich ihm zur Seite bin;      | How with innermost contentment,<br>Song, I sense your meaning!<br>Lovingly you appear to say:<br>That I am at his side;               |
| Daß er ewig mein gedenke,<br>Seiner Liebe Seligkeit<br>Immerdar der Fernen schenket,<br>Die ein Leben ihm geweiht.                  | That he eternally thinks of me,<br>The blissfulness of his love<br>Ever bestows to her far away,<br>Who dedicates her life to him.    |
| Ja, mein Herz es ist der Spiegel<br>Freund, worin du dich erblickst;<br>Diese Brust, wo deine Siegel<br>Kuß uaf Kuß hereingedrückt. | Yes, my heart is the mirror,<br>Friend, in which you behold yourself;<br>This breast, where your seal<br>Kiss upon kiss is imprinted. |

46 English translation by the author.

|                                 |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Süßes Dichten, laute Wahrheit   | Sweet verses, pure truth              |
| Fesselt mich in Sympathie!      | Binds me in sympathy!                 |
| Rein verkörpert Liebesklarheit, | Love's clarity immaculately embodied, |
| Im Gewand der Poesie!           | In the garb of poetry!                |

The most prominent feature of Schumann's setting is the extreme overlap present between the vocal line and its almost constant doubling in the piano accompaniment. Few commentators fail to remark upon this property; some, like Stephen Walsh, are not entirely impressed by the apparent redundancy (the result, it is claimed, could almost be a piano piece).<sup>47</sup> As Jon Finson has shown, however, Schumann's conscious adopting of a middle-line between a Schubertian and Northern German song aesthetic is generally reflected in his tendency not to present the entire vocal part of a song in the piano; and thus when he does so, as here in "Lied der Suleika," the decision is surely salient: this doubling unmistakably signifies something.<sup>48</sup> "If we ask why Schumann has written the music in this way," proposes Graham Johnson, "the key word 'mirror' comes to mind."<sup>49</sup> The constant mirroring and shadowing of the vocal line in the piano reflects the precise "meaning of the song" spoken of in its text: the presence of the other – and this despite his physical absence – attained through the subject's singing of this song. Indeed, we might say that Schumann's setting does not merely reflect, but instantiates this reflexivity, letting us hear how the voices of the beloved and absent lover may intertwine through the work of art they consciously share. But the mirrorings and reflections do not stop there.

In "Lied der Suleika," Schumann was setting a poem published by Goethe in his *West-östlicher Divan*, written in the female persona of "Suleika." The composer, like his contemporaries, did not know what is common knowledge now: that in fact these "Suleika" poems were substantially the creation of Marianne von Willemer, a much younger married woman with whom Goethe conducted a remarkable and largely epistolary romance. Goethe included her poetic creations – sometimes lightly modified, at other times as the basis for his own more extensive elaboration – under the name "Suleika" as the feminine counterpart to his own "Hatem" poems in his *Divan* collection, thus creating a fictional romantic interchange between two separated lovers that reflected a real one more acutely than anyone at the time could have guessed ("pure truth...in the garb of poetry," as the final verse aptly runs). The unsuspected parallels with Robert's own fusion of heart and soul with Clara's in their artistic collaboration in *Liebesfrühling* are obvious.

The crucial lines come at the start of the third verse: "Ja, mein Herz, es ist der Spiegel, Freund, worin du dich erblickst" ("Yes! My heart is the mirror, friend, in which you behold yourself," Ex. 6).<sup>50</sup> The self is a mirror of the beloved; and in this identification between two human subjects their physical separation is overcome, a hermaphroditic fusion paralleled in Goethe's poetic amalgamation with Marianne von Willemer and matched in the virtually constant reflection of voice in accompaniment.<sup>51</sup> The musical mirroring is

47 Walsh 1971, 16.

48 Finson 2007, 5–7.

49 Johnson 2010, 55.

50 This third verse appears to be the creation of Goethe; the theme of mirrors and reflection is prominent in the preceding poem from the *Buch Suleika*, "Abglanz," with its focus on "Doppelschein," to which Suleika's poem responds. Goethe 1999, 83.

