

# Women and the Nineteenth-Century Lied

*For Michael and Philomena – AK*

*For Lionel – SW*

*Edited by*

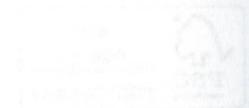
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## Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>List of Music Examples</i>	xi
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xxi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xxiii

1 Introduction	1
<i>Aisling Kenny and Susan Wollenberg</i>	

### PART I CONTEXTS FOR WOMEN'S LIEDER, I

2 Blurring the Gendered Dichotomies: Issues of Gender and Creativity for the Female Lied Composer	11
<i>Aisling Kenny</i>	
3 Absence and Dialogue: Pauline von Decker in a Performing and Cultural Context	29
<i>Briony Cox-Williams</i>	
4 In Pursuit of a Single Flame: Fanny Hensel's 'Musical Salon'	45
<i>Lorraine Byrne Bodley</i>	

### PART II INDIVIDUAL COMPOSERS AND THEIR LIEDER I: EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

5 'Der Jüngling und Das Mädchen': Fanny Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn and the <i>Zwölf Lieder</i> , op. 9	63
<i>Angela Mace Christian</i>	
6 Functions of Piano Introductions in the Lieder of Josephine Lang	85
<i>Harald Krebs</i>	

- 7 Clara Schumann's 'Liebst du um Schönheit' and the Integrity of a  
Composer's Vision 123  
*Susan Wollenberg*

**PART III INDIVIDUAL COMPOSERS AND THEIR LIEDER  
II: LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY**

- 8 Pauline Viardot-Garcia's 'Ne poj, krasavica, pri mne' and the  
Genre of Russian Romance 143  
*Kadja Grönke*
- 9 (Re)claiming Space for Ingeborg von Bronsart's Wildenbruch  
Lieder, op. 16 163  
*Melinda Boyd*
- 10 Cyclic Organization, Narrative and Self-Construction in  
Ethel Smyth's *Lieder und Balladen*, op. 3 and *Lieder*, op. 4 177  
*Cornelia Bartsch*
- 11 Contrasting Concepts of Love in Two Songs by Alma  
Schindler(-Mahler) and Gustav Mahler 217  
*Kadja Grönke*

**PART IV CONTEXTS FOR WOMEN'S LIEDER, II**

- 12 'Und das hat mit ihrem Singen, Die Lore-Ley gethan':  
Subjectivity and Objectification in Two Heine Settings 233  
*Caitlin Miller*
- 13 Echoes of the Lied: Women's Vocal Repertoire in Nineteenth-  
Century Ireland 251  
*Ita Beausang*
- 14 Women Composers of Lied: Selected Sources 259  
*Tammy Hensrud, Aisling Kenny and Susan Wollenberg*

- Index* 269

## List of Figures

- 5.1 Key areas in Felix Mendelssohn, op. 9 71
- 5.2 Key areas in Felix Mendelssohn, op. 9, alternating performance  
option 72
- 5.3 Enlarged and enhanced image of Fanny Mendelssohn, 'Die  
Nonne' (1822), bars 27–30 (D-B MA Ms. 32, p. 41). Reproduced  
by permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer  
Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv 80
- 5.4 Fanny Mendelssohn, 'Die Nonne' (1822), (D-B MA Ms. 32, p. 41).  
Reproduced by permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-  
Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-  
Archiv 81
- 7.1 Clara Schumann, 'Liebst du um Schönheit', fourth motif: scheme  
of transpositions 127
- 10.1 'Sketch of Rev. Hugo J. of himself, Mary and Ethel Smyth, who is  
driving' 186
- 10.2 Title page of op. 3. © British Library Board, GB-Lb, Add. 46861  
(Ethel Smyth, *Early Compositions and Sketches*), f. 47<sup>r</sup> 194
- 10.3 Title page of op. 4. © British Library Board, GB-Lb, Add. 46861  
(Ethel Smyth, *Early Compositions and Sketches*), f. 58<sup>r</sup> 195
- 10.4 First page of op. 3 no. 1, 'Vom Berge', with pencilled translation.  
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Compositions and Sketches*), f. 47<sup>v</sup> 208
- 12.1 Text of Heine, 'Lorelei' and Liszt's musical structure 238
- 12.2 Text of Heine, 'Lorelei' and outline of Clara Schumann's setting 244

- 15 O Traum der Lust, nach dessen  
Scheiden erwacht das Leiden der  
wunden Brust.  
ins Leben schneiden die Qualen, o  
Mutter,  
kommen und wecken mich, kommen  
und gehen!
- O dream of happiness, sorrow awakes  
in my painful breast, after it has passed.  
Torments cut into my life, o mother.  
They come and wake me, come and go!

