Robert Schumann

Herald of a "New Poetic Age"

JOHN DAVERIO

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11 Robert Schumann at 29—lithograph by Joseph Kriehuber.
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JOHN DAVERIO

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Printed in the United States of America
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For my parents

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Preface

Shortly after completing the draft of this book, I reread one of my favorite essays: Roland Barthes's "Loving Schumann." Like the French critic, I, too, must confess to loving Schumann, even at the risk of leaving myself open to the charge implicit in this odd passion: the adoption of a philosophy of nostalgia or untimeliness, as Barthes puts it. Moreover, the Schumann I love is the whole Schumann—not the one known to most everyone, the dreamy composer of quirky piano pieces and gorgeous songs who met a tragic end—and this Schumann, like caviar, is something of an acquired taste. After receiving a gentle nudge from Maribeth Anderson Payne, my editor at Oxford University Press, I decided to write this biography in part to set aside some old myths—that Schumann knew how to write short pieces but not long ones, that we can hear traces of his final illness in his later music—but also, and apart from any polemical intent, to draw a portrait of a composer who was perhaps the first in Western musical history to view the art of composition as a kind of literary activity. And above all, I felt the need to repay a debt, a debt to an artist who has given me untold happy hours as a listener to and performer of his music over the past twenty years. Loving Schumann may be a nostalgic and untimely avocation, but it exacts a price.

Although I'm sure to make some omissions, I would like to thank the many colleagues, friends, and students who have helped me to make good on my debt. Fellow Schumannians Arnfried Edler, Jon Finson, Rufus Hallmark, Claudia Macdonald, Gerd Nauhaus, Nancy Reich, R. Larry Todd, and Markus Waldura all offered much-appreciated advice at various stages during my research. I thank Barbara Barry, Mark Evan Bonds, Reinhold Brinkmann, Berthold Höckner, Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, and Howard Smither for generously sharing with me materials that enriched my understanding of Schumann's life and works. Drs. Mark Allen and Reed Drews provided invaluable insights on the interpretation of Schumann's medical history. I owe my gratitude to other friends and colleagues, including Anna Maria Busse-Berger, Karol Berger, Isabelle Cazeaux, Lewis Lockwood, and Herbert Sprouse, for their sage counsel

and unflagging support. To my colleagues at Boston University who have taken a keen interest in this project—Charles Fussell, John Goodman, Phyllis Hoffman, David Hoose, Joy McIntyre, Emilio Ros-Fábregas, Joel Sheveloff, Roye Wates, Gerald Weale, and Jeremy Yudkin—I extend a warm thank you, and reserve a special word for my recital partner and friend, Maria Clodes-Jaguaribe, who, like me, is an incurable Schumann lover. As always, the music-library staff at Mugar Memorial Library—Holly Mockovak, Richard Seymour, and Donald Denniston—responded promptly and cheerfully to my many (too many) requests.

My thanks also go to the students in a seminar on Schumann's music I conducted in the fall of 1993, especially to JoAnn Koh, Marcus Silvi, and Tom Williams, who reminded me that my hero wasn't victorious in every battle. Many current and former graduate students—Paul Bempéchat, James A. Davis, Simon Keefe, Teresa Neff, Eftychia Papanikolaou, and Elizabeth Seitz—lent willing ears to a sometimes obsessed teacher and advisor.

And last, I extend my thanks to the couple whose immeasurable support of my activities extends back forty years: my parents, Margaret and John D. Daverio. I dedicate this book to them, with love.

Boston J. D.
March 1996

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Robert Schumann

Introduction: Schumann Today

The Biographical Challenge

To write, near the turn to the twenty-first century, a study of the life and works of Robert Schumann is perhaps both presumptuous and foolhardy; presumptuous, because so many studies of the composer already exist; and foolhardy, because biographies, if some of the latest critical punditry is to be believed, may soon become the museum pieces of writerly genres. Among nineteenth-century composers, probably only Beethoven and Wagner might boast of having served more often as the subject of biographical inquiries than Schumann, whose story has been told and retold, revised and corrected, again and again. Moreover, the biographical method itself is under fire; before long, general studies of an artist's life and works may well be viewed with the same circumspection among scholarly writings as the historical romance is among literary genres. The guiding ideas of the nineteenth century, after all, can hardly be transplanted uncritically into the twentieth. For most of us, art is no longer the unmediated expression or reflection of the artist's inner life. The unity of lived experience and artistic product—so dear to nineteenth-century thinking—was already consigned by Walter Benjamin some three-quarters of a century ago to the realm where it belongs: to myth; fictional heroes, not living subjects, exemplify a perfect synthesis of this sort.[1] Striking a more hyperbolic tone, Roland Barthes has proclaimed the death of the author, whose written work "is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin." Writing, Barthes maintains,

"is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing."[2] And if the language spoken by a *literary* text is "neutral, composite, oblique," then the language of a musical text must be all the more hermetic, even if its creator, like Robert Schumann, has been held up by many as the ideal subject for a biography grounded in the nineteenth century's conviction that life and art are mutually reflective. But given recent skepticism of the view of music as a kind of "sonorous confession" on the one hand, and the demise of musical metaphysics on the other,[3] not even Schumann remains a safe subject for biographers. Either an account of the composer's life, pieced together mainly from his diaries and letters, hobbles alongside of an account of the works, or the works, deprived of their metaphysical content, figure as documents in a psychobiography whose hero is cut down to size by being portrayed as a neurotic like the rest of us. In the context of current debates, it is even questionable whether the traditional biography can be salvaged by tracing the transformation of biographical into aesthetic subjects in an artist's works.[4]

Then why should we have yet another biography of Schumann? In the first place, the project poses an interpretive challenge. The antinomy with which Karl Laux begins his compact but still useful study of Schumann's career—"It is easy to write a Schumann biography [because Schumann wrote it himself]. It is difficult to write a Schumann biography [because the modern biographer must chart the composer's relationships to his complicated and contradictory social surroundings]"[5]—is more than a rhetorical ploy. The difficulties entailed in writing a biography of Schumann are rooted not only in the complexities of the composer's world, but also in precisely the wealth of biographical material on which the writer must draw. Thanks to the painstaking editorial efforts of Martin Kreisig, Georg Eismann, Martin Schoppe, and Gerd Nauhaus, scholars have access to the rich fund of materials offered in the diaries and travel notes that Schumann maintained with some regularity from January 1827 to early 1854. Nauhaus's edition of the three volumes of *Haushaltbücher* ("household account books," with entries extending from early October 1837 to 23 February 1854—that is, to just four days before Schumann's suicide attempt) afford us an intimate if sketchily drawn portrait of the Schumanns' daily activities, including a minute accounting of their expenditures. Diaries, marriage diaries (the *Ehetagebücher* jointly kept with Clara from September 1840), travel notes, and household accounts together emerge as richly textured and indispensable sources of information.

Yet Schumann's diaries are easily sensationalized; some of the ear-

lier entries in particular almost seem to invite *mis*interpretation. Consider the following passage from Peter Ostwald's psychobiography:

> Schumann mentioned some of his adventures only in his diaries and not—understandably—in his letters; for example: "Voluptuous scandal during the night with the naked tour guide and the naked waitress"; "The inaccessible barmaid and my decision—unsatisfied—forced gaiety"; "The homosexual who thrust himself on me, and my sudden departure"; "Coffeehouse and the girl constantly looking around, certainly a whore"; "Real fear of ladies."[6]

Schumann did indeed jot down all these phrases, though at widely spaced intervals in the diaries, or, more exactly, in the travel notes documenting his sojourn in Switzerland and Italy from 20 August to 20 October 1829.[7] Restoring one of the quotations to its original context may make an impression quite different from the one suggested above:

> *16 Sept. 1829*
> "Golden sunny sky—Arrival in Brescia and Sambelli[8] angry on account of the passport—Sambelli's sister—cordial leavetaking from the professor—inn—lively trade in prostitution on the streets—coffeehouse—the ladies—the Signora and Signore—the one with a low voice: yes, sir!!—this woman is certainly from the Campagna[9]—I'm quietly 'left on the shelf'[10]—Addio, Signore—bad mood—theatre—a comedy: *The Adopted Son*—of little worth—the pederast who tried to force his company on me and my sudden departure—dinner at the inn—dim moonshine—letter to Therese [Schumann] . . . —reasonably content—the beautiful dreams that I've forgotten—[11]

Ostwald's string of quotes depicts a sexually obsessed teenager. Schumann's full diary entry, on the other hand, is the work of a keenly observant bystander who records isolated impressions stenographically but vividly, as if he were collecting notes for a novel. The montage calls up images of a young libertine; the full entry was made by an aspiring littérateur.

The realistic detail of the diaries, in other words, is easily made into the stuff of myth. Ostwald's strong suspicion that Schumann experienced several homosexual episodes during his late adolescence provides another case in point. A homoerotic Schumann makes for a more sexually complex figure than we might have suspected, but what is the nature of the evidence? Ostwald relates that after a trip to a tavern with Johann Renz on 2 March 1829, Schumann "noted 'pederasty' in his diary,"[12] and further that: "After returning to the tavern the next day, he [Schumann] recorded 'voluptuous night with Greek dreams'."[13] Ostwald's interpretation of the last phrase presupposes an understanding of

the rhetoric of our seedier tabloids. Schumann's "Greek dreams," however, were probably populated by figures from ancient tragedy: a year earlier he had translated a portion of the *Antigone* of Sophocles, whom he rhapsodically—we might say "voluptuously"—invoked in a diary entry of May or June 1828: "O magnificent Sophocles, who so many times has stood revealed before my soul in the beautiful and efflorescent form of Apollo."[14] In addition, Schumann would spend "luxurious" (perhaps a better translation of "üppig" than "voluptuous") nights with composers too: "Schwelgen in Chopin" (luxuriating in Chopin) he jotted in his diary on 19 June 1831.[15] In any event, on the evening of the pederasty episode in March 1829, Schumann had no Greek dreams—whatever they may have been—but rather fantasized about Schubert's so-called *Sehnsuchtswalzer,* as he would again on 4 March. If Schumann dreamed at all on 2 March, it was probably of Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe,* portions of which he read just before going to sleep.[16]

To be sure, Ostwald adduces other evidence to make a case for Schumann's homoeroticism—his close relationship with his roommate, the talented and attractive pianist Ludwig Schunke; the lack of references to Christel, Schumann's sometime-mistress, in the diaries of the mid-1830s—but this is flimsy evidence indeed.[17] Schumann's cultivation of close ties with men must be considered in the context of an age when intimate relationships among members of the same sex did not automatically spell sexual relationships. The principal male characters in Jean Paul's *Siebenkäs,* one of Schumann's favorite novels, were close enough that the author could write of his title character that: "he had not yet mustered up enough courage, except in the dithyrambic moments of friendship, . . . to kiss even his [male friend] Leibgeber, much less his Lenette [Siebenkäs's fiancée]."[18] The reader who assumes that Siebenkäs and Leibgeber are lovers is making an error; the biographer who pays insufficient attention to the cultural milieu in which Schumann grew up is making an even graver one.[19] The paucity of diary references to Christel during the mid-1830s likewise means little or nothing so far as the composer's personal dealings with men are concerned. From late March 1833 to July 1836 Schumann did not keep a diary, so that we must rely instead on the sketchy précis of his activities (from March 1833 to the summer of 1837) hastily compiled in Vienna on the evening of 28 November 1838.[20] To sum up, Schumann was undoubtedly more than an ardent bibliophile, but to maintain on the basis of scanty evidence that "he had one and possibly several homosexual encounters," that the death of his sister-in-law Rosalie might have weakened his "already fragile inhibitions against homosexuality," or that "homosexual panic" may

have contributed to his "nearly catastrophic breakdown" in 1833, requires too many leaps of the imagination.[21]

In reviewing the evidence for Schumann's passage through a homosexual phase during his early- and mid-twenties, I have not meant to engage in a diatribe with the author of one of the most readable and provocative biographies of the composer. On the contrary, I want only to suggest that if the meanings of the documentary materials were at one time transparent, they are no longer. If, as Sigmund Freud once put it, "biographical truth is not to be had,"[22] then the biographer should aim less at "setting the record straight" than at entering into a critical discourse with the surviving documents.