51 Indeed the number of mirrorings is remarkable: these are texts adopting a female perspective ostensibly written by a man but actually penned by a woman and then extended by this man, that speak of the

indeed astoundingly close, far more than the typical Schumannesque heterophonic accompanimental blurring: even ornamental turn figures are included in the piano part, with merely occasional moments when the two voices are slightly out of synchrony, one fractionally foreshadowing or lagging behind the other. It conveys the impression of two voices coming together in near unanimity, as if the sympathetic resonance between the song in which the absent lover expresses himself and the subject's own feelings, between his image and her heart, is near identical.<sup>52</sup>

17 *p*  
Ja, mein Herz, es ist der Spie-gel, Freund, wo-rin du dich - er-blickst; die-se

21 *ritard.*  
Brust, wo dei - ne Sie - gel Kuss auf Kuss, Kuss auf Kuss her-ein ge-drückt.

Ex. 6: Robert Schumann: "Lied der Suleika" (von Willemer/Goethe), *Myrthen*, Op. 25 No. 9, third verse

In the continual returning of the music of the opening verse (the repetition at the end of the first stanza allowing a five-part ABABA design), Schumann moreover creates a form in which the constant movement away from and back to the opening melody seems to reflect the movement away from and return to self, the reflection of other in self (one in which the third verse, with its mirroring of the beloved in the subject's heart, occupies the center or heart of the setting). The ultimate union of lover and beloved is given in the postlude: as in the second song from *Frauenliebe*, "entwined counterpoint in contrary

mirroring of the other in the self, in whose heart the other recognizes himself. And they were set by a composer given to drawing on his betrothed's music for his own compositions, who himself had written barely a year before that she could see herself mirrored in his heart, and barely a year later would be collaborating with her on a joint work published under both their names.

52 With what one should identify the voice and the accompaniment here is open to interpretation. In the context of the *Divan*, the "song" mentioned in this "Lied der Suleika" is presumably the preceding "Abglanz" by Hatem, but in the immediate context of Schumann's setting we might well take it as referring reflexively to itself. Thus the female subject sings a vocal line which is actually her male beloved's song, and finds her own feelings (expressed in the piano accompaniment) to be almost totally in sympathy, hence the virtual unanimity between the two.

motion roves over the two staves and indicates a conversation of male and female voices as well as a colloquy of mirror images.”<sup>53</sup>

To put this feature into relief, we might compare this song of Suleika with another setting Schumann made – unknowingly – of Marianne von Willemer’s verse, the “Liebeslied,” Op. 51 No. 5 (published in 1850).<sup>54</sup> Here, the subject longs “to open my heart to you,” but the other is absent: “How sadly the world looks at me! In my mind my friend alone dwells...I long to embrace him, and cannot.” (“Wie blickt so traurig / Die Welt mich an! / In meinem Sinne / Wohnet mein Freund nur ... Will ihn umarmen / Und kann es nicht.”) Instead of constant doubling between voice and piano, we have merely occasional duplicated pitches hidden within the accompanimental figuration – “rustling semi-quavers in vaguely disjointed patterns, which are all about aspiration and a vain search for happiness” – that only here and there shadow the singer’s part in distorted reverberation.<sup>55</sup> Wisps of a lyrical line do emerge, fitfully, in the piano, but rather than doubling the voice they respond to it during its silences; this is a duet where the two subjects are separated from each other in time as they are in space. The contrast with the Op. 25 Suleika setting is especially revealing.

Of course the other, the beloved, is also physically absent in “Lied der Suleika,” but here, crucially, this song is explicitly conceived as the means for bringing them together, creating a union in which the distance in time and space is overcome – an articulation of musical reflexivity familiar from works like Beethoven’s *An die ferne Geliebte* and taken up in Schumann’s own *Fantasy* Op. 17 and the *Novellette*, Op. 21 No. 8.<sup>56</sup> Art reflects or may even constitute this task of subjective self-knowledge, bridging the distance between lover and beloved, providing them an object in which they may recognize themselves.<sup>57</sup> This theme will be taken up again in another song from late May of that year, the Eichendorff setting “Intermezzo,” Op. 39 No. 2, which mixes the idea of the beloved’s image with a musical reflexivity in which the musical subject finally becomes a self-conscious subject through hearing itself singing.<sup>58</sup>