## Chapter 11

## Contrasting Concepts of Love in Two Songs by Alma Schindler(-Mahler) and Gustav Mahler<sup>1</sup>

Kadja Grönke

### Alma Schindler: 'Ich wandle unter Blumen'

Componierte eben in 5° ein kleines Liederl.  
Ich wandle unter Blumen  
und blühe selber mit.  
Ich wandle wie im Traume  
und wanke<sup>2</sup> bei jedem Schritt.

Oh halt mich fest, Geliebte,  
Vor Liebestrunkenheit  
Fall ich dir sonst zu Füßen  
... und der Garten ist voller Leut!

Obs gut ist, weiß ich nicht. Nur weiß ich, Liebesleidenschaft ist genug drin.<sup>3</sup>

On 7 January 1899, almost three years to the day before her engagement to Gustav Mahler, whom she had not yet met in person, Alma Schindler noted in her diary that she had set to music Heinrich Heine's poem 'Ich wandle unter Blumen'. The Lied came into being during a phase of the 19-year-old's life when

<sup>1</sup> This chapter was translated from the original German into English by Victoria Viebahn.

<sup>2</sup> In Heine's poem and in the printed version of the song this reads 'schwanke'; both sources also have further deviations in the wording and punctuation. In the following discussion the Heine text is cited in the version as underlaid to the printed edition of the song.

<sup>3</sup> 'Just composed in 5 minutes a little song. "I stroll among flowers / And I myself blossom with them. / I stroll as in a dream / And sway with every step. Oh hold me tight, beloved, / Else drunken with love / I fall at your feet / ... and the garden is full of people!" Whether it's any good I do not know. I only know that it contains sufficient amorous passion.' Alma Mahler-Werfel, *Tagebuch-Suiten 1898-1902*, ed. Antony Beaumont and Susanne Rode-Breyermann (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997), p. 172.

she felt emotionally torn and unhappy and was seeking escape through the act of composing. In those January days her ardent wish to create music of high quality inspired her to tackle a number of Heine settings that reflected her mood.<sup>4</sup> 'Ich wandle unter Blumen' was performed on several occasions among circles of family and friends and apparently belongs to the group of works which prompted plans for a public performance by a 'geschulte Stimme' (trained voice).<sup>5</sup> However, the song remained in manuscript until 1910, when it was published in Vienna,<sup>6</sup> where it received its official first performance on 11 December 1910 by Thea Drill-Orrigde and Alexander Zemlinsky.<sup>7</sup>

Alma Schindler's diary indicates clearly that 'Ich wandle unter Blumen' was written during the period of her composition lessons with the blind organist Josef Labor. In stark contrast to the lessons with Alexander Zemlinsky (which began in October 1900), Labor's well-meaning tuition appears to have trained adequately neither Alma's skills in the area of notational technique nor her powers of aesthetic judgement, but rather to have encouraged her creative imagination unburdened by knowledge of form or compositional rules, finding expression above all in her power of melodic invention.<sup>8</sup> Yet it emerges that the young woman did learn from examples, just as Labor wished,<sup>9</sup> and in this song, in particular, she had taken to heart her teacher's criticism of 20 December 1898 that '[she] squeezed too many themes together ... One could make several pieces out of them'.<sup>10</sup> The short setting is built on a distinct compositional idea, namely a 12-bar, uninterrupted chromatic rise in the vocal line followed by a three-bar recitative-like consequent.

<sup>4</sup> See Susanne Rode-Breyman, *Die Komponistin Alma Mahler-Werfel* (Hanover: Niedersächsisches Staatstheater, 1999), p. 137. At this time she confessed: 'Mich drängt nur, Lieder zu schreiben, die zu meiner Stimmung passen' ('I just feel a strong urge to write songs that fit my mood'). Mahler-Werfel, *Tagebuch-Suiten*, p. 171.