In addition to the hermeneutic challenges posed by Schumann's diaries, important advances in research contribute to the timeliness of a new general study. Wolfgang Boetticher's investigations of the compositional process have gone a long way toward debunking the myth of the unreflecting artist whose works poured forth at the behest of mysterious voices from the beyond.[23] The sketches, we are learning, are as variously interpretable as the literary documents. In her work on the manuscripts for pieces spanning all phases of Schumann's career—the piano sonatas, opp. 11, 14, and 22; the First and Third symphonies, opp. 38 and 97; and the string quartets, op. 41, nos. 1–3—Linda Correll Roesner has called attention to the composer's mosaic-like assembly of fragmentary ideas, suggesting a kind of composition-as-planned-improvisation that finds its sources in his earliest experiences at the keyboard.[24] Jon Finson's study of the sketches and drafts for the First Symphony discloses the links between Schumann's sometimes conventionalized view of form and his outlook on the symphony as a public genre,[25] while his reconstruction of the sketch materials for a never completed C-minor symphony (drafted in the fall of 1841) sheds new light on Schumann's abilities to compose at breakneck speed.[26] Another reconstructive effort, Joachim Draheim's completion of a *Konzertsatz* (concerto movement) in D minor for piano and orchestra, shows the composer grappling in early 1839 with a problem that would occupy him more persistently in 1841: the mediation of virtuoso display and thematic development.[27] The appearance of the first several volumes in the new edition of the composer's works (*Robert Schumann Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke,* jointly sponsored by the Robert-Schumann-Gesellschaft in Düsseldorf and the Robert-Schumann-Haus, Zwickau, and under the general editorship of Akio Mayeda and Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller) roughly coincides with renewed attempts at an analytical evaluation of Schumann's output, a task pursued more systematically by German than by American or Brit-

ish scholars. In arguing for Schumann's continuity with the formal traditions of Viennese classicism, Markus Waldura subsumes the composer's miniature and expanded forms alike under the banner of monomotivicism.[28] Reinhard Kapp and Michael Struck have both—albeit from different angles and with differing results—devoted themselves to a much-needed revision of our outlook on the controversial products of Schumann's later years.[29]

To be sure, much remains to be done on the documentary side. Perhaps most sorely missed is a comprehensive source-thematic catalogue of the composer's works (as of this writing, Margit McCorkle and Akio Mayeda are compiling one). For Boetticher, the problematic current status of Schumann's correspondence looms as a major concern. The publication of the Schumann family's special repository of letters, the so-called *Familienkassette* (which itself suffered severe water damage as a result of the 1945 bombing of Dresden and survives only because Boetticher had the foresight to microfilm much of the collection at the Dresdener Landesbibliothek in 1938) marks but a first step toward the realization of an important goal: a critical edition of all previously unpublished letters.[30] Even our knowledge of Schumann's activities as a music critic has its lacunae. Boetticher's comparison of several of the composer's early diary entries on Beethoven, Spohr, Berlioz, and Liszt with anonymous notices on the same figures in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* suggests that many of the unsigned articles may in fact be attributable to Schumann.[31] Akio Mayeda's projected completion of a new edition of Schumann's writings on music promises to address these (and other) aspects of the composer's critical endeavors. And finally, the new edition of Schumann's works is still in the incipient stages.[32] Its editors will have a host of issues to confront, among them the problem posed by works for which several versions or editions exist (e.g., the *Davidsbündlertänze*, op. 6; the *Etudes Symphoniques*, op. 13; and *Concert sans orchestre*/Piano Sonata no. 3, op. 14)[33] or for which the sketchbooks transmit alternate (and often very different) readings,[34] and the interpretation of the composer's subtle but sometimes idiosyncratic notation of his keyboard music.[35]

If the purpose of scholarly biography, as Hermann Danuser puts it, lies in "the precise representation of compositional thought,"[36] then the present state of Schumann research will at least allow for a general study that aims at a thorough engagement with the composer's music, even though we will have to rely in many cases on the less-than-ideal texts of his works as transmitted in the old collected edition (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1881–93), a project overseen by Clara Schumann and Brahms. To a certain extent, the assertion made over a decade ago by two leading schol-

ars—"For the present, Schumann is . . . only the composer of certain piano pieces, a piano concerto, and the Rhenish Symphony"[37]—still holds today. Works may be "as irreducible as deeds,"[38] but the light in which these deeds are viewed is constantly shifting over time. That significant portions of Schumann's output (in particular, the choral-orchestral music, much of the chamber music, and the works of his last years) play a relatively minor role in contemporary concert life is in part a function of the vagaries of reception history. Brahms's evaluation of the incidental music to *Manfred* and the *Scenen aus Göthe's Faust* as "the most magnificent things" that Schumann had ever written is probably shared by few today.[39] But at the same time, the spotty picture of the composer emanating from our concert halls and recording studios can be traced to the demise of the type of individual that Schumann represented in its purest manifestation: the musican-as-littérateur. Indeed, literature held a place in Schumann's creative life comparable to that of philosophy in Wagner's. Here was a figure who as a youth of fifteen read with his friends practically all of Schiller's dramas,[40] who as a *pater familias* of forty-three reread (in some cases, for the fourth or fifth time) his favorite Jean Paul novels,[41] and whose eclectic taste for literature extended from Aeschylus's *Eumenides* to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*[42] Schumann was, to quote Peter Rumenhöller's finely nuanced phrase, "universally cultured" ("universal gebildet"),[43] so that a necessary condition for our understanding of his musical output, especially its less accessible byways, will be an understanding of the literature that the composer knew and loved. We will have to look behind and beyond the works, the "irreducible deeds" forming our point of departure, to the poetic sensibility that informed their creation and to the afterlife they experienced at the hands of Schumann's critics.

Questions and Provisional Answers

In a review of Nigel Hamilton's *JFK: Reckless Youth,* Elizabeth Hardwick notes that "necessity, gap, lack do not always play a part in contemporary biography. Indeed, redundancy is the rule on the celebrated and even for those of a more narrow appeal such as poets, novelists, painters, and composers."[44] As disconcerting as it may be to accept, Hardwick's assessment rings true. We read (and write) biographies in part to confirm what we know about the subjects under discussion and what we think we know about ourselves. But while redundancy may be the justifiable object of the critic's scorn, this is not to say that previously raised questions should not be framed anew.

So far as Schumann is concerned, a complex of biographical, more broadly historical, critical, and analytical issues are certainly worth considering from a fresh perspective. To what extent did Schumann cultivate the musical *Erlebnislyrik* or "lyric of personal experience," represented, most obviously, by his youthful fondness for cryptograms and ciphers? How can we gauge the interplay between subjective utterance and objective treatment in his music? What is Schumann's position relative to the accomplishments of other nineteenth-century artists? Is it possible for us to form a coherent picture of an output in which works of considerable breadth and seriousness rub shoulders with unpretentious miniatures? Is it sensible to link the changes both in Schumann's style and in the direction of his career with the social and economic configurations of the mid-nineteenth century? To what extent do the old caveats—regarding Schumann's undistinguished orchestration, his greater success in smaller than in larger forms, his lack of dramatic talent, and the gradual decline in his creative powers—still hold?

Without promising definitive answers, we might begin by examining the questions critically. Nowhere is this more difficult than in measuring the interpenetration of life and art in Schumann's works, even if the two commingle more thoroughly here than with any other nineteenth-century composer. The notion of music-as-confession finds sustenance in the writings of Schumann himself, who as a young man wrote of his favorite author, "In all his works Jean Paul mirrors himself, but always as two persons: he is Albano and Schoppe [in *Titan*], Siebenkäs and Leibgeber *[Siebenkäs]*, Vult and Walt *[Flegeljahre]*,"[45] and as a more mature journalist said of Liszt, "His own life is situated in his music."[46] What Schumann asserted of one of his most admired predecessors—"Strictly speaking, a sheet of music was for Schubert what for others was a diary"[47]—has been said often enough of Schumann himself. Plentiful evidence suggests that he viewed large segments of his own output in precisely this way. In spite of a tangle of contradictory utterances, it is difficult to rule out some connection between *Papillons*, op. 2, and the literary example provided by Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre*. Copious references from the letters can be marshalled to support the view that many of the piano works from the 1830s—the *Davidsbündlertänze*, op. 6; the F♯-minor Sonata, op. 11; the *Concert sans orchestre*, opus 14; *Kreisleriana*, op. 16; and the *Novelletten*, op. 21—were bound up with conflicts over Schumann's troubled suit for Clara's hand. While arranging Paganini's G-minor Caprice for inclusion in the *6 Studien*, op. 3, Schumann notes in his diary that he was visited by fantastic images of the violin virtuoso "in a magic circle."[48] Similarly, the composer relates

that the *Nachtstücke,* op. 23 (originally called *Leichenphantasie* or "Corpse-Fantasy") were conceived under the spell of a visionary premonition of his brother Eduard's death.[49] According to Clara's January 1841 entry in the marriage diary, the impulse for the creation of the First Symphony (its new stylistic profile is often linked by biographers to Schumann's recent marriage) came from a poem by Adolph Böttger.[50] As late as 1850, Schumann writes to Simrock of the Third Symphony, op. 97, that it "perhaps here and there reflects on a slice of [my] life."[51]

No doubt Schumann is an important witness for his own works, but the suspicion arises that his testimony may be colored by an ideology of art and life that runs through nineteenth-century criticism with the obstinacy of a Wagnerian leitmotif. The two spheres can certainly affect one another, but their interaction may result in either reciprocal support or mutual negation. According to Schumann's comments on his creative outpouring during the civil revolutions at mid-century: "It seemed as if the outer storms impelled people to turn inward."[52] At the same time, artistic product and affective state are not always in harmony. Those who treat the Second Symphony, op. 61, as a reflection of Schumann's depressive melancholy are listening only to the somber rhetoric of the Adagio, and not to the dignified joviality of the first movement and Finale, or the irrepressible good humor of the Scherzo.[53]

An accumulation of biographical detail brings with it a paradox: heightened knowledge of a composer's lived experience often belies the connections between life and art that we would like to find.[54] Even an early commentator like Franz Brendel asserted that the descriptive titles of Schumann's collections of miniatures for piano were "the result of reflection," not pre-compositional catalysts.[55] For most biographers, the link between *Carnaval,* op. 9, and Schumann's then-sweetheart Ernestine von Fricken is assured by the encipherment of the name of her hometown, Asch, into the fabric of the music; but the A-S-C-H motive first appears in sketches unrelated to *Carnaval.*[56]

Living in the shadow of Freud, the modern biographer responds to "the imperfection of artificers" at the expense of "the perfection of artifacts."[57] Udo Rauchfleisch, author of yet another psychobiography of Schumann, is not alone in treating the composer's works as documents of his psychological complaints.[58] The focal point of Ostwald's biography is the composer's final illness, which casts a pall over the entire study; witness the author's decision to devote his opening chapter to an account of Schumann's suicide attempt in February 1854 and its immediate aftermath.[59] Biographical narrative and value judgment go hand in hand, for Schumann's works are thus reduced to a therapeutic means

of warding off impending madness. To be sure, composing may have been a form of theraphy for Schumann (it probably is for most composers), but my sense is that it was much more besides.

No less difficult than the circumscribed problems of biography are the larger issues of historical position. No doubt, our composer occupies an equivocal place in the nineteenth century. "Schumann," Brahms pointed out in conversation with Richard Heuberger, "went one way, Wagner another, and I a third."[60] But what was "Schumann's way"? The composer came of age as part of the successor generation to Hegel, Goethe, and Schleiermacher. The majority of his works fall within the two decades bounded on the one hand by the rise of the optimistic literary movement known as *Junges Deutschland* and on the other by the failed revolutions of 1848/49. Hence they span a period of transition from faith in philosophical idealism to resigned embrace of political realism. Schumann's music neither accords neatly with his time nor withdraws decisively from it, but rather hovers between the no-longer and the not-yet, between the youthful bloom of Weber and the autumnal reflection of Brahms. This transitional quality can be read in the network of allusions and foreshadowings in a composition such as the First Symphony: the trombone countertheme from the coda of the Finale inverts a characteristic segment from the famous horn tune that opens Schubert's Ninth Symphony; the melody prefacing the return to E♭ in the slow movement looks forward to the main theme of the first movement of Brahms's Third Symphony.

Perhaps Schumann's appearance at a juncture when the musical scene was in flux has made it difficult for biographers to reach a concensus on the number and nature of his style periods. One thing is certain: traditional three- or four-period divisions will not do. Their differences aside, most attempts at a periodization of Schumann's career affirm the presence of two main phases. In doing so, they draw (whether consciously or not) on the paradigm suggested by the nineteenth-century critic and historian Franz Brendel, who argued that the temporal manifestation of Schumann's general tendency to proceed "outward from within" resulted in the passage from a "subjective" phase (represented in the early piano music) to an "objective" phase (in the symphonic, chamber, and contrapuntal works of the early- and mid-1840s), with the songs of 1840 serving as a bridge from one phase to the other.[61] Stripped of its Hegelian overtones, Brendel's scheme is at the heart of the subsequent divisions of Schumann's career into "romantic" and "classic" periods,[62] a bipartition as convenient as it is questionable: the G-minor Piano Sonata, op. 22, begun when Schumann was in his mid-twenties, is in many ways a model of classical form; the late choral-

orchestral ballade *Vom Pagen und der Königstochter* is full of romantic whimsy. Examples such as these could be easily multiplied. Schumann himself singled out 1845 (when the Second Symphony was begun) as the year during which he developed "a completely new manner of composition."[63] Still, it is open to debate whether this composition represents a watershed in the sense that, say, Beethoven's "*Eroica*" does. While the Second Symphony demonstrates a notable sophistication in its integration of materials over the entire course of a multi-movement work, Schumann's "new manner" of 1845 is perhaps better understood as a logical outgrowth of his approach to large-scale instrumental composition in the earlier 1840s rather than as a radical break.

Allow me to suggest a way out of the dilemma posed by the search for a cogent periodization of Schumann's output. Perhaps Schumann consistently intermingled "subjective" and "objective" qualities throughout his career, but with varying degrees of emphasis, a hypothesis implying that the passage from a "subjective" to an "objective" phase was hardly abrupt. To insist on a hard-and-fast demarcation of style-periods in time is to miss the point, namely, that Schumann's *oeuvre* unfolds in a series of sometimes parallel and sometimes overlapping phases.[64] The products of his imagination may thus be viewed as points where divergent or complementary trends intersect. Schumann's hopes for a career as virtuoso pianist, dashed in the autumn of 1831 by the realization that his lame finger would not allow for it, run parallel with an intense preoccupation with literature; both factors coalesce in his engaging review of Chopin's virtuoso variations on Mozart's "*Là ci darem la mano.*" During the 1830s Schumann not only cultivated the keyboard miniature, but also prepared assiduously for symphonic composition,[65] a dualism evident in many an orchestrally styled passage in the piano sonatas and the *Fantasie,* op. 17. The balance shifts during the course of the Symphonic Year (1841), where we hear, for example, an allusion to the last piece of *Kreisleriana* in a transitional passage from the Finale of the First Symphony.[66] Overlaps and crosscurrents of this sort infiltrate every aspect of Schumann's work: sketchbooks may function as diaries,[67] passages from the diaries often turn up in the critical writings, critical perspectives shape the attitude toward genre, musical genres—the possibilities of which Schumann appears to have explored quite systematically—mutually influence one another.

