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Speech and Silence: Encountering Flowers in the Lieder of Clara Schumann

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Around a third of Clara Schumann's vocal compositions include references to flowers, whether as passing metaphors or as the principal addressee of her chosen text. At first glance this may seem unremarkable given the central place flowers held in the symbology of Romantic literature. But the survival of documents such as the Blumenbuch für Robert (1854–56), in which she collected flowers from her travels around Europe, demonstrate a personal and distinctly feminine engagement with nineteenth-century floral practices beyond the vegetative poetics of male-authored poetry. This article examines the ways in which Clara Schumann engages with the overlapping floral discourses and media of the nineteenth century in four of her flower-centric lieder: 'Die stille Lotosblume', 'An einem lichten Morgen', 'Was weinst du, Blümlein' and 'Das Veilchen'. In these songs, flowers are explicitly gendered through their material conflation with women's bodies and relationship to a (typically male) lyric persona. I show how Schumann often uses her piano accompaniments to undermine the male construction of passive flowers by granting flowers an emergent agency in her settings. In so doing, Schumann is able to protect the stubborn silences of flowers or reify their secret desires. Flowers in these lieder thus emerge as radically polysemic and multimodal symbols, not only hinting at a myriad of possible meanings, but also reflecting a mode of feminine authorship that can be recalcitrant, revealing and tactfully mutable.

At the end of October 1854, Clara Schumann travelled to Weimar with a pressed red rose stowed in her belongings. It had come into her possession at some point while visiting her hometown of Leipzig, where she had given two warmly received concerts at the Gewandhaus. These concerts initiated an intense period of concertizing for Schumann, who had only just given birth to her eighth and last child, Felix, and seen her husband, Robert, committed to the asylum at Endenich. By the time she reconnected with Johannes Brahms on 7 November in Hamburg, she had already given concerts in Weimar and Frankfurt am Main, and had found a couple of days to visit her children in Düsseldorf. The rose she carried with her, together with a number of other flowers from her travels, has

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Fig. 1 Red rose from Leipzig, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, 25 October 1854.¹

been preserved thanks to Brahms's gift of a *Blumenbuch* ('flower book') during that stay in Hamburg. This thoughtful gift was a nod to her habit of holding onto flowers for her husband, as well as a medium for Brahms and Clara Schumann to hint at unspoken feelings for one another.² As she continued to tour around German and other European cities, she filled this book with flowers from concerts, local gardens, friends (especially Brahms) and her children. The collection concludes, touchingly, with laurel leaves laid on Robert's grave on the day of his funeral, and the dedication of the collection to his memory. He would never see the *Blumenbuch für Robert*.

It is hard to resist the sentimental allure of these flowers. Each appears as a precious relic of a lost, personal memory. They have become unique testaments to the special place that flowers had in her life, as well as tangible reminders of Schumann's feminine otherness in the androcentric German canon. Cuttings like the red rose from Leipzig (Fig. 1), with its still-sharp thorns and vibrant red colour that bleeds onto the surrounding paper, seem to bristle with meaning that still

¹ From the archives of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau, Germany. The *Blumenbuch für Robert* is also available in a modern facsimile edition. I will provide page references to this edition throughout this article. Clara Schumann, *Blumenbuch für Robert: 1854–1856*, ed. Gerd Nauhaus and Ingrid Bodsch, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2016): fol. 4, pp. 26–7.

² Janina Klassen, *Clara Schumann: Musik und Öffentlichkeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009): 51.

speaks to us today. Redolent of romantic love and sexual desire, the red rose evokes an inexhaustible network of cultural, literary and religious associations: from innocence, virginity and youth to sexual desire, death, loss and rebirth.³ This rose is at once a token of love saved for her husband institutionalized in Eendenich, a tender reminder of her childhood in Leipzig and lost innocence, a *memento mori* for herself and husband, and a tribute to the temporary beauty of nature. Indeed, the more we ask of this flower, the more mutable and fugitive its potential messages become.