<sup>5</sup> Mahler-Werfel, *Tagebuch-Suiten*, p. 173. This performance took place on 2 February 1900, at an evening of chamber music hosted by Adele Radnitzky-Mandlick (Rode-Breyman, *Komponistin*, p. 144; Mahler-Werfel, *Tagebuch-Suiten*, p. 443). Whether the Heine setting examined here was in fact among the three songs performed on this occasion is not known.

<sup>6</sup> This was as no. 5 of the *Fünf Lieder* submitted by Mahler for publication by Universal Edition.

<sup>7</sup> Rode-Breyman, *Komponistin*, p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> 'Almas Komponieren war zunächst überhaupt nicht an musikalischen Formmodellen oder an der Eigengesetzlichkeit musikalischer Formbildung orientiert' ('At first, Alma's composing was not in the least orientated towards musical forms or the intrinsic principles of creating musical structure'), *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> At this same time she composed a piano piece on a specific model by Beethoven (Mahler-Werfel, *Tagebuch-Suiten*, p. 168).

<sup>10</sup> '[Sie haben] zu viel Themen aufeinander gepfercht ... Man könnte daraus mehrere Stücke machen.' The item referred to is a piece for piano (Mahler-Werfel, *Tagebuch-Suiten*, p. 164).

The integrity of the compositional concept is linked not least with the fact that the setting – like all the composer's extant Lieder – follows the text closely. Hence, this is a through-composed setting of poetry, its structure deriving its authority from the 'textumsetzende[n] Erfindung' ('invention in the service of realizing the text').<sup>11</sup> Five compositional sections are clearly distinguishable by their contrasting performance indications. The first two ('*Träumend*', '*Langsam*') connect the chromatically rising course of the vocal line to undulating accompanimental figuration in the piano. The 'Blühen' ('blossoming') referred to in the text is thus realized by the voice as a process of opening up and striving upwards, whereas the 'Schwanken' ('swaying') in the instrumental part (and in bar 7 also in the voice) is depicted in vividly illustrative manner as a swinging to-and-fro movement. But both these figures are supported on the firm foundation of bass notes changing bar by bar and then, from the seventh bar onwards, heard as held notes played in octaves. It could be said that the chromatic ascent is made on a secure footing (Example 11.1).

However, this stable basis disappears abruptly in sections 3 and 4 ('*Plötzlich sehr schnell*', '*Prestissimo*'). Although the chromatic rise in the vocal line persists, it is now underlaid with individual chords in the piano that break the continuity prevailing in the song thus far. Hence, in this setting, the firm hold invoked in Heine's text ('O halt mich fest, Geliebte!') is deliberately denied. Instead, by employing shorter note values in the voice and with the piano chords sounding in ever quicker succession, the composer creates an internal acceleration. At the culmination of this process the composition is no longer geared to the grammatical-semantic line-for-line design of the poem but rather sums up three lines of text in a single musical arc. Despite the lingering on the words 'Liebestrunkenheit' ('drunken with love') and 'sonst' ('else'), the insistent accompanying chords leading to an upward semiquaver run, together with the unbroken chromatic rise of the vocal line and the lack of pauses for breath to create caesuras, are all clearly directed towards the surprising *fortissimo* octave downward leap at the beginning of bar 12 (on 'Füßen'). Contrary to the utterance in the text, the music doesn't express tight hold and self-control but rather, quite clearly proceeds as if in a precipitate act of 'falling to the ground'. The gesture conjured up by Heine in the imagination only as a wish and a possibility is emphatically realized in the song (Example 11.2).

The final line of the poem explains why such a visible expression of love would be inconceivable for Heine: the presence of other people makes self-control an imperative. As the music has already accomplished the 'falling to the ground' gesture at the words 'und der Garten ist voller Leut!', Schindler expresses the shock of this outbreak of amorous emotion musically with built-in delay: the vocal line is suddenly paralysed in a recitative-like note repetition, *pianissimo* (marked with the performance indication '*Langsam*'), and withdraws into speech in an almost toneless whisper.

<sup>11</sup> Rode-Breyman, *Komponistin*, p. 98.