In order to analyze the dualisms that contribute to the richness of Schumann's work (but that have caused his biographers no end of headaches), let us turn briefly to one of the more problematic corners of his output: the *Hausmusik* (convivial or pedagogical music for piano, voice, or chamber ensemble) of the late 1840s. The bourgeois sensibility

of much of Schumann's later keyboard music—one thinks of the *Album für die Jugend,* op. 68 (1848) and the *Waldscenen,* op. 82 (1848–49)—is as unmistakable as it is challenging to fix in technical categories. But the literal meaning of the term aside, *Hausmusik* cannot be defined by its place of performance. Although mainly intended for the delectation of the family circle, *Hausmusik* might just as well find its way into the aristocratic or royal salon; witness Schumann's report on Clara's performance of selections from the *Album für die Jugend* at the Hannoverian court.[68] Nor is a definition on stylistic grounds any easier to formulate. A fine line separates the stylized naïveté of the *Kinderscenen* from the insouciance of the *Album für die Jugend,* a number of whose pieces (especially from the second part of the collection, "for older children") would not sound out of place in the "poetic" collections of the 1830s. What emerges in much of the *Hausmusik* for piano is a delicate tension between simplicity and high art.

In the first piece of the *Waldscenen,* "Eintritt," this tension manifests itself in the discrepancy between the regularity of the larger metric groupings and the irregularity of their inner divisions. The opening phrase falls into two subphrases of three-and-a-half and four measures, respectively, thus causing a slight but telling shift in the metric weight of the closing gesture, marked x in Example I.1. To the eye, both statements of x seem to occupy the same position within two four-bar phrases. But given the beginning of the second subphrase a half-bar "too soon" midway through m. 4, we perceive the stress pattern delineated by *x* in mm. 7–8 as weak-strong-weak, the reverse of the strong-weak-strong pattern of its first appearance (mm. 3–4). What is more, the player who takes the first ending will hear the opening gesture transformed, as if by magic, from a strong to a weak position in the larger metric pattern. The unpretentiousness of the melody is thus belied by syntactic subtleties.

This example should at least give pause to our unquestioning acceptance of one of the oldest clichés of Schumann criticism: the unrelenting four-squareness of much of his music. Another tired claim, that Schumann was an inept orchestrator, also invites reexamination. Half a century ago, Arnold Schoenberg interpreted this claim as a by-product of the conflict between the "New Germans" (Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner) and the "Academic-Classicists" (Schumann, Brahms) that raged so furiously in the second half of the nineteenth century.[69] And indeed, Schumann was capable of producing orchestral effects just as striking as those of the "musicians of the future" if the occasion warranted. The evocative scoring at the opening of the fourth of his *Faust* Scenes ("Ariel. Sonnenaufgang"), featuring richly divided strings and upper wind chords punc-

Example I.1. Waldscenen, op. 82: *Eintritt,* mm. 1–8.

tuated by the harp, provides both a backdrop for Faust's attempts to fall asleep and an apt portrayal of Goethe's designation for Ariel's opening speech: "Gesang, von Äolsharfen begleitet" ("Song, accompanied by Aeolian harps"). The clearly differentiated sound-strata of the subsequent scene ("Mitternacht"), where a nervous figure in the *divisi* violas contrasts sharply with an eerie line in the winds, are worthy of comparison with many a passage in Berlioz. And in order to establish the proper mood for the invocation of the Spirit of the Alps in *Manfred* (no. 6), Schumann fashioned a gossamer texture of muted violin sixteenths, arabesques in the winds, and harp harmonics.

Even more deeply engrained in the popular consciousness is the opinion that Schumann was unable to control larger forms. That he was more than able to do so is easily demonstrated by the final scene-complex of *Das Paradies und die Peri.* The representation of the Peri's third and final descent to earth, her observation of the fearsome criminal turned penitent, and her joyous welcome into heaven, span a series of four numbers (23–26), the first and third of which are likewise parsed into interdependent lyric units. Fundamental for the cohesiveness of the whole is a "progressive" tonal scheme moving from E minor to G major.

The logic of the design also results from a network of melodic cross-references: portions of the lyrical material from the tenor's arioso in No. 23 resurface in the episodes of the rondo-like No. 26; the sinner's prayer at the conclusion of No. 23 provides the tone for the chorus's reflections in No. 24 and its commentary on the tenor solo in No. 25; and finally, a descending figure elaborated in No. 25 recurs, though reconfigured as an emblem of triumph, at the beginning of No. 26. By and large, Schumann makes his referential points unobtrusively; nowhere in the closing scene-complex do the recurrent materials acquire the chiseled character of leitmotifs. Recognition of this fact may help to explain Schumann's peculiar standing as a composer of dramatic music. His preference for the subtle link over the profiled leitmotif colors his epic endeavors with a lyric quality, an inwardness at odds with the confrontational atmosphere we expect in drama. But faulting him for his lyric bent is as unjustified as criticizing a lyric poem because it happens to eschew dialogue.

The uneasy relationship between analysis and value judgment comes into relief more obviously in discussions of Schumann's late works than in any other portion of his output. For some early critics, a dimming of the composer's genius was already apparent at the end of the 1840s in works such as the opera *Genoveva.*[70] By the beginning of the following decade, Theodor Uhlig would find signs in the A-minor Sonata for piano and violin, op. 105, that idiosyncrasy had given way to musical mannerisms such as obsessive repetitions and curious mixtures of the bizarre and the commonplace.[71] Even the more sympathetic Brendel had only muted praise for the *Phantasie* for violin and orchestra, op. 131. The violinist Ferdinand David, he wrote, "lent the work a surprising effectiveness, demonstrating that it really can be successfully performed for a cultured audience receptive to Schumann's compositions."[72] Nor has it helped matters that the events surrounding the creation or reception of some of these works have all the trappings of a ghost story by E. T. A. Hoffmann. By Schumann's own account, the theme of his last set of keyboard variations was dictated to him "by the angels." Jelly d'Arányi and Adili Fachiri, nieces of the violinist Joseph Joachim and themselves violinists of note, were in turn "commanded" by the spirits of their uncle and Schumann to track down the manuscript of the latter's violin concerto and have it published. (This they indeed did, with the help of Wilhelm Strecker, then in the employ of Schott Verlag; the concerto appeared in print, notwithstanding the objections of Schumann's daughter Eugenie, in 1937.)[73] These are intriguing tales, but they have had the unfortunate effect of enveloping the

late works in a fog of occultism that has become increasingly difficult to penetrate.

Stemming from the ever-narrowing circle of family and friends around Schumann in his last creative phase—namely Clara, Brahms, and the violinist Joseph Joachim—the myth that portrays the late works as a necessary complement to the final illness has been called into question by more recent appraisals of the documentary and musical evidence.[74] According to this view, Schumann's ultimate descent into madness forfeits its status as the last stage in a disintegrating career. If we want to interpret Schumann's life as a drama, the dementia of his last years will function as the peripeteia or reversal that occasioned an abrupt interruption in the work that had continued apace until January of 1854.[75] Indeed, anyone who scans Schumann's last diary entries (on the trip to Hannover in late January 1854) for signs of mental decay will be disappointed. Likewise, an unbiased look at the late music will disclose qualities too frequently overlooked: a heightened intensity of expression,[76] a rigorous limitation of thematic materials,[77] and a visionary prefiguration of features associated with later composers including Bruckner, Reger, and even Schoenberg.[78]

Consider, for instance, the slow movement of the Violin Concerto, which, in spite of its brevity, unfolds as a fully elaborated sonata form. The movement plays on two ideas (labeled A and B in Example I.2) associated with a solo cello and the solo violin, respectively. The second idea (B) embodies a tension between lyric breadth and motivic economy: a close look reveals that it evolves entirely as a series of melodically filled-in thirds. While this idea serves in both the opening and closing groups, the solo cello's idea (A) turns out to be even more versatile. One could say that the point of the movement resides precisely in the gradual realization of this motive's potential: as principal theme, as countermelody to the violin's theme, as transitional material to the closing group, as main subject in the development, and finally as transition to the finale. Functional multiplicity and motivic limitation go hand in hand. Only a composer in full command of his or her rational powers can realize the consequences of this interdependence of variety and unity. Robert Schumann was such a composer—until February 1854.

Toward a Portrait of Schumann the Composer

Our image of Schumann will vary depending on which segment of his creative output we deem central. The focus on the piano music common

Example I.2. Violin Concerto: slow movement. Violin and piano reduction by Georg Schunemann © B. Schott's Soehne, Mainz, 1937. © renewed. All rights reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors Corporation, sole U.S. and Canadian agent for B. Schott's Soehne, Mainz.

in so many studies represents the continuation of a critical tradition stemming from the later nineteenth century. But whereas the cycles of keyboard pieces from the 1830s and the songs of 1840 have contributed to a view of Schumann as a sentimental lyricist (in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* [*Beyond Good and Evil*] Nietzsche spoke of "a dangerous propensity . . . for quiet lyricism and sottishness of feeling"), the poetic element in the piano music, embodied in its evocative titles and superscriptions, enabled the composer's supporters in the "New German" camp to make him into a program musician and hence a representative

of musical progress.[79] Liszt found further proof of Schumann's modernity in the later works for chorus and orchestra. In arguing for the centrality of works such as the *Faust* scenes, Liszt justified his elevation of Schumann from musical craftsman to *Tondichter*—tone poet. A more recent writer like Peter Rummenhöller also takes Schumann's "literary culture" as a starting point. In Rummenhöller's opinion, the composer's critical activities serve as the focal point for a new, "modern-bourgeois" artistic type: the musician-as-intellectual.[80] For Helmuth Christian Wolff, who emphasizes the contrapuntal works of 1845 (*Studien für den Pedal-Flügel,* op. 56; *Sechs Fugen über den Namen B-A-C-H,* op. 60; *Vier Fugen für Pianoforte,* op. 72), Schumann is a "classicist."[81] If we accept Dahlhaus's pithy description of Schumann's *oeuvre* as "*Hausmusik* for cognoscenti,"[82] then the keyboard and vocal music of the late 1840s will have to be accorded more than marginal significance. And last, Reinhard Kapp, an apologist for the late, "esoteric" instrumental works, views this repertory as the culmination of Schumann's creative life.[83]

The fact that nearly every facet of Schumann's output can be taken as the decisive one is not so disconcerting as it may first appear. Quite simply, it means that the composer was many things: a progressive, a tone poet, a bourgeois intellectual, a classicist, a lover of the bizarre and enigmatic. It also means that no single genre was central to his development. In fact, he was a master of transforming one genre into another, without our being able to pinpoint where one leaves off and the other begins. *Kennst du das Land,* the first of the *Lieder und Gesänge* from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister,* Opus 98a, compresses all the elements of an operatic *scena*—instrumental introduction, recitative, and aria—into the smallest of spaces. Schumann's fugues (the *Vier Fugen,* op. 72, in particular) often display the techniques of motivic development associated with the character piece. The slow movement of the D-minor Piano Trio, op. 63, is both a character piece for chamber ensemble and a series of contrapuntal variations.

Thus the model for Schumann's creative work is less a perfectly rounded whole, a circle with a midpoint, than a constellation of fragments. But regulating the fragments and imparting them coherence is a single thought: the notion that music should be imbued with the same intellectual substance as literature. Schumann developed this conviction while he was still a teenager; he held to it until the end of his career.

1

The Formation of a Musico-Literary Sensibility

A Youth by No Means Lacking in Talent

"The city and its suburbs lie in one of the most beautiful and romantic regions of Saxony, on the left bank of the Mulde, between gardens, meadows, and fertile fields. . . . The entire area around Zwickau has so many natural beauties that one could actually call it a park."[1] It was here in Zwickau, on 8 June 1810 at 10:30 P.M., that Robert Schumann was born the fifth and last child of August Schumann and Johanna Christiana Schumann *née* Schnabel. The young Schumann passed his early years in a milieu conducive to the pursuit of literary studies. His father, by several accounts an active, ingenious, and industrious man,[2] is often described as a book dealer, though the scope of his activities was considerably wider. The author of chivalric romances and an indefatigable lexicographer, August Schumann made a small fortune by publishing pocket editions of Sir Walter Scott's novels and other foreign classics in German translation. Soon before his death in August 1826 he began to issue similar editions of Byron's works; these publications were not lost on his son, who during the summer of 1827 set one of the English poet's lyrics ("I saw thee weep") as a lied entitled *Die Weinende.* Indeed, Schumann spoke of his father's book dealership as "a great formative power for a youth";[3] within its walls he no doubt wiled away

many an hour poring over literary classics produced both abroad and at home. A firm believer in the positive force of Enlightenment, *Bildung* (self-cultivation), and the liberal spirit, August Schumann once asserted that "What binds the Germans as a nation is their literature,"[4] a conviction he certainly passed on to his youngest and favorite offspring. Even Johanna Christiana dabbled in literature: the thirteen-year-old Robert copied her poem *An Napoleon* into his *Blätter und Blümchen aus der goldenen Aue* (Leaves and Flowerlets from the Golden Meadow), a commonplace-book in which the aspiring *literatus,* under the name "Skülander," recorded his earliest poetic efforts, including lyrics, dramatic fragments, and fictitious letters.[5]

Up to his third year Schumann was, in his own words, "a child like any other."[6] Then, after his mother contracted typhus ("Nervenfieber"), he was placed under the care of a Frau Eleonore Carolina Elisabeth Ruppius, a kindly woman well practiced in the art of child-rearing, who along with her husband had served as witness at Schumann's baptism. The child's stay in the Ruppius household, which was supposed to last no more than six weeks but in fact covered a two-and-a-half-year period, has been viewed as the source of a separation anxiety that fed into the composer's later depressive condition.[7] Yet Schumann seems to have had nothing but fond memories of this phase of his life: he soon grew extremely attached to Frau Ruppius, whom he likened in his earliest autobiographical account to a "second mother."[8] (In any event, such arrangements were not uncommon in the earlier nineteenth century: the gregarious Balzac, for instance, spent several of his childhood years with a foster family). Schumann emerged from the experience "gentle, childlike, and attractive," ready, at the age of six or so, to enroll in the private school of Archdeacon H. Döhner, from whom he soon began to learn Latin, French, and Greek.[9]