In the introduction to the modern facsimile of the *Blumenbuch für Robert*, editors Gerd Nauhaus and Ingrid Bodsch link Schumann's flower book to a larger tradition of *Stammbücher* popular in the nineteenth century. These albums of friendship (*liber amicorum*), passed between close friends, were often kept by women, who filled them with painted or pressed flowers.⁴ Such albums were just one of the myriad ways that women in the nineteenth century encountered flowers in their lives, especially in the world of books. A new genre of commercial literature, collectively termed 'sentimental flower books', entered the book market, offering their presumed readership the specific codes needed to understand a so-called *Blumensprache* or 'language of flowers'. Such books were marketed to an audience of women whose bodies and sexuality were commonly represented by flowers during this period. As Beverley Seaton has noted, these floral representations played on familiar stereotypes of women, such as their 'smallness of stature, fragility of mind and body, and impermanence of beauty'.⁵ Nineteenth-century women would have witnessed a similar conflation of floral and female representations in contemporary literature. The famous blue flower of Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the 'Ur-symbol' of the early Romantics, is one of numerous examples, symbolizing inspiration, the source of poesy and eternal longing.⁶ The face of the blue flower that first appears to Heinrich in the dream that opens the novel later becomes the face of his beloved, Mathilde. Women were thus caught in a perpetual representational exchange, in which flowers represented women, and women represented flowers.

Given how deeply engrained flowers and floral representations were in nineteenth-century European culture, it is perhaps no surprise that Clara Schumann's own interest in flowers extended beyond her flower books. Around a third of her song settings and choral pieces involve some reference to flowers. In some cases, flowers simply form part of the typical natural landscape of Romantic tropes, alongside trees, mountains, birds, meadows and streams. Yet in many, the flower is the principal addressee of the song, as in 'Das Veilchen', 'Was weinst du, Blümlein', 'An einem lichten Morgen' and 'Die stille Lotosblume', perhaps her most well-loved song. All stage some form of encounter

³ See Gertraud Meinel, 'Pflanzenmetaphorik im Volkslied', *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung* 27–28 (1982): 163.

⁴ Nauhaus and Bodsch, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, 8. See also the later collection also available in facsimile: Clara Schumann, *Das Berliner Blumentagebuch der Clara Schumann, 1857–1859*, ed. Renate Hofmann (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1991). Robert Schumann's own collection of music and poetry, titled *Dichtergarten*, is another interesting example of *Stammbuch* culture in this period and in the home of Robert and Clara Schumann. See Robert Schumann, *Dichtergarten für Musik: eine Anthologie für Freunde der Literatur und Musik*, ed. Gerd Nauhaus and Ingrid Bodsch (Bonn: StadtMuseum, 2007).

⁵ Beverley Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995): 17.

⁶ Berthold Hoekner, 'Paths through Dichterliebe', *19th-Century Music* 30/1 (2006): 65–6.

with a flower where both poetic speaker and flower are implicitly or explicitly gendered. In this article, I explore how Clara Schumann navigates the floral texts of these four lieder *vis-à-vis* the cultural, literary and botanical associations with flowers in the nineteenth century as well as the personal flowers of the *Blumenbuch für Robert*. At the same time, I consider how her encounters with flowers differed from her male counterparts.

The study of floral poetics in Romantic music is not without precedent.⁷ In a 2012 article, Holly Watkins explored how Robert Schumann's *Blumenstück* (Op. 19) engages both sentimental and Romantic floral poetics.⁸ This distinction also runs along gendered lines, with the sentimental flower books being the female counterparts to male-authored Romantic literature. Yet Watkins observes a difference in how each discourse understands floral symbols, comparing the one-to-one allegoric meanings offered by sentimental flower books to the transcendent symbolism of the flower in the literature of Novalis and E.T.A. Hoffmann. For the media theorist Friedrich A. Kittler, the flower in early-Romantic literature encapsulated what he identified as the 'originary discourse' of the period: the *a priori* source of poetic inspiration for the male artist around 1800. This source is comprised of a symbolic nexus of Nature/Woman/Love – as demonstrated by Novalis's blue flower as the beloved Mathilde – which poets 'translate' into literature.⁹ Watkins extends Kittler's discourse analysis to the floral symbolism of sentimental flower books, arguing that these books position real women, as the presumed speakers and interpreters of the language of flowers, as Woman(/Nature/Love). That is, within the Romantic paradigm identified by Kittler, sentimental flower books interpellate women as manifestations of Woman/Nature/Love.¹⁰