Example 11.1 Alma Schindler, 'Ich wandle unter Blumen', from *5 Lieder für Gesang und Klavier*, bars 1–8. © 1910 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien/UE 18016

**Träumend**

Ich wand - le un - ter Blu - men und  
blü - he sel - ber mit, ich wand - le wie im  
Trau - me und schwan - ke bei je - dem Schritt.

**Langsam rit.**

Although the composer deliberately takes her music beyond the text and reinterprets its inner content to become an imagined external occurrence, the change of compositional idiom is fully in line with the change of perspective in the text, from the subjective excess of romantic love to the distant, ironic view from outside. But here, departing from Heine's approach, the composer interprets the change not as an ironic comment, but by taking back what had previously been offered. A brief postlude in the piano (models for which are to be found in Robert Schumann's Heine settings) ends the Lied. Combining a rising gesture that

Example 11.2 Alma Schindler, 'Ich wandle unter Blumen', from *5 Lieder für Gesang und Klavier*, bars 9–15. © 1910 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien/UE 18016

**Plötzlich sehr schnell**

O halt mich fest, Ge - lieb - te! Vor Lie - bes - trun - ken - heit  
fall' ich dir sonst zu Fü - ßen und der  
Gar - ten ist vol - ler Leut!

**Prestissimo** **Langsam p**

could be said to make a hurried exit with a thoughtful, sedate falling final cadence, it takes up the constellation of bars 11 and 12, that is the 'falling to the ground' gesture, thereby confirming that the central statement of this poetic setting lies in the utopian construction of amorous feelings being lived out.

It becomes clear from Schindler's diary entries that external factors were among those that determined the young woman's musical production. She pursued her composing independently of an instrument, but as she possessed no room of

her own until her 22nd year and felt disturbed in her work by the presence of other people, phases of heightened creativity alternated with periods of total sterility, as she herself called it.<sup>12</sup> She was also disposed to strong fluctuations of mood that influenced her composing, especially when she was intensely in love. In general, it would appear that Alma's compositional activity was enhanced by amorous longing but, conversely, inhibited by fulfilment or disappointment in love. As she herself put it, for instance: 'Ich war immer nie so unfruchtbar, wie in den Zeiten der Liebe' ('I was never so unfruitful as at times when in love').<sup>13</sup>

Referring to the broadly based literary knowledge possessed by the young Alma Schindler, Susanne Rode-Breyman indicates that she preferred to set poems that touched her emotionally and that contributed to the 'Entzifferung des eigenen Subjekts' ('decoding of self as subject'), as Rode-Breyman terms the process of self-discovery that comes about at the threshold to adulthood.<sup>14</sup> The choice of the Heine poem and her interpretation of it thus suggest that in the form of the amorous longing described by the poet, which may be neither articulated nor lived out in society, the young woman recognizes a fundamental experience from her own life – albeit an experience with which (as the setting shows) she cannot reconcile herself.<sup>15</sup> The Lied in fact came into being during a phase of the young woman's life in which she was deeply troubled by her strong feelings for the painter Gustav Klimt, whose bad reputation, free lifestyle and material situation ruled him out from being her partner in life. But in musical terms the young composer articulates an occurrence that would be inconceivable in public: it actually takes place in the course of the song and is musically imagined as reality.

### Gustav Mahler: 'Liebst du um Schönheit'

Gustav Mahler's setting of Friedrich Rückert's 'Liebst du um Schönheit' likewise has its roots in actual amorous experiences.<sup>16</sup> Conceived as a gift of love for his wife Alma, it was written in August 1902, hence only a few months after the marriage and immediately prior to the birth of their first child. In keeping with

<sup>12</sup> See for example Mahler-Werfel, *Tagebuch-Suiten*, p. 661.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 725.

<sup>14</sup> See Rode-Breyman, *Komponistin*, pp. 77 and 79.

<sup>15</sup> That the woman composer thereby identifies with the fundamental experience of the masculine 'Ich' is no contradiction: what is involved here is essentially human, not confined by gender. The fact that Alma Schindler was able to identify with such essential elements from the point of view of the opposite sex is shown by indications in her diaries that she preferred to take male roles in family theatrical productions.