When he was about seven, his frequent singing having alerted his parents to their youngest son's musical talent, Schumann began piano lessons with Johann Gottfried Kuntsch, then the organist at Saint Mary's, described in one of the composer's autobiographical sketches from around 1840 as "a good teacher who liked me, but who was himself only a mediocre player."[10] Kuntsch's youthful charge made rapid progress: in short order, Schumann demonstrated a real gift for sight-reading, "though obviously without technical perfection or accuracy," and already by his second year of study, he had made his first attempts at composition in the form of dances, presumably for keyboard.[11] A further spur to the boy's musical imagination dates from about the same time. In 1818, Schumann accompanied his mother to Karlsbad, where she intended to reap the curative benefits of the spot's famed mineral

baths (her son would do likewise in the mid- and late-1840s, in the environs of Dresden and on the East Frisian island of Norderney). Schumann remembered their five-week excursion, which flew by so quickly he thought only a week had passed, as the "most beautiful time" in his life; he was up every morning, sometimes as early as 4 or 5 A.M., for a walk along the promenade, read until lunchtime, and then took another stroll in the afternoon, either in the city or alone in the countryside. At an evening concert, Johanna Christiana whispered into her son's ear that the famed pianist-composer Ignaz Moscheles was seated behind them. This fleeting encounter made a lasting impression. Writing to Moscheles many years later, in 1851, Schumann confessed to having preserved a concert program that the virtuoso happened to touch, as if it were a "sacred relic."[12]

Schumann's childhood idyll came to an end by about 1819 or 1820 when, upon entering the fourth class of the Zwickau Gymnasium, he began to feel overladen with schoolwork. "I wasn't always diligent," Schumann admitted in his earliest autobiographical account, "though I was by no means lacking in talent."[13] Along with his brother (probably the next oldest, Carl) and some schoolfriends, Schumann set up a "right pretty theatre" at home and, charging two or three thalers admission, mounted ex tempore theatrical productions that made him into something of a neighborhood celebrity.[14] Beginning in 1821 or 1822, he appeared in *Abendunterhaltungen* (semi-private evening entertainments) organized by Kuntsch, participating in performances of four-hand variations by Pleyel; variation sets for solo piano by J. B. Cramer, Ferdinand Ries, and Moscheles; and Weber's *Aufforderung zum Tanz.*[15] Echoes of this repertoire can easily be heard in some of Schumann's earlier compositional efforts. The *VIII Polonaises* (1828) draw on his youthful exposure to the four-hand literature; the *Abegg Variations,* op. 1 (1830), reflect his close acquaintance with the virtuoso variation tradition; and the diverse influences that fed into *Papillons,* op. 2 (1829–31), certainly include Weber's popular *Aufforderung zum Tanz.*

Thanks largely to the *Lebenserinnerungen* of his schoolmate Emil Flechsig, we can sense the emergence of a well defined personality as Schumann approached adolescence. According to Flechsig, his friend's performance as a gymnasiast was only "middling," his deportment, at least at school, given to dreaminess and inattention. But this is not to say that Schumann was indifferent to his schoolwork, nor that he was lethargic and withdrawn. After all, his diploma from the Zwickau Gymnasium, awarded on 15 March 1828, testifies to a graduation "with honor."[16] Moreover, and again as Flechsig tells it, Schumann was "absolutely convinced" as a teenager "that he would eventually become a fa-

mous man." He needed only to settle on the precise area in which to distinguish himself. And although Schumann toyed with the idea of pursuing heraldic or philological studies, Flechsig drew particular attention to his schoolmate's keen intelligence for belles-lettres, his aspirations in this direction encoded in the poems and dramatic fragments of the *Blätter und Blümchen.*

At the same time, Schumann had already developed into an accomplished pianist with a genuine gift for free improvisation. His own autobiographical notes on this phase of his life speak, in even stronger terms, of a "pathological longing for music and piano-playing if I hadn't played for a while," and make further reference to cello and flute lessons with a Herr Meissner, the municipal music director.[17] In addition, a number of ambitious compositional projects stem from these early teenage years. Schumann listed his setting of Psalm 150 for soprano, alto, and an unusual orchestral complement (consisting of two violins, viola, two flutes, two oboes, bassoon, horn, two trumpets, tympani, and piano) as his "oldest completely finished work,"[18] and indeed the manuscript's title page, dated 1822, and unfortunately the only trace of the composition to survive, bears the proud disignation "Oeuv. 1" as well as an imprint indicative of the young composer's wishful thinking: "Leipzig / chez Breitkopf et Härtel." "I'm almost ashamed when I look at it now," Schumann wrote of his fledgling effort many years later, "I had no knowledge [of composition] and even wrote like a child."[19] Nonetheless, the child was already exhibiting a proclivity for systematic production, for another foray into the oratorical genre, an *Ouverture* and *Chor von Landleuten,* "Oeuv 1 . . . No. 3" (again scored for an odd instrumentarium, this time including piano and serpent) followed later in 1822 or early in 1823.[20] An entry in his *Projektenbuch* (project book) for the same years even alludes to the beginnings of an opera.[21]

Thus by the time Schumann reached his thirteenth year, a tug-of-war between poetic and musical pursuits was well under way and would, in one form or another, persist until the end of his career. As he indicated much later in his diary, both urges emanated from the same source: "Already in my earliest years I always felt compelled to produce, if not music, then poetry, and I enjoyed a happiness just as great as any I've since felt."[22] And even at this relatively early stage, there are signs of an attempt to reconcile the dual impulses in his will to production by writing literature *about* music: the *Blätter und Blümchen* contain, together with poetic and dramatic fragments, a series of brief biographical sketches of famous composers and excerpts from F. D. Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (1806).

Among the clearest signs of the seriousness with which Schumann

intended to cultivate the belletristic side of his talent was his founding, along with ten other students, of a *Litterarischer Verein* (literary club) in the late autumn of 1825. No doubt the young Schumann was the driving force behind the group, which met no less than thirty times between December 1825 and February 1828. Indeed, its statement of purpose begins with a phrase much in keeping with the outlook of Schumann *père:* "It is the duty of every cultivated individual to know the literature of his fatherland. . . ."[23] Dedicated to the study of specifically German literature, every meeting of the *Verein* consisted of a series of readings aloud from the masterworks of German poetry and prose, the biographies of distinguished men of letters, and even the original works of members, followed by a period of discussion. The *Protokollbuch* of the *Verein* likewise laid out the ground-rules for the establishment of a lending library to be owned jointly by the members and toward which every new member was to contribute one volume. Frequently elected *Vorsteher* or chairman, Schumann was responsible for maintaining silence during the readings, distributing parts in plays, correcting errors in delivery, and imposing fines for inappropriate behavior. In the course of its slightly more than two-year existence, the *Verein* provided a forum for the reading and discussion of poetry by acknowledged masters such as Schiller, a particular favorite of the young Schumann, and less well-known figures including Ernst Schulze; biographical articles on Jean Paul, Herder, and Wieland; and essays by Friedrich Schlegel.[24] From the minutes of the group's meetings we can tell that its members planned to explore, systematically, the works of great German authors in turn, and here too it is possible to sense Schumann's guiding hand. Special emphasis was first accorded the dramatic works of Schiller, eight of whose plays were read and studied, either in whole or in part, between 16 January 1826 and March 1827. One of these, *Die Braut von Messina,* provided the inspiration for an overture (op. 100) composed during Schumann's later years.[25] The group's focus on drama thus occurred at the end of a phase designated in Schumann's autobiographical sketches of 1840 as one of "Passion for the theatre," and marked by his first hearing of operas by Weber *(Der Freischütz),* Cherubini *(Les deux Journées* in its German incarnation as *Der Wasserträger),* Rossini *(La Gazza Ladra, Mosé in Egitto),* and Mozart *(Die Entführung aus dem Serail).*[26]

The survey of Schiller's dramas complete, the *Verein* turned to the writer who would loom larger in the young Schumann's literary pantheon than any other: Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, best known by his *nom de plume,* Jean Paul. But the group did not make much progress with its study of this brilliant but idiosyncratic author; only two of his titles figured in their sessions: *Die Neujahrsnacht eines Unglücklichen,* a

novella, taken up in June 1827, and his *Conjecturalbiographie,* read in December of that year.[27] During the same period, Schumann had apparently struck out on his own self-designed course of Jean Paul study; in a letter of 25 December 1827, he promised to send his friend Otto Hermann Walther a copy of *Titan,* the novel whose apparent offenses against writerly proprieties he would defend in a school essay, also written in 1827, entitled "Warum erbittert uns Tadel in Sachen des Geschmakes *[sic]* mehr, als in andern Dingen" (Why Does Censure Provoke Us More in Matters of Taste Than in Other Things?).[28] The *Litterarischer Verein* assembled for the last time on 16 February 1828, its subsequent disbanding surely linked to Schumann's relocation in Leipzig to pursue legal studies.

The formative importance of this coterie of like-minded, aspiring literati for the young Schumann can hardly be overemphasized, not least because it afforded him an outlet for his developing tendency toward systematic study and production. Indeed, the *Verein* was founded on the principle that all of the "great men" of German letters "have sprung from groups such as this."[29] Hence reception and creation were envisioned as flipsides of the same coin, as they undoubtedly were during Schumann's later teenage years as well. His justifiable claim to have been familiar with "the most important poets of a fair number of countries" before his twentieth birthday[30] was complemented by an urge to try his hand at a broad range of literary genres: translation, lyric poetry, drama, critique, and confessional memoir. The same desire to exhaust the possibilities of a genre that arches over Schumann's mature productions is thus present in his youthful literary activities. Some of these projects even foreshadow the chief musico-poetic efforts, the "literary operas" of Schumann's later years. Though none of the seven surviving dramatic fragments of the Zwickau years progressed beyond a first act, two of them dating from early 1827—*Die beiden Montalti,* a *Trauerspiel,* and *Coriolan,* a *Dramatisches Gedicht*—prefigure the dramaturgical forms of *Genoveva* and *Manfred,* respectively.[31]

As a gymnasiast, Schumann had read the classical tragedians and Horace in the original Greek and Latin. No later than 1825, he began to make metric translations (many of them collected in his *Idyllen aus dem Griechischen des Bion, Theocritus und Moschus*) of Anakreon, Homer, and Sophocles, an activity for which he claimed to demonstrate "great talent."[32] As we have already seen, Schumann's earliest original efforts in verse, assembled in the *Blätter und Blümchen aus der goldenen Aue,* date from two years before. Then between 1825 and 1830, he brought together a number of his own lyrics in another album, this one entitled *Allerley aus der Feder Roberts an der Mulde* (All Sorts of Things

from the Pen of Robert on the Mulde), now part of a manuscript containing thirty-two poems and poetic fragments, fugitive notes on Beethoven and Spohr, an exercise in Jean-Paulian prose-poetry, and the beginning of a letter in English.[33] While Schumann's handling of the standard romantic themes—love, death, honor, artistry—and images—sunflowers and violets, heaven-bound swans, enchanted gardens—proves to be somewhat stiff, it is nonetheless noteworthy that he should have lavished so much attention on his early efforts in the lyric vein. The manuscript abounds in emendations and marginal notes; in one extreme case of self-criticism, he even writes: "all this has been said before—trivial recounting of phrases that convey little."[34]

The young Schumann struck a better balance between reflection and fantasy in his essays and confessional writings. Their youthful effusiveness aside, the extant school essays of 1827, all of them touching on aesthetic issues, bear the seeds of the keenly developed critical faculty characteristic of the writings of the next decade. True enough, the young critic devotes a fair amount of space to assuming what were already well-worn ideological positions. In "Über die innige Verwandtschaft der Poesie und Tonkunst" (On the Inner Bond Between Poetry and Music), written when Schumann was still under the sway of Schiller, he argues as many had before him for the common source of poetry and music, though his reluctance to say which is the "higher" art reflects his powerful attraction to both. He shows a greater willingness to subject his own views to a critique in another essay, "Das Leben des Dichters." Here Schumann begins by painting an idealized portrait of the literary life, emphasizing the proximity of the poet's muse to Nature and the Divine: "The poet lives a charmed life; his eye becomes dark and weak during the bustling day, but it awakens clear and serene in the solitude of Nature." At the same time, he acknowledges that this stance is at best naïve, and at worst false, that the discrepancy between ideal vision and quotidian reality is the precise cause of the poet's pain.[35]

Probably the most critically acute of the early essays is "Warum erbittert uns Tadel in Sachen des Geschmakes mehr, als in andern Dingen." On the surface a general inquiry into the causes underlying the stubborn refusal of some individuals to alter their judgments of taste on matters musical (Schumann mentions Spohr, Rossini, and Weber), painterly, and literary, the essay evolves into a spirited justification of the apparent stylistic anomalies in the works of Jean Paul. While an unnamed but "enlightened man" has criticized Jean Paul's *Titan* for its abundance of contradictions, its "unnatural" plot, its peculiar imagery, and its oddly developed characters, Schumann convincingly argues that these eccentric features are part and parcel of the work's thematic fabric.

As a *Bildungsroman*, or novel of personal formation, *Titan* thematizes the attempts of its central character, Albano, to forge contradictory tendencies and unusual happenings into a meaningful unity. According to this line of reasoning, the contingency of events in the novel, which Schumann calls a "collision of circumstances" and relates to a similarly "romantic" conceit in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, merely serves to underscore the capriciousness of Fate.[36] Jean Paul's eccentricity, in other words, is a necessary condition of the genre in which he encapsulates his world view. Schumann's attempt to rationalize the irrational thus belies a more than passing acquaintance, or at least an uncanny affinity, with the esoteric critical strategies of the chief figures of Jena Romanticism: the Schelgel brothers and Novalis.