In contrast to Watkins, who espouses an understandable bias for the ineffable Romantic symbolism of flowers, I seek to approach the flowers of Clara Schumann's lieder in a way that reflects how she may have encountered flower symbolism as a middle-class nineteenth-century woman. This does not mean that I indulge in the easy allegories of sentimental literature, which Watkins chastises as 'the *Biedermeier* counterpart to Romanticism's more rarefied floral symbolism'.¹¹ Rather, I connect the flowers in her lieder to a network of necessarily

⁷ Inge van Rij, for example, has noted the long association of flowers with collections of poems and songs in her work on Brahms's song 'bouquets'. Indeed, the word 'anthology' derives from the Greek word *anthologia* meaning 'flower collection'. Van Rij argues that for Brahms, the use of the term 'bouquet' primarily referred to the songs' non-cyclical arrangement and potential for rearrangement. See *Brahms's Song Collections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 72–5. Another noteworthy example is Lawrence M. Zbikowski's article on settings of Wilhelm Müller's 'Trockne Blumen', in which he theorizes the anthropomorphizing of flowers in this poem and its musical setting through Gilles Fauconnier's notion of 'conceptual integration networks'. See Lawrence M. Zbikowski, 'The Blossoms of "Trockne Blumen": Music and Text in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Music Analysis* 18/3 (1999): 307–45.

⁸ Holly Watkins, 'The Floral Poetics of Schumann's *Blumenstück*, Op. 19', *19th-Century Music* 36/1 (2012): 24–45. This article became the fourth chapter of her monograph *Musical Vitalities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). I will refer to the book chapter for the remainder of this article.

⁹ Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer, with the assistance of Chris Cullens (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990): 73. See also Watkins, *Musical Vitalities*, 95.

¹⁰ Watkins, *Musical Vitalities*, 100–101.

¹¹ Watkins, *Musical Vitalities*, 98.

overlapping discourses, media and historical contexts, reflecting how deeply entwined flowers were in the lives of women like Clara Schumann. In this study flowers emerge as radically mutable symbols that tactfully switch between ineffability and specificity, confounding the classical relationship of signifier to signified.¹² As the red rose of the *Blumenbuch für Robert* shows, flowers can paradoxically allude to legible, definitive meanings while also being open to boundless interpretation.

Contemporary books such as Elizabeth Kent's anonymously published *Flora Domestica, or The Portable Flower Garden* (1823) encapsulate how different ways of understanding flowers collide in a woman-authored work. This horticultural handbook included extensive passages of English poetry alongside instructions on how to care for each flower listed. Kent often chose poetry that simply mentions the flower in question. Her entry for sunflowers, for example, includes references to sunflowers in passages of James Thomson, Thomas Moore, John Clare, Charles Maturin and William Drummond, though with little exegesis beyond matching the flower's physical properties to its representation in poetry.¹³ Many European sentimental flower books such as Charlotte de Latour's hugely popular and influential *Le Langage des Fleurs* (first published in 1819) similarly included passages of poetry that matched the supposed meaning of each flower.¹⁴

Throughout the following discussions of 'Die stille Lotosblume' (Op. 13, No. 6), 'An einem lichten Morgen' (Op. 23, No. 2), 'Was weinst du, Blümlein' (Op. 23, No. 1) and 'Das Veilchen', I take a self-consciously 'naïve' approach to their floral representations.¹⁵ This means that in place of a suspicious theorization of the

¹² See Claudette Sartillot's Derridean approach to floral discourse in modern literature in *Herbarium/Verbarium: The Discourse of Flowers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993): Introduction and chap. 1.