|                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Dein Bildnis wunderselig         | Your wondrously blissful image,   |
| Hab ich im Herzensgrund,         | I hold in the depths of my heart, |
| Das sieht so frisch und fröhlich | It looks so freshly and joyfully  |
| Mich an zu jeder Stund.“         | At me every hour.                 |

|                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mein Herz still in sich singet | My heart sings softly to itself |
| Ein altes schönes Lied,        | An old and beautiful song,      |
| Das in die Luft sich schwinget | That soars into the air         |
| Und zu dir eilig zieht.        | And hastens to you.             |

53 Johnson 2010, 55.

54 Again, this is a collaboration between von Willemer and Goethe (the title is Schumann’s). It was published cryptically in the “Ciphers” section of the lengthy supplementary “Noten und Abhandlungen” Goethe appended to the *Divan*. Goethe 1999, 191.

55 The apt characterization is Johnson’s. Johnson 2000, 13.

56 See Marston 2000, 124–147, and Hoeckner 1997, 109–126.

57 An idea familiar from German Idealist and Romantic aesthetics; one of the best examples may be provided in Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling 1978.

58 English translation by the author.

**Langsam**

Dein Bild - niss wun - der - se - lig hab' ich im Her - zens -

grund, das sieht so frisch und fröh - lich mich an zu je - der

*p* *nach* *und* *nach* *schneller* ∞

Stund'. Mein Herz still in sich sin - get ein al - tes schö - nes

*und* *schneller*

Lied, das in die Luft sich schwin - get und zu dir ei - lig

*ritard.* **Im Tempo**

zieht. Dein Bild - niss wun - der - se - lig hab' ich im Her - zens -

*ritard.* **Im Tempo**

*p*

Ex. 7: Robert Schumann, "Intermezzo" (Eichendorff), *Liederkreis*, Op. 39 No. 2 (continued on next page)



21  
grund, das sieht so frisch und fröh-lich mich an zu je-der, je-der  
ritard. ritard. p

25  
Stund?  
ritard. p

Ex. 7 (continued from previous page)

Schumann's vocal line emerges out of the syncopated pulsations in the accompaniment; presented in mid-air over a fourth chord harmony, the metric and harmonic structure is first clarified through the left hand's tonic downbeat in m. 2 (Ex. 7). Initially the song seems to consist of a single vocal line with chordal accompaniment, but in m. 3 the piano's right hand answers the singer's falling fifth span E5–A#4 with the rising fifth B4–F#5, creating a new fledgling line which by m. 6 forms no longer merely a response to the vocal part but participates in the melodic unfolding, anticipating the expanded octave ascent in the voice by a sixteenth note. From here on, with the disappearance at this point of the reiterated low A that had underscored the downbeats and underlying tonic prolongation of the preceding four bars, the sense of notated meter virtually vanishes. Verse two is given over to total syncopation in the piano accompaniment, with only the vocal line offering any sense of the real meter. From this state of complete metric flux the powerful bass octaves at m. 18 decisively reinstate the downbeat, coinciding with the point of return to the opening music and repetition of Eichendorff's first stanza, imparting a larger ternary form to the song as a whole. And now the bassline descends, briefly forming a new voice obliquely mirroring the vocal line above (which itself is newly echoed in blurred unison in the right hand) before driving the music through a strong cycle-of-fifths progression back to the tonic.

This reprise of the opening verse is the crux of the setting. It is as if the image of the beloved, referred to in the text at this point, has obtained a deeper resonance inside the self: not merely the mirroring of other in the self, but now its recognition as well. But more than this, the repetition of the opening verse here informs us that it is *this* song, the very song being sung, that is the "old and beautiful song" of the poem – and furthermore that the subject at last knows this, can *hear itself singing*. In the palpitations of the second verse, as the metric structure dissipates into pure, unmeasured pulsations of the self's own internal consciousness, we hear the gestation of this music, as deep in the

singer's heart a song emerges, takes wing, and hurries to the beloved. And with the modified repetition of the first verse both we and the subject can actually hear this song, for it is nothing other than the song he or she has been singing since the start.