Lived experience, poetic language, and critique intersect in *Tage des Jüngling-lebens*, the diary Schumann began shortly after New Year's Day, 1827, and maintained for about a month thereafter. Personal confession lies at the heart of such endeavors, and Schumann's earliest diary does not lack in tantalizing glimpses into the creative adolescent's quest for self-definition: "I myself don't clearly know what I actually am; I believe that I possess imagination, and no one denies it, but I'm not a deep thinker: I can't proceed logically with the threads I've perhaps entwined too tightly. Whether I am a poet—for one can't *become* a poet—is for posterity to decide. Further about myself I can't say, for the most difficult thing is to describe oneself, and 'Know thyself' is a powerful phrase."[37] The actual impetus for the diary, however, sprang from Schumann's attempt to cope with a typically adolescent problem: the reconciliation of a current love (for a girl named Liddy Hempel) with a past crush (on Nanni Petsch). "When I think of Liddy," he writes, "the vision of an angry Nanni hovers before my eyes." Like the "lyric I" in a romantic love poem, the young diarist traces an emotional path from doleful longing for an unattainable object—"I am unhappy; the darkest doubts mount in my heart; I thirst for her gaze, and yet I can't contrive to see her"—through nervous joy at having finally stolen a dance—"my hands shook, my voice trembled, I became dizzy"—and nagging doubts over the depth of his beloved's feelings for him—"I tremble, I lose myself in a labyrinth of hellish dreams . . . If only she loved me! I ask myself this the whole day long, and can't form an answer: a cold 'perhaps'—Ugh! How I shudder at the thought. Yet a flatout 'no'—would destroy me"—to repulsion at his inability to restrain his desires for Liddy—"It was a dreadful day; such days shorten one's life; when sensual pleasure prevails, man becomes an animal, as did I. Enough of this. I should be ashamed of myself."[38] Yet Schumann's infatuation with Liddy was further complicated by another factor: thoughts over the "two beloved be-

ings" recently "torn" from him: his father, who had succumbed to a nervous disorder on 10 August 1826, and his nineteen-year-old sister Emilie, whose death, perhaps from suicide, probably occurred around the same time.[39] At once pained by these losses but joyful over the possibility of union with Liddy, Schumann gives utterance to the feelings of guilt that naturally arose from the emotional discrepancy: "Can the outer being mourn, if the inner being perhaps rejoices? Or is inner mourning a condition for outer mourning?"[40] Yet the potency of his love for Liddy leads to a resolution of the conflict, or at least to a rationalization couched as a series of rhetorical questions: "Is it not horrid enough . . . to be robbed of a father? why shouldn't one try to forget pain through joy? why not be jolly in jolly company?"[41]

Schumann's first diary, however, is not merely a confessional account, a personal diagnosis of a sensitive and lovesick youth's conflicting soul states. No less constitutive for its character is an undeniably literary quality born of reflection. We, as readers, should feel no embarrassment at peering into the pages of a strictly confidential document, for throughout there is the sense that Schumann was writing to be read not just by himself, but by others. Already the affixing of a title, *Tage des Jüngling-lebens* (uncomfortably close to that of a popular American soap opera when rendered in English as "Days from the Adolescent Life"), lifts the diary from a narrowly private into a broader realm. So too do the self-consciously stylized language, the frequent literary allusions, and even the newly-minted maxims with which Schumann peppers his account. He relies on nature imagery, the stock-in-trade of the romantic poet's style, to justify the transfer of his affections from Nanni to Liddy—"If merry violets, the adornment of golden spring, bloom around my present love, why should I preserve the wilted, though still beautiful roses more lovingly in my bosom?"—and to assume the role of the unrequited lover—"unfortunately those violets grow on a barren field."[42] His first dance with Liddy becomes the occasion for a long poem whose opening effectively captures the giddy alternation of dancing couples in short, breathlessly delivered lines:

> In whirling flight on the quaking floorboards
> The fleet-footed soles take wing:
> Little curls fly—
> Little skirts swing—
> All goes swiftly
> And the dance,
> Like a band of elves,
> Like orgiastic springtime,
> Sways from couple to couple.

Subsequent stanzas bring playful allusions to Schumann's friends: Flechsig breaks through the "dense ranks" like a "nobly smiling Adonis"; Ida Stölzel appears with her partner, "radiating modestly, like the violets by the brook"; and of course, "Like a butterfly in the meadow / Flitting through a flowery wreath / *Liddy,* the shepherd's sweet joy, / Floats along in the nimble dance."[43] Personal experience thus nurtures poetic expression, its central image in this case the dance, a long-time favorite of Schumann's.[44]

Yet the aspiring poet was keenly aware that the process whereby emotions were transformed into verse was a "chemical" one contingent upon reflection. As a diarist Schumann intended "to entrust [his] feelings and views to paper, to give a brief account of [his] happier hours," but at the same time he realized that "only when my spirit is more calm, my feelings more moderate . . . my imagination more elevated, and my enthusiasm more subdued, can I think back quietly on those hours when I was so happy."[45] Self-conscious detachment from an emotive source thus becomes a pre-condition for the poetic act: "when my feelings speak most strongly, I must cease being a poet; at best I can only jot down a few disconnected thoughts; but when my actual, feeling self is not involved, when imagination and thought prevail, I poetize with freedom and ease. . . . Thus I couldn't write a poem about Liddy. I feel too strongly about her, [and feelings] are speechless."[46] On the surface a confessional memoir, a window into the developing artist's soul, the adolescent Schumann's diary proves to be a medium of critical reflection.

In spite of the importance of his literary activities, it is still impossible to say which—poetry or music—had the upper hand for Schumann in his mid-teens. His contributions to a "Musikalish-deklamatorischen Abendunterhaltung" (musical-declamatory evening entertainment) held at the Zwickau Gymnasium on 25 January 1828, less than two months before his graduation, are emblematic of a dual will to music and literature: after reciting a monologue from Goethe's *Faust,* he played a movement from Kalkbrenner's Piano Concerto, op. 1.[47]

Though the surviving documents attest more fully to the cultivation of poetry than to music, both artforms were probably pursued with almost equal vigor. While immersing himself in Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel, and Jean Paul in preparation for the meetings of the *Litterarischer Verein,* Schumann demonstrated a comparable attachment to the keyboard music of Haydn, Prince Louis Ferdinand, Ries, and Moscheles; to Mozart's operas; and to Beethoven's string quartets.[48] His skills as the organizer of a literary club were paralleled on the musical side by a complementary entrepeneurial flair; probably in 1827 he planned, di-

rected, and played in a concert held at his home in the Amtgasse, the ambitious program including choruses from Weber's *Preciosa* and Boieldieu's *Jean de Paris,* an aria from Mozart's *Entführung,* a piano concerto by Lecour, and a symphony by Ernst Eichner.[49] Although we have no original compositions for the period from 1824 to 1826, Schumann probably did continue to compose after having tried his hand at a psalm setting, an overture and chorus, and an opera in 1822 or 1823. His father, after all, had approached Weber as a potential teacher for his talented son, though the plan was disrupted by the death of Weber and the elder Schumann in 1826.[50] Moreover, one of Schumann's autobiographical sketches of 1840 refers not only to the composition of a psalm setting and "a few numbers from an opera," but also to "many songs" and "many piano pieces."[51] While at least some of the early songs are indeed extant, none of the piano works, among them the beginnings of an E minor piano concerto dated 1827 in the *Projektenbuch,*[52] appears to have survived.

Given the young Schumann's attraction to both music and literature, it is only natural that he should have been drawn to the composition of lieder, for here, as he put it in one of his autobiographical sketches, "poet and composer [appear] in one person." A diary entry of 13 August 1828 expresses a similar point of view in more highflown terms: "Song unites the highest things, word and tone, the latter an inarticulate letter in the alphabet of humanity; it is the purely extracted quintessence of the spiritual life."[53] Another factor probably contributed to Schumann's turn to song in the summers of 1827 and 1828: his encounter with Agnes Carus, an attractive woman eight years his senior and reportedly a gifted singer. Her husband, Dr. Ernst August Carus, was the nephew of Karl Erdmann Carus, a merchant in whose home Schumann was a regular guest. It was here during the spring of 1827 that he first met the young Frau Dr. Carus and in all probability promptly became enamored of her, though whether or not their contact tipped the balance in favor of Schumann's decision on a musical career it is difficult to say.[54] Just as the *Tage des Jüngling-lebens* served as a reflective medium for his feelings for Liddy Hempel, so too did the early songs emerge, at some level, from the interaction of personal and artistic concerns. "My songs," Schumann wrote in his diary on 14 August 1828, "were intended as an actual reproduction of my inner self; but no human being can present something exactly as the genius creates it; even *she* [Agnes Carus] sang the most beautiful passages badly and didn't understand me."[55]

All told, we know of thirteen songs from this period: four date from the summer of 1827 (*Sehnsucht, Die Weinende, Verwandlung,* and

Lied für XXX); another eight *(Kurzes Erwachen, Gesanges Erwachen, An Anna, Erinnerung, An Anna II, Hirtenknabe, Der Fischer,* and *Klage)* can be ascribed to June, July, and August of 1828, by which time both Schumann and the Caruses had resettled in Leipzig; a single song, *Im Herbste,* edited by Brahms for the collected edition of Schumann's works, remains undated, but no doubt belongs here as well.[56] Even a cursory glance at these lieder will indicate that in his later teens Schumann had already attained an impressive level of technical mastery as a composer, thus lending further support to the conjecture that his compositional activity continued apace in the immediately preceding years. While the early songs are perhaps not perfect specimens of the art of conjoining word and tone, they are hardly the fledgling attempts of an untutored amateur. Even the lieder of 1827 disclose a notable stylistic range. In *Sehnsucht,* completed in June of that year, Schumann assumes the dual roles of poet and composer. The former, in typical romantic fashion, implores the stars to greet his beloved and the winds to send her a kiss; the latter responds with an unassuming strophic setting in which the eloquently shaped, arching vocal line is supported throughout by a murmuring accompanimental figure. In contrast, Byron's verses elicited an altogether more complicated response in *Die Weinende,* composed during the next month. Here again, the poem turns on a common enough image: the radiant eyes of the poet's beloved, whose glance outshines even the most lustrous sapphire. But Schumann binds the two stanzas of the poem into a continuous thought by means of a nearly through-composed setting, and likewise couples the suggestive imagery of the lyric with a more chromatic musical language. In addition, the varying number of poetic feet per verse motivated a flexible, arioso-like vocal line. A subtle play between *cantabile* and declamation is evident already in the first phrase (Example 1.1), where Schumann regularizes the 3 + 4 disposition of feet in the first two verses by welding them into a four-bar unit that begins in a lyric vein but closes with a recitative-like gesture.

Subtleties of this sort aside, the early lieder were nonetheless products of a composer without formal training. After having completed several lieder on Kerner texts by mid-summer of 1828 and anxious for the informed opinion of a recognized professional, Schumann sent his settings to Gottlob Wiedebein, Kapellmeister in Braunschweig, and like the young composer, a devotee of Jean Paul.[57] By early August, Schumann had received an encouraging reply from the older man, who diagnosed the shortcomings of the lieder not as "sins of the spirit," but rather as "the natural sins of youth" that one might easily forgive so long as "here and there a genuinely poetic feeling bursts through."

Example 1.1. Die Weinende, mm. 5–8.

Sounding a theme upon which Schumann's critics would construct all sorts of variations in response to the keyboard music of the 1830s, Wiedebein cautioned that although the young composer had given himself up to inspired fantasy, he should also allow "the calmly testing faculty of understanding" its due. His parting words of advice must have struck a resonant chord with the youthful artist: "Above all, attend to truth. Truth of melody, harmony, and expression—in a word, poetic truth. If you don't find it, or if it is threatened—then cut even your favorite passage."[58]

Wiedebein was perhaps reacting to features evident most obviously in a lied such as *An Anna* ("Lange harrt' ich"), an extended setting in which the composer's inspired fantasy animates practically every phrase. His pursuit of ultra-expressivity manifests itself in the no less than four tempo shifts—spanning a range from the unusually designated opening, *Schwärmerisch* (rapturously), to the concluding *Largo*—and in an abundance of affective indications, *zart* (tenderly), *träumerisch* (dreamily), *steigernd* (intensifying), and *solenne* (solemn) among them. Schumann delivers much of Kerner's text in a flexible *parlando* style, consciously avoiding metric squareness even in the *cantabile* sections. A series of unexpected harmonic turns culminates in an passage initiated from the

♭VI region (G major). Yet Schumann's extravagant approach nonetheless takes its bearings from Kerner's lyric, a thematization of the poet's intense desire for an unattainable beloved, probably deceased, who appears to him in the image of an "angel of peace." The contrasting settings of parallel lines near the end of the Lied ("Sprechen's nach die Stern . . . Sprechen's nach des Tales . . ."), for instance, lend poignancy to the poet's futile exhortation of his unapprehending beloved. The attenuation of the B-major tonic throughout imparts to the music a measure of the anxious longing so prominent in the verses, just as the excursion to an unstable G major beautifully colors the poet's desolate stance "in the distance." In short, Schumann's inspired fantasy turns out to be an agent of poetic truth after all.

The early lieder thus occupy a special place in Schumann's output, and not only because they represent his first extant works in a polished compositional idiom. In the piano music of the next decade, he would turn to these musical lyrics of personal experience more than once as a repository of melodic ideas: *Hirtenknabe,* a stylized *Volkslied,* serves as the basis for the fourth of the *Intermezzi,* op. 4; a significantly reworked form of *An Anna II* surfaces as the second movement, Aria, of the F♯-minor Piano Sonata, op. 11; and *Im Herbste* supplies the principal material for the slow movement, Andantino, of the G-minor Piano Sonata, op. 22. Even in his keyboard music, then, Schumann emerges as poet and composer in one person, deepening and refining tendencies already present in a youth who may not have been a genius, but who certainly was not lacking in talent.