<sup>16</sup> On Clara Schumann's setting of this poem see the discussion in Chapter 7 above, which provides a further possibility for comparison with Mahler's interpretation of the text.

his character it was intended as a 'Privatissimum' (something extremely private),<sup>17</sup> and, departing from his usual practice, Mahler did not undertake the orchestral scoring of this Lied.<sup>18</sup> He had it published, however, in the *Sieben Liedern aus letzter Zeit* (1905). Mahler's Lied is conceived as a varied strophic structure. The text as set by Mahler reads as shown below.<sup>19</sup>

Liebst du um Schönheit,  
O nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe die Sonne,  
sie trägt ein gold'nes Haar!

Liebst du um Jugend,  
o nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe den Frühling,  
der jung ist jedes Jahr!

Liebst du um Schätze,  
o nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe die Meerfrau,  
sie hat viel Perlen klar!

Liebst du um Liebe,  
o ja, mich liebe!  
Liebe mich immer,  
dich lieb ich immer,  
immerdar!<sup>20</sup>

Rückert's poem in my reading of it deals in an untroubled manner with expressions of love and love requited, but Mahler places its ultimately positive message fundamentally in question. The text and harmony of the Lied stand in open contradiction to each other.

Although the musical structure – in analogous fashion to the text – seems to be conceived in simple, indeed even predictable vein, Mahler's setting turns out to be a highly ambivalent construction. The syllabic vocal part, which is reduced to a positively simplistic model in terms of melody, with diatonic scale fragments, few leaps, even note values and short individual sections interspersed with pauses, is embedded in a complex expanded tonal context. The harmonic progressions, rife

<sup>17</sup> Alma Mahler-Werfel, *Mein Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1960, 1997), p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> After Mahler's death the Lied was orchestrated by Max Puttmann.

<sup>19</sup> For an English translation see Chapter 7, p. 126 above.

<sup>20</sup> In Rückert's poem: 'Dich lieb ich immerdar!' The text given here is notated and punctuated as in Mahler's musical setting.

with friction, consist of a series of suspensions and resolutions with, in most cases, a further tension-generating chord underlaid in turn. Even the song's fundamental tonic chord of E<sub>b</sub> major hangs in the balance throughout. It appears only on the core words that are negated: 'Schönheit', 'Schätze' and 'Jugend', but is always veiled by suspensions.<sup>21</sup> The home key is not definitively resolved until a quarter of the way into the final bar, hence in the chord heard only at the last, whereby the added third and fifth confirm the E<sub>b</sub> as root of the tonic major harmony (Example 11.3).

Example 11.3 Gustav Mahler, 'Liebst du um Schönheit', bars 31–34

The melodic flow comes across as being no less inhibited than the harmony, for although the vocal line is geared entirely to the spoken rhythm, constant changes of time and an irregular pattern of internal word stresses make orientation on the basis of metre or groups of bars difficult. While the text of the Lied sets up a simple schematic 'love equation', the musical setting indicates not romantic bliss but the sense of danger and insecurity produced by the feelings of love. In contrast to the text, Mahler's music defines love as a phenomenon that defies any predictable development but is pervaded with a longing for agreement, harmony and continuity that can scarcely be fulfilled.<sup>22</sup> Hope flourishes on the last word of the text, 'immerdar', in a completely unforeseen melisma in the vocal

<sup>21</sup> On the word 'Jugend' Mahler in fact moves towards the minor, perhaps as a reflection of the age difference between himself and the dedicatee. From the beginning of his acquaintance with Alma, Mahler strongly doubted 'whether a man who is in the grip of becoming old has the right to take so much youth and vitality into his overripe state – linking the spring to the autumn' ('ob ein Mensch, der im Begriffe steht, alt zu werden das Recht hat, so viel Jugend und Lebensfrische an seine Überreife – den Frühling an den Herbst zu ketten'): Gustav Mahler, *Liebste Justi: Briefe an die Familie*, ed. Stephen McClatchie (Bonn: Weidle, 2006), p. 499.