At the song's end, imitative entries of the vocal incipit twine around each other in a typically Schumannesque instrumental postlude – an explicit recognition and harmonizing of both personas in the manner seen at the close of “Lied der Suleika” earlier and which will be taken up in the second song of *Frauenliebe*. Augmented syncopations across the bar line fittingly bring the song to rest.

“Intermezzo” reveals a possible path to self-consciousness, the attainment of a deeper sense of selfhood. Through recognition of the other, the image of the beloved in its heart, the subject has become conscious of itself, of its own voice. And we should be clear that the text does not make this point explicit: this understanding is achieved by Schumann's decision to repeat the opening verse. The self-consciousness witnessed here is not achieved simply by textual signification but by the interaction of the words with the musical setting.

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## RÉPLIQUE (GANZ ZUM ÜBERFLUSS...)

In a famous *Märchen* or fairy-tale interpolated into his unfinished novel, *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, Novalis tells of the youth Hyazinth, who leaves his home and childhood love Rosenblütchen in search of a mysterious goddess, the “mother of all things,” related to him by a traveling stranger. After years of wandering he last comes to the dwelling place of Isis, where he dreams he lifts the veil of the divine woman – only to see his sweetheart Rosenblütchen, who falls into his arms. Their loving reunion is marked by the appearance of “a distant music” – a quintessential Romantic symbol for the state of highest spiritual oneness, of being at home with the world. This ending distinctly mirrors a fragment left by Novalis that is thought to transmit the story's ending, in which it is told how one of the apprentices at Sais finally managed to lift the veil of the goddess. “But what did he see?” asks Novalis. “He saw – wonder of wonders – himself.”<sup>59</sup> In both instances the truth sought turns out to be the same: the self is the other and the other the self. The path to absolute knowledge is none other than the path to full self-understanding, and full self-understanding may be found through the union with the beloved.

But another, darker prospect lurks under such total identification of self with the other, as Romantic authors were only too well aware. In his satirical novella *Viel Lärmen um Nichts* (1832) – the original source of “In der Fremde,” the song preceding “Intermezzo” in Schumann's Op. 39 *Liederkreis* – Eichendorff relates the following troubling dream of the protagonist, Prince Romano:

He was standing once more on the beautiful hills overlooking the Neckar by Heidelberg. Summer was long gone, and night was falling. From over the mountains there came an old and beautiful song [‘das alte, schöne Lied’] from his past; he followed its tones over the sleeping landscape, lying silent and pale in the shimmer of the moon, towards his childhood home. Stepping over the body of the doorkeeper slumped against the gate

59 Novalis 1997, 81 and 99.

he entered the familiar garden. Statues of gods slumbered on their pedestals; a solitary swan, its head under its wing, described silent circles in the pond. In the fitful moonlight he thought he suddenly glimpsed the beguiling figure of his sweetheart among the trees; but she seemed to elude him as he approached, as if he was chasing his own shadow. But at last within the bushes he caught up with her and grasped her hand. And as she turned to meet his gaze he saw – to his horror – his own face looking back at him. “Let me go” he cried, “you don’t exist, it is only a dream!” “I am not and never was a dream” replied his horrifying mirror-image: “only now are you awakening.”<sup>60</sup>

Not only is the beloved in fact absent, but the self has merely been doubled – that is to say split yet again. Like Aristophanes’ divided hermaphroditic halves, the lover ardently desires the beloved with whom he or she may become one again. The subject seeks an other in which it may find recognition and completion, a solution to its own internal contradictions, into whose image it projects its own desires – but this may turn out all along to be merely an image of the self.

Eichendorff’s nightmarish, psychologically intriguing story offers a warning of how easily the search for the other might spill into narcissism. For Narcissus, the mythical figure who gives his name to both a common genus of hermaphroditic flower and condition of excessive self-love, so enamored did the youth become of his own reflection that he fell into the water and drowned. The resonance with the themes of this article is clear, as it is with the unhappy circumstances of the composer’s own later life.

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60 Eichendorff 1990, 211–212. Translation by the author.

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University of Edinburgh [Universität Edinburgh]

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