Revelling in Schubert and Jean Paul

According to the generous terms of August Schumann's will of 6 June 1826, his son Robert was allotted 10,323 Reichsthaler in trust, of which he would receive 200 yearly (plus his father's Viennese piano and an additional 100 thalers for the defrayal of examination costs) if he agreed to complete a three-year course of university study in an unspecified field.[59] In deference to the wishes of his mother, who feared that a career in the arts might be rich in spiritual but slim in material rewards, and those of his guardian, a Zwickau merchant named Johann Gottlob Rudel, Schumann agreed to matriculate on 29 March 1828 as a student of law at the venerable University of Leipzig. To be sure, Johanna Christiana did not intend to squelch her son's broadly creative and specifically musical proclivities, talents she hoped he would continue to cultivate for his own enjoyment and that of others as well; but as a parent justifiably

concerned for her child's future, she remained steadfastly committed to her Robert's pursuit of a *Brotstudium,* a profession whereby he might earn his daily bread.[60]

From the start, however, Schumann harbored quite different plans. As he put it in one of his autobiographical sketches: "[At] eighteen I went to Leipzig, in accordance with my mother's wishes, to study law, but in accordance with my own still vaguely formed intent, to devote myself entirely to music."[61] Once settled in the city, Schumann responded to his new surroundings in less than enthusiastic terms: "Nature, where will I find her here?" he queried in a letter to his mother of 21 May 1828, "no valley, no mountains, no forest." Nor did he conceal his lack of interest in the "ice-cold definitions" of law, consoling himself with the observation that "philosophy and history will be among my studies."[62] Writing to his mother less than a month later, he described a daily routine including two hours of piano practice, several hours of reading, some "poetizing" in the nearby village of Zweiaundorf, and regular attendance at law lectures.[63] Schumann probably appended the last item to set her mind at ease, for according to Flechsig, with whom he shared lodgings, he "never entered a lecture hall."[64] The same witness supplies us with a compelling and at times colorful report of his friend's student days in Leipzig. The bustling north German trade center may have offered fewer natural beauties than his native Zwickau, but as the center of a flourishing book trade, it afforded him rich opportunities to keep abreast of the latest in literature, his continued study of Jean Paul acting as a further catalyst to original poetic creation.

No later than August, he assiduously pursued his piano studies under the tutelage of Friedrich Wieck, a figure destined to play a major role in Schumann's professional and personal life, who, bemused by his new student's fervor, dubbed him the "hothead at the keyboard," and through whom the youth came into contact with the leading musicians of the city.[65] By late summer, he had developed a passionate attachment to a new musical love: the works of Franz Schubert, which, again according to Flechsig, were just beginning to gain some currency beyond the limited circle of their Viennese devotees. Anxious to get his hands on everything by the composer that he could, Schumann was thrown into such an agitated state by the news of Schubert's death on 19 November 1828 that his roommate "heard him sobbing the whole night long."[66] Composition likewise formed an integral part of the would-be law student's activities, his comical bearing while engaged at his writing desk the subject of an amusing passage from Flechsig's *Lebenserinnerungen:* "[Schumann] always puffed at a cigar [while composing], but since smoke got into his eyes, he pressed it upward with his mouth as

far as it would go, at the same time casting his eyes downward in a squint, so that he made the strangest grimaces all the while."[67] The image that emerges from Flechsig's description of this phase of his friend's life is that of a young man situated at once together with and apart from other youths of comparable social background. Like many other university students of his day, Schumann became an avid chess-player, dabbled a bit in fencing, and "enjoyed a drink" in "the spirited company of friends." Yet in spite of his "compatible" nature, he evinced less interest in the "usual trivialities" of student life than many of his colleagues. Soon he became "one of Leipzig's best-known sons of the Muses—because of his talent," and grew "into a singularly handsome fellow [who] bore his attire well, [and] was of a thoroughly noble character, chaste and pure as a vestal virgin."[68]

The idealized tone of Flechsig's description notwithstanding, it supplies us with a convincing portrait of an affable if reflective youth for whom artistic matters counted for more than anything else. The "new life" that Schumann linked with his move to Leipzig had little to do with his formal university studies (from reading his diary alone, it would be difficult to know that he was even studying law) but very much to do with an expanding literary and musical sensibility. For Schumann, university life in Leipzig amounted to a period of "revelling in Jean Paul and Schubert,"[69] each figure in turn providing him with a model for his own creative endeavors.

Although Jean Paul has long been acknowledged as the most significant poetic influence on the composer, it is important to keep in mind the encyclopedic breadth of Schumann's readings, which (to judge from his diaries and other documents) encompassed well over six hundred works ranging from world classics to political journals. As we have seen, Schumann's habit of focusing on one writer at a time, parallelled by his later concentration on individual musical genres in a systematic fashion, was already firmly established in the days of the *Litterarischer Verein.* Having thoroughly explored Schiller's plays in the context of that group, he was poised for a comparably exhaustive encounter with the writings of Jean Paul. Later he would devote phases of similarly intense study to figures including Shakespeare, Byron, Heine, and Rückert. But Jean Paul remained the writer to whom Schumann turned again and again. As late as 1853 we find him rereading—often aloud, and in collaboration with Clara—the novels of his youthful idol.[70]

While still a "mystery" to the sixteen-year-old Schumann,[71] the eccentric world of Jean Paul began to disclose itself to him a year later through a reading of *Titan.* In short order he devoured most of the other major novels: a passage in Schumann's diary entered in May 1828,

but reflective of his activities in the previous six months or so, alludes to *Die unsichtbare Loge, Hesperus, Titan, Flegeljahre,* and *Siebenkäs; Der Komet* provided bedtime reading in January 1829.[72] Already by March 1828, he was able to state unequivocally in a letter to Flechsig: "Jean Paul still takes first place with me, and I rank him above all, even Schiller." At the time it was Goethe whose works he failed to comprehend to the fullest.[73] Then in April of the same year, on a trip to Munich with his friend Gisbert Rosen, he passed through Bayreuth, Jean Paul's home for nearly thirty years. Like a pilgrim making his way in a poetic Holy Land, Schumann lost himself in a sombre reverie at the writer's tomb: "Jean Paul, I stood by your grave and wept as you looked on and smiled at my tears." The "deep pain" of this experience gave way to "pleasant memories" when, after a two-hour conversation with the proprietress of the guest-house where Jean Paul plied his writerly trade for twenty-six years, Schumann beheld the author's tiny, sparsely furnished room.[74] On his return journey from Munich in early May, he again stopped in Bayreuth, this time for a visit with Jean Paul's widow, who presented him with a portrait of her late husband—a memento he preserved as if it were a sacred object. Writing to Rosen from Leipzig on 5 June 1828, Schumann felt compelled to observe: "If the whole world read Jean Paul, it would certainly be a better, but unhappier place—he's often brought me close to madness, but the rainbow of peace and of the human spirit always hovers delicately over all the tears, while the heart is wondrously elevated and tenderly transfigured."[75]

Of course, Jean Paul has brought other readers close to madness as well, if for different reasons. A notoriously difficult writer, his language, to quote Thomas Carlyle, "groans with indescribable metaphors . . . flowing onward not like a river, but an inundation, circling in complex eddies, chafing and gurgling now this way, now that, [until] the proper current sinks out of view amid the boundless uproar."[76] A few examples will bear out Carlyle's appraisal. Leibgeber's "Adam Letter" from *Siebenkäs* refers to Adam and Eve, not as our primordial parents, but as our "protoplasts." As Siebenkäs attempts to make headway on his writing projects, the nearly inaudible sounds produced by his wife Lenette's housecleaning attack him "like rabies or podogra, each time putting to death one or two budding ideas, as a loud noise puts to death silkworm or a brood of canaries."[77] Walt and Vult Harnisch, the twin-brother protagonists of *Flegeljahre,* not only exchange costumes during the novel's culminating masked ball scene, they practice an "alternate pupation and depupation." Little wonder, then, that Jean Paul wanted the epitaph on his tombstone to proclaim him the writer who had thought up more metaphors than any other. Given his conviction that it is not the poet's

duty to reproduce reality, but rather to unriddle its eternal meaning, decipherment is a necessary condition for even a basic comprehension of the Jean-Paulian text. In *Siebenkäs*, the author describes one of the items in the title character's home as a "copper fish-kettle, which, as long as it remained unmended, could not poison any vinegar," relying on his readers' knowledge that the chemical interaction of copper and acid will produce a poisonous compound to make the point that Siebenkäs and Lenette are too impecunious to pay for the repair of their kitchen utensils.[78]

When Friedrich Schlegel ironically characterized Jean Paul as an author "who hasn't control of the basic principles of art . . . [and] cannot tell a story well, at least not according to what is accepted as good story-telling,"[79] he was undoubtedly thinking of another key feature of the poet's idiosyncratic style: his love for digressions. Whether brief or protracted, humorous or sentimental, these excurses proliferate on the surface of Jean Paul's prose like ivy on a stone wall. Sometimes they take the form of narrative embeddings, or even embeddings within embeddings, as in *Flegeljahre,* where the twins are at work on a novel entitled *Hoppelpoppel* (scrambled egg hash) to which Walt contributes the main plot and Vult the satirical asides. In other cases, the digressions spill over the narrative frame; in *Titan,* for instance, the logbook of Gianozzo, the ill-fated balloonist, and a mock-serious philosophical tract on Fichtean philosophy are consigned to a "Comic Appendix," Schumann's bedtime reading, by the way, on 18 January 1829.[80] Of course, it is not that Jean Paul was *unable* to tell a story well; on the contrary, he stubbornly *refused* to adhere to the accepted principles of unity of plot, if only because he passionately believed that life itself was a motley, variegated affair. Hence the plethora of digressions, excurses, embeddings, interpolations and appendices, however disorienting they may be, serves to affirm what was an essentially epic world view. The patient reader, in any event, will be rewarded with glimpses into Jean Paul's inimitable comic style, his uncanny ability to give a humorous twist to the most solemn subjects. Fichte's idealist philosophy, for instance, comes in for a merciless lampooning in the "Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana" from the Comic Appendix to *Titan:* "Kant spent 10,957 ½ nights, or 30 years, on the begettal of his Critique; Fichte probably needed less than 3 months for it (for reading is also making)."[81] Jean Paul even pokes fun at his own narrative convolutions in the *Biographische Belustigungen* (Biographical Entertainments), where he is ordered by the court to desist from telling stories with so many digressions.

What did Schumann find so enthralling about this most bizarre of writers? We should keep in mind, first, that his discovery of Jean Paul

amounted in part to a kind of self-discovery. "I've often asked myself," he writes in *Hottentottiana,* the diary he began keeping just after settling in Leipzig, "where I might be had I not gotten to know Jean Paul; yet he seems on the one hand to be interwoven with my inner being, as if I had an earlier premonition of him."[82] Just as Schumann beheld himself in Jean Paul, so Jean Paul "mirrors himself in all his works, but always in two people: he is Albano and Schoppe [from *Titan*], Siebenkäs and Leibgeber *[Siebenkäs],* Vult and Walt *[Flegeljahre],* Gustav and Fenk *[Die unsichtbare Loge],* Flamin and Viktor *[Hesperus].* Only the single Jean Paul could combine two such different characters into one being; it is superhuman, but still he's done it."[83] The notion of the *Doppelgänger,* a term that Jean Paul himself coined and a prominent theme throughout his *oeuvre,* is a highly unsettling one, yet it was precisely to the disturbing qualities in the writer's works that Schumann was particularly drawn. Based on a dream vision in which Jean Paul saw himself as a corpse, *Siebenkäs* abounds in qualities of just this sort. Its protagonists exchange names as youths, and identities as adults, so that the title character (whom we first meet as "Siebenkäs" though he is in fact "Leibgeber") can go through the pretense of death and burial, thereby liberating himself from a stultifying environment. Schumann found the tale positively "frightful," but like a child fascinated by the stimulating causes of his nightmares, he still wanted "to read it a thousand times."[84]

In a broader and less morbid sense, the disturbances in the Jean-Paulian text result from the writer's fondness for the portrayal of life as a series of unresolved conflicts, a feature neatly encapsulated at the end of *Flegeljahre* in a line from Vult's letter of farewell to his sleeping brother: "I leave you as you were, and go as I come." Striking contrasts abound in Jean Paul's novels, but his intentional refusal to weld them into a harmonious unity often leaves a remainder. Firm in his belief that life is never pure poetry, Jean Paul fancifully juxtaposes prosaic and poetic styles, pigtails and moonlight, the result a kind of dissonance that Schumann found equally compelling: "Jean Paul has seldom appeased but always enchanted me; and although an element of dissatisfaction, like an eternal melancholy, resides in this enchantment, I feel afterward a sense of inner well-being comparable to that of a rainbow arching over the heavens in the wake of a storm."[85] Indulging in a pun on the author's surname, Schumann dubs Jean Paul a "comforting, mild judge *[Richter],*" a "supremely human" writer who "cries over" life but loves it nonetheless.[86] No less a teacher than a judge, he continually nudges his readers into a position of active engagement with his texts, and herein lies, as Schumann well understood, the motivation for the extrav-

agant metaphors, the continual wordplay, and the fantastic digressions. Jean Paul's texts demand critical, not passive, readers, and here too they found a willing student in Schumann, who—drawing on categories that play an important role in the writer's anatomy of the comic modes in the *Vorschule der Ästhethik*—analyzed the Jean-Paulian spirit as an amalgamation of "feeling" *(Gemüth)*, "humor" *(Humor)*, and "wit" *(Witz)*.[87] Analogues of these properties in turn assume special significance in Schumann's music.

Schumann's fascination with Jean Paul was complemented by the veritable outpouring of literary projects undertaken soon after Schumann's arrival in Leipzig. In all of these endeavors, confessional, novelistic, aesthetic, and critical elements intermingle and overlap to such a degree that it is often impossible to unravel them. In many ways, *Hottentottiana*, the diary Schumann began on 2 May 1828 and maintained faithfully until 1 April 1830 (with only one major interruption between August and November 1829 during his travels in Switzerland and Italy), evinces an even more markedly literary quality than the earlier *Tage des Jüngling-lebens*. As a sign of the semi-public character of his musings, Schumann adds fanciful titles to the first and fourth of the diary's volumes: *Das Fuchsjahr, eine komische Autobiographie* ("The Year of the University Freshman, a Comic Autobiography") and *Das Burschenjahr oder die moralische Erziehung* ("The Year of the Upperclassman, or The Moral Education"), respectively. At the end of the second volume, he adds the humorous note: "printed in the thought-offices of the ostensible author, Robert Schumann." Verse mottos and dedications (to his friends Flechsig and Rosen) further contribute to the diary's literary character. The overall title in turn alludes to the "Hottentots"—later a derogatory term for the natives of South Africa, but in Schumann's day a less offensive slang expression for "savage" or "barbarian"—perhaps underscoring the "wild" youth's recently won independence from the watchful eyes of parent and guardian. Not surprisingly then, *Hottentottiana* amounts to considerably more than a mere diary. A congeries of autobiographical analyses, lapidary notices of quotidian activities, drafts for letters, fragments and sketches of various poetic projects, and aesthetic speculations on music and literature, it holds up a mirror to a developing artistic nature.