<sup>22</sup> See also Kadja Grönke, 'Musikalische Analyse als Beitrag zu einem tieferen Verständnis der Biographie. Zwei Liebeslieder von Alma Schindler und Gustav Mahler im Vergleich', in *Wozu Biographik? Zur Rolle biographischer Methoden in Vermittlungsprozessen und Musikanalyse. Bericht über die Tagung der Fachgruppe Musikwissenschaft und Musikpädagogik in der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, Lüneburg 2002*, ed. Andreas Waczkat (Rostock: Universität, 2003), pp. 65–73. Even if the alternative

line that breaks once and for all with the regularity suggested thus far. For in a deviation from Rückert's original text, Mahler inserts the word 'immer' ('dich lieb ich immer, immerdar!') in penultimate position, with the result that the final word and the melisma attached to it grow out clearly beyond strophic form. The vocal line is left open-ended, finishing on a suspended sixth over an unstable six-four chord in the piano (Example 11.4).

Example 11.4 Gustav Mahler, 'Liebst du um Schönheit', bars 29–31

The unexpectedly open-ended nature of this compositional structure surprises the listener by granting the course of the song up to this point – notwithstanding the fact that it has already encompassed four verses – the function of an introduction, and suggesting the need for further development. But following this there is no further indication as to the song's message. Instead, a brief postlude in the piano achieves in four bars precisely the close that the vocal part in its passionate 'dream-of-love' melisma is clearly meant to avoid. This piano epilogue ignores all hope invoked by the voice, exaggerating instead the metrical and harmonic disturbance up to the penultimate chord. The brief, intensely voiced avowal of the permanence of love culminates instrumentally in heightened doubt, and the concluding chord heard as a disconnected added element in the piano sounds so questionable in the abrupt certainty of E<sub>b</sub> major that it is perceived as a close only after it has finished sounding. The certainty of love fulfilled, rhapsodically expressed here, remains a dream that is experienced only fragmentarily.

reading of Rückert's poem suggested in Chapter 7 is taken, it remains true that Mahler's musical setting subverts it.

## Comparative Reading of the Two Songs

The marriage of Alma Schindler to Gustav Mahler on 9 March 1902 in the Karlskirche, Vienna, was the union of two people for whom music constituted in both cases the central element of their lives. Although Alma (as convincingly set out by Rode-Breyman)<sup>23</sup> possessed an expert knowledge of the visual arts that had been developing since her childhood, and demonstrated a remarkable talent for drawing as well as evidently showing the aptitude to become a pianist, she opted for composing at an early stage. But standing in the way of this striving to become an artist was her lack of role models, a factor that all too often robbed her of the courage to proceed '[to] achieve something in this as a woman with such a small heart and even smaller brain' ('[als] ein Frauenzimmer mit einem so kleinen Herzen und noch kleineren Gehirn ... darin etwas [zu] leisten').<sup>24</sup> Gustav Mahler, on the other hand, was utterly convinced of the capacity of his works to stand the test of time. His status as a renowned and respected conductor brought with it the financial security that allowed him the freedom to devote himself to composing intensively in the summer months, out of season.

In spite of the fact that the artistic ambitions of these two individuals were directed towards similar goals, the biographies of Alma and Gustav Mahler provide clear evidence of the gendered nature of social spheres, and the differing perception of gender roles around 1900. During their brief period of engagement, Gustav Mahler confronts his bride, some 19 years his junior, with his idea of a partnership in which the woman is fully absorbed by her role as enabling and supportive muse. Although at this time the 22-year-old is working with determination towards becoming a professional composer, she yields to the demands of her fiancé and gives up composing – apparently without communicating to him the doubts and despair his demands cause her. Mahler must have assumed, therefore, that his future wife was prepared to fulfil the expectations set before her.<sup>25</sup>

But the abandonment of her creative ambitions throws a lasting shadow over the marriage. Despite all her willing dedication to her husband's composing, Alma seems to find no compensation for the loss of her own creativity. What's more, it becomes increasingly difficult for her to immerse herself in Mahler's music, Mahler's idea of human devotion clearly does not satisfy her emotional and physical demands, and she misses the social life of Vienna, with the result that her

<sup>23</sup> Rode-Breyman, *Komponistin*.

<sup>24</sup> Mahler-Werfel, *Tagebuch-Suiten*, p. 165 ff.