While *Hottentottiana* colors confessional with self-consciously reflective prose, *Juniusabende und Julytage*, a "Bildchen" or "Idylle" conceived during the summer of 1828, does much the reverse. Viewed by Schumann as his "first work," his "truest and most beautiful,"[88] it focuses on a dilemma already presented in such early romantic novels as

Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde:* the threat to individuality posed by a quest for spiritual and physical union with friends and lovers. In tracing the fortunes of his main characters, the couples Julius and Ammali, Gustav and Inna, Schumann certainly drew on personal experience, just as he had in *Tage des Jüngling-lebens* the previous year: Julius projects the author's own persona, his various love entanglements modelled on Schumann's relationships with Nanni Petsch, Liddy Hempel, and perhaps Agnes Carus as well. Yet the reflective quality of the idyll emerges in its connection with the diarist's art in general and Schumann's diary in particular. On the one hand, *Hottentottiana* includes many excerpts from the *Juniusabende;* on the other, the fifth chapter of the idyll opens with entries from the fictional Julius's diary.[89] A precedent for this sort of mutually conditioning exchange between producer and product, confession and reflection, would have been readily at hand in the works of Jean Paul. After the title character in *Siebenkäs,* for instance, decides to become a writer, he sets to work on "Jean Paul's" so-called *Teufels Papieren* (Devil's Papers). Echoes of the Jean-Paulian manner may likewise be detected in Schumann's frequent recourse to wordplay, unusual turns of phrase, neologisms, and even to "Polymeter" or *Streckvers,* Jean Paul's term for freely metred but non-stanzaic prose-poetry.[90]

Though Schumann may have begun an epistolary novel, *Bernard von Nontelliers* at about this time, none of the more ambitious writing projects from his first period in Leipzig owes more to Jean Paul in matters of style and spirit than *Selene,* a fragmentary *Bildungsroman* dating from late in 1828.[91] Indeed, Schumann's reading of Jean Paul's autobiography *(Wahrheit aus Jean Pauls Leben)* in November of that year coincides with his copying of several draft excerpts from *Selene* into his diary.[92] While the novel's heroine takes her name from the title of Jean Paul's last major work, *Selena,* her twin brother Gustav takes his from the hero in *Die unsichtbare Loge.* And just as the theme of the split self or *Doppelgänger* resonates with *Siebenkäs* and *Flegeljahre,* so the migration of characters from one tale to another (we have already encountered a "Gustav" in *Juniusabende und Julytage)* recalls Jean-Paul's practice as well: several of the figures from *Hesperus,* for instance, recur in *Siebenkäs;* Viktor, the hero of the former, reads *Die unsichtbare Loge;* and Gianozzo, whose logbook forms a major part of the "Comic Appendix" to *Titan,* dedicates his journal to Siebenkäs's double, Leibgeber.[93] Drawing as they do on a fixed but variegated cosmos of characters, Jean Paul's novels in a sense constitute a single novelistic system. In his early literary works, we likewise find Schumann attempting to imitate just such a system, even though it will appear in full bloom only in the

keyboard works and music criticism of the 1830s, where musical themes wander from piece to piece, and the partly fictional characters of the critical writings put in appearances as the "composers" of character pieces and works in larger forms.

If Julius serves as spokesperson for the author in *Juniusabende,* then Gustav functions similarly in *Selene.* Schumann describes him as a *hoher Mensch,* or "higher human being," hearkening again to a favorite Jean-Paulian conceit. Indeed, the first part of *Die unsichtbare Loge* concludes with a lengthy excursus on the capacity of the *hoher Mensch,* as represented by characters such as Dr. Fenk, the Genius, the hero Gustav, and his friend Ottomar, to rise above the pettiness of everyday life. But fearful that his novel might turn out to be "too much like Jean Paul," Schumann was determined that *his* Gustav "should be neither an Albano, a Gustav, a Woldemar, a Viktor, nor a Flamin; he should be more poetic than Flamin and more powerful than Viktor."[94] Accordingly Schumann departs somewhat from Jean Paul's notion of the *hoher Mensch* as an individual sublimely indifferent to earthly cares, associating the epithet instead with the ability to temper Promethean energy through Olympian restraint: "Gustav must pass through all the schools of life; he must learn both to hate and to love; his youthful demeanor must be tender and mild in order to show that the higher being can submit to the fetters of calm, but that his Promethean sparks remain unextinguished nonetheless."[95] Three years later, Schumann would split the dual personae of the *hoher Mensch* into the respectively dynamic and contemplative "Florestan" and "Eusebius," the fictional producers of much of the criticism and keyboard music of the next decade. The *hoher Mensch,* in other words, emerges in retrospect as a cipher for the author-composer's idealized attempt to neutralize the conflicts in his own being, to rise above his human limitations. Here again Schumann proves himself true to the spirit of Jean Paul through his pre-echo of Nietzsche's conviction that humankind is "a thing to be overcome."

The surviving fragments for Schumann's novel are not only rich in allusions to the favored themes of his beloved Jean Paul, but also to the writer's idiosyncratic style. Consider, for instance, the following description of an eerie, moonlit landscape from the *Mitternachtsstück* in *Selene,* no doubt modelled on the comparably spooky churchyard scenes in *Siebenkäs:*

> The pale stars glimmered magically over the hilltop graveyard, a teary meadow, and the cypresses whispered quietly, and in their own tongue, among themselves—the silent gravediggers towered over the flowers

> that staggered in the wind, and the tombstones threw great, long shadows, like the hands of a time-piece wound for eternity, as if to say: "Behold, we mark the spot where you now lie buried"—the moon shone quietly, and long drawn-out swan-songs, monotonous and gloomy, intoned in the ether.[96]

Here, as elsewhere in his youthful prose, Schumann makes generous use of Jean Paul's most characteristic punctuation mark, the dash, the resultant paratactic style a fitting emblem for a worldview that configures reality as a system of mysteriously related fragments. To this feature Schumann adds one of his own, the repeated use of the coordinating conjunction "and" to string together his diminutive thought-fragments into a suggestive mosaic.

Likewise the *Harmonika-Altarblatt* episode, in which Selene, Gustav, Minona, and the Prince enter a dimly lit cathedral by night, recalls one of the most celebrated of Jean Paul's digressions: the "Speech of the Dead Christ of the Universe" in *Siebenkäs,* a proto-Nietzschean vision of man alone in a godless world.[97] As in the *Mitternachtsstück,* parataxis and an additive approach to sentence construction impart a fragmented quality to the language of Schumann's scene, while the many word- and phrase-repetitions lend an unmistakably incantational dimension as well. These features come together in the description of the weird music that Selene and her companions hear emanating from the organ loft: "Silence—then a single, deep tone wandered quietly (as if it were afraid to breathe), hardly audibly, through the nave—new tones joined in—then everything overflowed with tones, then the stones, the statues, and the portraits of the saints seemed to come to life in tones and everything resounded as if bewitched. . . ."[98] Schumann's youthful literary and musical pursuits largely run on parallel tracks; indeed, passages such as this reveal an attempt to fuse them into a musical prose redolent more of Novalis than of Jean Paul. Gustav's pained reaction to the mysterious stranger's organ-playing and the response of the inspirited tones—" 'O ye heavenly sounds from the graves of slumbering bliss, tell me, do tell me, why do I weep when I hear you?' then the tones replied: we are harbingers of the world toward which you weep, but that you will never discover here—we come from the beyond"[99]—touches on a whole panoply of *topoi* associated with the aesthetics of other early Romantics such as Tieck and Wackenroder: music as the voice of Nature's darker forces; tone as an emanation of the divine; the musician as tortured prophet. Schumann's conflation of imaginative prose and aesthetic speculation thus betrays more than a passing acquaintance with a cherished ideal of the Jena Romantics. Just as Friedrich Schlegel, the principal theoretician of the group, envisioned the novel as an amalgam of narra-

tive and criticism, inspired effusion and cool-headed reflection, so Schumann's otherwise Jean-Paulian text aims for a similar blend.

In the months prior to his sustained work on *Selene,* Schumann entrusted his musico-poetic ruminations to the pages of *Hottentottiana.* Indeed, during July and August 1828 the diary begins to read like a preparatory sketch for an aesthetic, or rather synaesthetic, tract. It is certainly no coincidence that Schumann's second burst of song composition fell in the same period. Searching for yet another means of mediating his attraction to both music and poetry and following on the early Romantic tradition that led Tieck, Wackenroder, and E. T. A. Hoffmann to a doctrine of "absolute" music, he decides to recast the former as a more elevated function of the latter. Hence he concludes that "tones are higher words," or, in a variation on the same conceit, "Music is poetry raised to a higher power; spirits speak the language of poetry, but the angels communicate in tones."[100] Taking this conviction a step further, he speculates on a rapprochement between musical and poetic genres. Hence Schubert's *Acht Variationen über ein Thema aus der Oper Marie von Hérold* (*Eight Variations on a Theme from Hérold's Marie,* op. 82 no. 1, D908; published 1827) for piano four hands, a particular favorite at the time, "relate to [Goethe's] *Wilhelm Meister* just as tones generally do to words; in any event, both are the ne plus ultra of Romanticism. After all, tone is but the musically realized word. Schubert's Variations are thus the composed novel that Goethe has *yet to write*"—or, put more succinctly: "Schubert's Variations are the most perfect romantic portrait, a perfect novel in tones *[Tonroman].*"[101] (The same line of thinking culminates, four years later, in the intriguing rhetorical question: "Why shouldn't there be such a thing as an opera without text? Now that would be most certainly dramatic. There's much for you in Shakespeare.")[102]

In the same spirit, Schumann posits analogues for his favorite composers among the great poets, without, however, always settling on a definitive conclusion. Schubert is equated with Goethe, but also with Novalis, and even (in an entry of 15 August 1828) with a chemical compounding of Novalis, Jean Paul, and Hoffmann.[103] At least at this stage, Jean Paul finds a more fixed musical counterpart in the figure of Beethoven, since, according to Schumann, both artists possess the uncanny ability to unite melancholy and enchantment, to make their devotees at once happy and unhappy.[104] Touching on a theme later elaborated in his review of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and realized in many passages of his own compositions, Schumann imagines a musical syntax liberated from the strictures of metric regularity and modelled on the *Streckverse* of Jean Paul:

> Evening Fantasy in X major; the free fantasy unites the highest elements in music—the law of the measure and alternating, freely lyric, metric groupings—a union lacking in compositions in the strict style. Poetry accomplishes this in Jean Paul's Polymeter and in the choruses of classical Greek drama; syntactic liberty *[Ungebundenheit]* is in every instance more imaginative and more ingenious than metric regularity *[das Gebundene]*, hence my displeasure with rhymes.[105]

These citations speak less to a firmly delineated theory than to the quest for a theory, but taken together, they point toward an evolving notion of music as a kind of literary activity. Although the particulars of Schumann's youthful musico-poetics will change in time, his outlook on music as a form of literature remains fundamentally the same.

The young Schumann delineates his musical aesthetic in a more systematic fashion in "Die Tonwelt," an essay dating from late summer 1828, and thus a product of the same impulses articulated in the musico-poetic aphorisms of *Hottentottiana*. Subtitled "Aus dem Tagebuch der heil. Caecilia" (From the Diary of St. Cecilia), it falls into five parts, each a self-contained mini-essay; after an introductory section, "Ueber Ton im Allgemeinen nebst sentimentalen Ausschweifungen" (On Tone in General along with Sentimental Excesses), come four "Extravaganzen," the first of these and portions of the second probably culled from a letter written by Schumann's friend Willibald von der Lühe.[106] Hence the essay is representative of what the Jena Romantics called *Symphilosophie*, collaborative theorizing by like-minded thinkers. And to be sure, both Schumann and Lühe shared a passion for Jean Paul, whose influence is made palpable through an initiatory motto drawn from *Hesperus*—"Ah! All that ye say, ye tones, is denied me!"—pointing to the inability of words to replicate the affective power of pure tone, and through the conception of the essay as a colloquy among five *höhere Menschen* who stroll in a dusky landscape. The process of symphilosophizing is neatly exemplified in the second Extravaganza, where, reacting to the assertion that music, unlike painting, involves unmediated perception and hence can be understood without reflection, Schumann supplies the parenthetical observation that the *production* of musical works does indeed require the exercise of the reflective faculty: "for a composition conceived without reflection will lack character, and such a piece is just as reprehensible as a poem without a basic coloration."[107] Nonetheless, the central tenet of the essay—the notion that music is the most nearly autonomous of the arts, the freest from material constraints—is very much in line with the aesthetic of absolute music implicit in the *Hottentottiana* fragments. Schumann's scoffing at the strictures of the *reine Satz* recalls the "Evening Fantasy in X major," but here

the "strict style" is imaginatively personified as a troupe of "musical sack-carriers and hurdy-gurdy men" reminiscent of those "tedious family scenes" where Grandfather takes the bass, the upright Hausfrau the discant, and the children pipe out the innter parts.[108] Likewise, the view of music as "the true mediator between the beyond and the here-and-now"[109] resonates with the outlook expressed poetically in the *Harmonika-Altarblatt* chapter from *Selene*, once again demonstrating the fluid boundary between imaginative and critical prose for the young Schumann.