<sup>25</sup> The implications of this decision seem to have eluded both partners. Mahler planned their joint future without an intimate knowledge of Alma's music; and Alma sought in this prestigious marriage with the celebrated director of the Vienna Hofoper an escape from personal and familial conflicts. Furthermore, the capitulation to Mahler's demand rendered her constant doubts of her own artistic talents unassuaged. And finally Alma evidently believed that she could – perhaps even that she must – fulfil unconditionally the feminine role expected of her.

attempt to slip into the desired role of devoted spouse, re-educating herself, as it were, in the interests of her husband, fails.

Comparison of the two songs with piano accompaniment by Alma Schindler and Gustav Mahler analysed here confirms and defines how their individual concepts of love, as evidenced in letters, documents and biographical events, diverge. The songs display two highly contrasting notions of love and of the immediate and potential effects and demands that this existential feeling between the sexes produces. Alma Schindler bases her music on a text that reveals how love and passion are threatened by society and its conventions. Talking about love, living out love, or showing love appears to be unimaginable in the presence of other people. This is why the verses focus entirely on the feeling of love or, to put it more precisely, on the 'I feeling' of the person speaking, which the music helps to express in detail and – in this respect going beyond the statement made by the text – realizes. For in this setting the aim of expressing this ardent feeling centres on the confession of a love which, regardless of social conventions, urgently seeks articulation, thereby representing the untrammelled passion concomitant with such confession of love.

This corresponds to the biographically verifiable fact that before her marriage, Alma moved frequently and with enjoyment in Viennese circles where she received the recognition that was apparently denied her at home with her mother, stepfather and two half-sisters. This recognition applied not only to her intellectual potential but also to her physical beauty, and in her diaries she regularly describes at length her effect on men, her active coquetry, and in later years also her own sensuousness. But neither public nor family circles allowed her intense longing for love to be fulfilled. In particular (as mentioned above), a relationship with Gustav Klimt, who was throwing her mind into turmoil during the time when 'Ich wandle unter Blumen' was written, proved to be socially unacceptable and was strictly forbidden by the parents. The more lonely and misunderstood the young woman felt and the more strongly she sensed the boundaries set by her family, by society and convention, the more intense was her growing longing for self-discovery and self-fulfilment. Despite her artistic interests, these aims seemed to her attainable only through love – a notion that in her diaries appears in all shades ranging from infatuated admiration to physical passion, in relation to a large number of desirable or desired men, and subjecting the young woman to extreme fluctuations of mood. And in view of the public morals reigning in fin-de-siècle Vienna, these feelings could only be lived out in secret or fantasized into existence.

The common denominator of her emotions can – with due caution – be construed from her Heine setting. Love, we can infer from the music of the Lied, is for Alma a truly intense feeling only where there are external barriers to its progress: a feeling that fulfils the lovers completely and becomes a force against a hostile environment. Accordingly, it exists primarily in the 'Ich', perhaps even becoming its main defining force, whereas the 'Du' represents more an occasion that is replaceable by another, rather than a constant component of the individual's own emotional life. Her diaries confirm this exchangeability of the love object, and

the young woman herself is also aware of the fact that all too often she indulges in flirting with men who actually mean nothing to her, but whose admiration boosts her self-esteem.

Gustav Mahler, on the other hand, selects for his love song a text that tells of love apparently in an almost overly simplistic or schematic manner: love does not need the values of the world, but rather love will and must be returned and lived out – this must be mutual. But however sure the text's speaker is about his own love, the musical 'Ich' remains correspondingly unsure of the feelings of the beloved 'Du'. Thus love is and remains – even in the autobiographically fulfilled phase of marriage – a permanent dream to be wrestled with endlessly in music.

Here, too, the biographical facts correspond entirely with the hypothesis drawn from musical analysis: Mahler's marriage is not easy for either partner. Time and time again, Alma's repeated escape into alcohol, illness and drug consumption arouses Mahler's concern, but his loving though demanding attention to her cannot correlate with Alma's idea of passionate love centred completely on her. Nevertheless, Mahler does not give up, even seeking the opportunity for discussion with Sigmund Freud, and he repeatedly tries to retain Alma's affections through self-reflection as well as by his actions. Mahler's setting of the Rückert poem bears witness to this repeated attempt to live out love in reality. And beyond this, the music expresses precisely Mahler's personal notion of love as an offer made repeatedly but only able to lead to the calm assurance of love when reciprocated. If this reciprocity is lacking, then love can still make a person happy from moment to moment, but in the long term this is outweighed by the never-ending struggle and doubt.