In addition, "Die Tonwelt" touches on a problem that will motivate much of Schumann's critical activity during the next decade. The introductory mini-essay is headed with a verse motto that also appears in the entry for 29 July 1828 in *Hottentottiana:* "In man there resides a great, incredible Something which no tongue can proclaim, and which awakens on high mountains or at sunset or in tones."[110] Pellegrini, the first of the *höhere Menschen* to offer a definition of "tone," glosses on this conceit in asserting that music is an "earthly breath from beyond, which, like everything divine and otherworldly, can be neither named nor described, but only felt."[111] Music, in other words, articulates the inarticulable. But as the bearer of mysterious messages from the spirit world, is it therefore inaccessible to rational discourse? Convinced that music, its numinous powers aside, is indeed an object of reflection, Schumann refuses to answer in the affirmative. In "Die Tonwelt," he responds to the problem as a poet would, attempting in the final "Extravaganza," a Jean-Paulian Polymeter entitled "Beethoven," to capture in words an impression of the "dreams" set in motion by the composer's music. During the 1830s, Schumann will record his impressions in the more sober language of the critic. Both responses, however, the poetic and the critical, are grounded in the conviction that although music utters the inutterable, it still embodies an intellectual content.

Among the most intriguing literary products of the summer of 1828 is the playfully entitled essay "Ueber Genial- Knill- Original- und andre itäten." Roughly translatable as "On Genial- Insobr- Original- and other i(e)ties," the title sports with a common German suffix in a manner reminiscent of Jean Paul.[112] Similarly, Schumann's striking play with unusual metaphors in the body of the essay recalls the idiom of his favored author: "Geniality likes to build its temples in wine-cellars and tipsiness [in the Zwickau dialect, *Knillität*] is a quasi-helper or in the end, the left hand itself, while originality is the foot."[113] The fanciful language, however, in no way detracts from the seriousness of Schumann's attempt at a kind of anatomy of creative genius. Nor should his fascination with the effects of alcohol be taken as a paean to insobriety:

the intoxication that often accompanies geniality must be brought on by champagne, not by "schnapps, punch, or Bavarian beer."[114] Hence *Knillität* is neither more nor less than an emblem for the heightened awareness associated with the act of creation.

Of the three terms considered in the essay, *Genialität, Originalität,* and *Knillität,* the first, in Schumann's view, is the highest. It is also devilishly difficult to translate into English. "Geniality," though not inappropriate, is an uncommon locution, and too readily confused with "*con*geniality," a term with very different connotations. As the distinguishing feature of creative geniuses, *Genialität* is perhaps best rendered as "ingeniousness." In any event, Schumann views it as the ability to synthesize opposites: moderation and power, the "lightness of butterflies" and the "ponderousness of elephants," delicacy and destruction. It is, in a word, the hallmark of the *hoher Mensch,* its "highest capacity" being the "aesthetic-beautiful union of the sentimental and the humorous, as we find often in Jean Paul, sometimes in Goethe, seldom in Hoffmann, but frequently in Beethoven, Schubert, and even in Moscheles." What figures in *Selene* as an ethical category is thus granted an aesthetic, and even critical slant, for the "genial" being will know how to synthesize "feeling" and "understanding," *Gefühl* and Kantian *Verstand.*[115] But perhaps most important, the individual rises to the level of genius, thus attaining to the status of *hoher Mensch,* not through the grace of God, but rather through an active program of self-formation or *Bildung:* "Every genius is at once a creative and self-formed *[gebildetes]* individual, . . . [though] not every creative individual is a genius."[116]

Imaginative and critical prose in the Jean-Paulian style thus complement one another. Together they attest to the development of a sensibility that would animate Schumann's artistic endeavors in the years ahead. The motto of the *Freuden- und Schmerzensthränen,* a manuscript collection of aphorisms stylistically and thematically related to "Die Tonwelt" and the essay on *Genialität,* for instance, tells of an angel's request for the creation of something to saturate the human heart with melancholy. In response, God transforms the dewdrops of roses, forget-me-nots, and cypresses into teardrops, saying: "the last is the most beautiful, and a jewel in the heavenly crown."[117] This line strikingly prefigures the completion of the Peri's quest for a suitable gift in Schumann's great oratorio of 1843.

Just as the sphere of Schumann's literary activities broadened during the summer of his first year in Leipzig, so too did his commitment to music. By late August 1828, he was spending much time in the company of the Caruses and his piano teacher, Friedrich Wieck, through whom he gained access to Leipzig's elite musical circles, and at whose

home he came into contact with his teacher's daughter Clara, at nine years old a burgeoning concert pianist. Already at this early point, Flechsig detected in the prodigy's engagement of his roommate in "childish teasing" a premonition of their future life together.[118] In the same letter to his mother in which Schumann reports on his studies with Wieck, he also alludes to plans for a four-hand piano recital in the coming winter months with Emilie Reichold, another of Wieck's students;[119] whether the concert took place, we do not know, though there is ample evidence for Schumann's honing of his keyboard skills during that period. According to a series of diary entries for early 1829, he practiced Hummel's *Etudes* assiduously in February, returning in March to the same composer's A-minor Piano Concerto, op. 85, the first movement of which, probably together with Moscheles's *La Marche d'Alexandre*, op. 32, he performed in Zwickau on 28 April 1829.[120]

In the meantime, Schumann had fastened on an idol whose position in his musical pantheon was comparable to that of Jean Paul in the poetic sphere. By mid-summer 1828, he was revelling in Franz Schubert, whose musical creations, no less than Jean Paul's novels, surely provided an important stimulus for the musico-poetic fragments in *Hottentottiana* and the aesthetic of "Die Tonwelt." While Flechsig attests to Schumann's splendid playing of the *Erlkönig*,[121] his attention soon shifted to the four-hand piano repertory. As noted earlier, his synaesthetic speculations led him, in July 1828, to dub the *Acht Variationen über ein Thema aus der Oper Marie von Hérold* a "perfect novel in tones." On 20 August he would describe the same work as "too sublime and otherworldly for contemporary humanity; in spite of the transparency of these variations, one can't grasp them in a single hearing, a trait they share with Beethoven's music."[122] In a diary entry for the day before, he alludes to a session devoted to Schubert's four-hand polonaises (op. 61, D. 824 and op. 75, D. 599) with August Böhner, a student friend described in none too flattering terms as "uncultivated and without character"; in the months ahead, he would continue to play these pieces in convivial gatherings with his sister-in-law Therese (the wife of Eduard Schumann) and a number of other friends and acquaintances.[123]

Schumann's cultivation of this repertory further corresponds to the beginnings of a definitive association between his favored author and his current favorite among composers. As we have seen, several of the aesthetic fragments in *Hottentottiana* for July and early August 1828 link Jean Paul with Beethoven, but in an entry of 15 August 1828 we read: "*Fantasie a la Schubert:* Schubert expresses Jean Paul, Novalis, and Hoffmann in tones."[124] And a little over a year later, Schumann states unequivocally in a letter to Wieck: "Schubert is still my 'one and only'

Schubert, especially since he has everything in common with my 'one and only' Jean Paul; when I play Schubert, it's as if I were reading a novel 'composed' by Jean Paul."[125] It may at first strike us as odd to assert that two such different artists have "everything in common." Schubert possesses even less of Jean Paul's baroque quirkiness than the writer shares in the composer's rarefied elegance. But on reflection, perhaps the two figures are not such polar opposites after all. Neither will have much of an impact on an impatient observer: Schubert's continual invitations for his listeners to pause over leisurely unfolding and subtly varied phrases find a parallel in Jean Paul's demand that his readers linger over a peculiar metaphor or a convoluted sentence whose meaning discloses itself only gradually. Schumann hints at other shared features in his letter to Wieck: "Apart from Schubert's, no music exists that is so psychologically unusual in the course and connection of its ideas, and in the ostensible logic of its discontinuities. . . . What for others was a diary in which to set down momentary feelings was for Schubert a sheet of music paper to which he entrusted his every mood, so that his thoroughly musical soul wrote notes when others wrote words."[126] Similarly, Jean Paul lent his novels an unusual psychological profile by tinging melancholy with humor, and by opting for a discontinuous style in order to emphasize the fragmentary nature of existence. And Jean Paul too, much like Schubert, infused his creations with a powerful confessional element: he "mirrors himself in all his works," to quote again from a diary entry written when Schumann's Jean Paul craze was at its height, "but always in two people." The aspiring poet finds the process "superhuman" *(übermenschlich)*, an adjective close to the one he later employed to characterize Schubert's Variations: "otherworldly" *(überirdisch)*.[127]

Just as Jean Paul inspired Schumann to literary creation, so Schubert provided a stimulus for musical composition in the late summer and fall of 1828. Composed in August and September while Schumann was at work on "Die Tonwelt" and the essay on *Genialität*, and dedicated to his brothers Eduard, Carl, and Julius, the *VIII Polonaises . . . op. III*[WoO20] for piano four hands were a direct outgrowth of Schumann's passion for Schubert's works for the same medium. The composer's spirits buoyed by the positive response accorded his first significant works for piano in Dr. Carus's circle, he noted in his diary that while Schubert's polonaises may be divine, his own were "highly or at least passably beautiful."[128] Taken as a group, Schumann's polonaises are marked by the exuberant, unbuttoned style typically associated with the genre. Each falls into a straightforward ternary form (ABA), the A section, or polonaise proper, featuring driving dactylic rhythms and glitter-

ing textures, the B section comprising a lyric trio in a contrasting key. Several of the latter—their programmatic French titles perhaps a reflection of Schumann's youthful study under Kuntsch of similarly titled pieces by C. P. E. Bach and Türk[129]—are notable either for their improvisatory, rhapsodic flights ("La fantaisie" of no. 7) or for their flirtation with contrapuntal textures ("L'aimable" of no. 6). In some cases (Polonaises II and III) Schumann links the contrasting sections by presaging the theme of the trio in the polonaise proper.

Schubert's influence is felt not only in the generally easy-going style of the *VIII Polonaises*—appropriate for a genre whose *raison d'etre* lies in the delectation of the performers—but also in their harmonic language. The third-related modulations in the A section of Polonaise I, whose E♭-major tonic is colored by both G♭ and B (=C♭), recalls many a similar "flat-side" progression in Schubert's works. So too does the emphasis on the Neapolitan in Polonaise V; obviously, its C-major Trio stands in just such a relationship to the B-minor A section, but the second half of the trio compounds the Neapolitan coloration by climbing a half-step further to D♭. Likewise redolent of Schubert is the general absence of expressive indications; these Schumann leaves to the discretion of the performer, for as he wittily puts it in his diary: "Works in which many 'dolces' appear are usually not very *dolce;* Jean Paul has already said something similar in his *Ästhetik:* comedies with 'laughter to death' in their titles often bring weeping and lamentation to death."[130]

By early October, Schumann had moved on to another composition for the piano four-hand medium, a set of variations on a theme by Prince Louis Ferdinand, a favored composer since Schumann's early and mid-teenage years. Now the recently completed polonaises seemed dull and tedious, but "so it goes with me; the new continually displaces the old, and I prize the latest creative project most highly."[131] While the variations have not survived, another and more ambitious project undertaken shortly thereafter—a quartet in C minor for piano and strings, designated "op. V" on the autograph manuscript—is rich in implications for an account of Schumann's evolving compositional talent. Like the polonaises, his first essay in what he would later call the "higher forms" grew out of an atmosphere that viewed music as a promoter of conviviality. Late in 1828, he formed a piano quartet—comprised of Johann Friedrich Täglichsbeck (violin), Christoph Sörgel (viola), Christian Glock (cello), and Schumann himself as pianist—whose reading sessions were often attended by a circle of select listeners including Wieck, Dr. Carus, and the music-dealer and butt of many of Schumann's jokes, Heinrich Probst. A musical counterpart to the *Litterarischer Verein*

of the Zwickau years, the group tackled a broad range of piano quartets and trios by acknowledged masters (Beethoven, Weber, Schubert) and other figures little known today (Prince Louis Ferdinand, Ries, Dussek, Onslow). A diary entry for 13 March 1829 paints a vivid portrait of a typically lively session given over to hearty music-making and good-natured banter:

> Evening: 14th quartet session. Beethoven's ["Archduke"] Trio, op. 97 (bizarre)—Dussek Quartet in E♭ (op. 57)—[Schumann's] Quartet op. V (went well)—much Bavarian beer [the previous night, Flechsig had arrived home drunk, "knill," and broken his bed]—tedious conversation about the students' and peasants' associations—good cheer—late at night the first movement of Schubert's Trio [op. 100, D. 929]—very noble music—gallopade [a lively Hungarian dance]—beautiful sleep."[132]

Again like the *Litterarischer Verein,* the quartet centered around Schumann and his self-designed course of study: its disbanding soon after the seventeenth session on 28 March 1829 immediately preceded his relocation to Heidelberg; and following its first meeting on 14 November 1828, we find him engaged in writing a piano quartet of his own. Therefore the initial work on the composition coincides with the drafting of *Selene,* the fervent melodramatics of its *Mitternachtsstück* and *Harmonika-Altarblatt* episode resonating with the impassioned opening movement of the C-minor quartet. But from the start, Schumann associated his latest compositional effort with the image of his newly found musical hero, word of whose untimely death threw him into a state of emotional anxiety, witness the diary entry for 31 November: "My quartet—Schubert is dead—dismay."[133] The informal quartet sessions at Wieck's or Carus's thus would have provided Schumann with a laboratory for trying out what probably began as an *Hommage à Schubert.* As soon as he had finished a movement and seen to the copying of parts, his friends were on hand for a sympathetic reading. At their tenth meeting on 7 February 1829, the group played through portions of the quartet (probably the first movement) no less than three times to "general laudations."[134] A week later, the *Minuetto* was ready, but the cellist Glock (at the time a student of theology and philosophy, and also an amateur pianist) apparently came to grief over its witty rhythmic turns: "bungled quartet—the breakneck cello" Schumann noted in his diary on 14 February.[135] While the Adagio received a trial performance at the group's next meeting on the evening of 21 February, the last movement was not ready until exactly a month later; and although the work as a whole was accorded a "laudatory aesthetic judgment" at that session,