The incompatibility of the two notions of love expressed artistically in the Lieder examined here aligns with the real life experiences of Alma and Gustav Mahler, whereby two differing concepts of love collide, making it difficult for the marital partners to translate their feelings into a harmonious life together. While the biographical evidence of the marriage can be traced in letters, diary entries and recorded events, assessment and interpretation of these documentary sources must always remain a subjective matter. Analysis of the music can shed new light on the case in a very specific way and elucidate the fundamental nature of the conflict.

This may initially come as a surprise, since musical analysis has generally been conceived as intended to produce understanding of the work of art as such, whilst a composer's life and attitudes might be thought to belong more properly to a biographical account. Indeed, followers of post-structuralism tend to detach the artwork entirely from the person of its creator, viewing it as an intrinsically closed entity completely independent of external circumstances. However, if we posit that a work has its roots in a certain situation in life and an individual's personal view of the world, thus making it capable of bearing witness to these two factors, then we could bring the outcome of the two musical analyses explored here to a point, as follows. By 'love', Alma means first of all herself. Love serves to demarcate her from a hostile outside world, to assure her of her own being, and consequently

proves to be a crucial factor of becoming and defining oneself. Gustav, on the other hand, is sure of himself and of his feelings for the other person, but unsure that love is reciprocated. His feelings are therefore primarily directed towards the beloved. But ultimately, for both Alma and Gustav, the same is true: neither gains lasting happiness through their love.

With all this in mind, comparison of the two Lieder not only confirms the known biographical facts but can also expand our understanding of them and differentiate their approaches in a manner that goes beyond the verbal testimony and self-perceptions formulated by the couple. Hence, rather than explaining music with the help of biographical data, this contribution seeks to provide, through music, an interpretation of two people and their relationship to each other. This is of course an approach that cannot be employed universally. But in the present case, I would argue that analysis of the musical texts offers the greatest chance of approaching a biographical description more objectively. Constructing such an account is an especially problematic endeavour where Alma and Gustav Mahler are concerned, one that has tended to be characterized by such drawbacks as manipulative self-representation, lack of knowledge of the facts, one-sided sensation seeking, and at times undisguised partisanship.<sup>26</sup> In the light of the acknowledged problematic aspects inherent in the biographies, insights from the two composers' songs of love compared here may offer an approach centred more truthfully on their own attitudes and understanding.

<sup>26</sup> On this point see the fundamental observations in Rode-Breyman, *Komponistin*; the same author's 'Im Spannungsfeld von Selbstinszenierung, Lebensrealität und Rezipientenphantasien: Über das Komponieren von Alma Schindler-Mahler-Werfel', in *Frauenstimmen, Frauenrollen in der Oper und Frauensebstzeugnisse*, ed. Gabriele Busch-Salmen and Eva Rieger (Herbolzheim: Centraurus, 2000), pp. 135–43, and her 'Imaginiert, verklärt – marginalisiert, skandalisiert. Biographische Darstellungen "kranker" Musikerinnen am Beispiel von Alma Mahler und Jacqueline du Pré', in *Krankheiten großer Musiker und Musikerinnen: Reflexionen am Schnittpunkt von Musikwissenschaft und Medizin*, ed. Eckart Altenmüller and Susanne Rode-Breyman (with contributions by Anna Langenbruch), *Ligaturen. Musikwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch der Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hannover*, vol. 4 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2009), pp. 149–70; and in Melanie Unseld, 'Alma Mahler – Biographische Lösungen eines unlösbaren Falles?', in *Leben als Kunstwerk. Künstlerbiographien im 20. Jahrhundert. Von Alma Mahler und Jean Cocteau zu Thomas Bernhard und Madonna*, ed. Christopher F. Laferl and Anja Tippner (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), pp. 147–63; and Sandra Marchl, *Alma Mahler-Werfel in der Biographik. Die Dekonstruktion einer Legende* (Graz: Leykam, 2009).