¹³ Elizabeth Kent, *Flora Domestica, or, The Portable Flower-Garden: with Directions for the Treatment of Plants in Pots and Illustrations from the Works of the Poets* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1823): 357–9.

¹⁴ For example, the entry for tuberose (*tubéreuse*), meaning voluptuousness (*volupté*), leads to a bizarre quotation from a poem by the eighteenth-century French cardinal François-Joachim de Pierre de Bernis depicting the guilt of female sexual desire along 'a path of flowers' (*un chemin de fleurs*). See Charlotte de Latour, *Le Langage des Fleurs*, 8th ed. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1862): 92–4. Poetry was so central to this book that when Karl Mächler translated Latour's flower language into German in 1820, he (very) freely translated poems like Bernis's, added new ones 'where it seemed appropriate' (*wo es mir passend schien*), and quoted the published German versions of classical texts. See Karl Mächler, *Die Blumensprache, oder Symbolik des Pflanzenreichs. Nach dem Französischen der Frau Charlotte de Latour* (Berlin: K.A. Stuhr, 1820): vol. 3: 220.

¹⁵ A distinction between 'naïve' and 'critical' reading stems largely from the work of Umberto Eco in *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979): see Introduction. A naïve reader in this work is one who is unable to perceive the 'mazelike structure' of an open text, whereas a critical reader will discover a textual strategy to navigate this maze. See also Steven Sallis, 'Naming the Rose: Readers and Codes in Umberto Eco's Novel', *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 19/2 (1986): 3–12. My use of the term here, however, bares a closer relation to Robert Pippin's idea of the naïve reader in his 2010 *New York Times* op-ed, 'In Defense of Naïve Reading', *Opinionator* (blog), *New York Times*, <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/in-defense-of-naive-reading/> (accessed 29 April 2020)). Pippin advocates for 'naïve' reading in response to what he sees as the obsessive theorization of literature in the academy and its meta-critical language borrowed from the social sciences. The consideration of historical and biographical contexts and the motivations and actions of characters come

ecological symbology of the music and poetry of these songs, I instead examine how the flowers act, form relationships, withhold feelings and communicate with the poetic speaker.¹⁶ This allows me to place flowers centre stage, and to explore their extroversive network of gendered, botanical, sentimental and poetic associations. It is at this level, I suggest, that Clara Schumann interacts with her flowers, weaving their distinctive mutability into her compositional style. I will show that through her piano accompaniments especially, she is able to reify their desires, protect their stubborn silences and contextualize their speech in relation to the poetic speaker.

Absence and Silence

In a painting by Schumann's contemporary Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann (1819–1881), a wounded Danish soldier lies injured in bed while a woman holds his hand and reads from a book (Fig. 2). The golden glint on his ring finger suggests that perhaps his caregiver is also his spouse, yet there is a palpable gulf between them. They do not look at one another; instead, she peers into her book while he gazes forlorn at the half-eaten bowl of soup and single plucked red rose on the bedside table. As with the red rose of Schumann's *Blumenbuch*, this rose could stand for any number of different thoughts, feelings or messages: the fragility of life, the futility of war, the loss of innocence, a wilted and faded love. Tellingly positioned atop an opened envelope, this particular rose functions as a substitute for an unspoken communication between the couple. The soldier stares at the rose searching for meaning, for some secret message enclosed in this tender floral gift, but finds nothing other than a reflection of what he already knows. His companion reveals nothing either to him or to the viewer; she remains as unknowable as the flower.

The rose of Jerichau-Baumann's painting reflects the popular nineteenth-century understanding of flowers as a means of communication between genders; one that leaves men grasping at possible meanings, and women able to conceal or defer their true intentions. The idea that men were not privy to the secret codes of flowers also made them a way for women to communicate with each other. Elisabeth A. Petrino, for example, has shown in her study of floral metaphors in the poetry of Frances Sargent Osgood and Emily Dickinson how nineteenth-century women writers were able to invoke flowers as a way of evading explicit reference to sexual behaviour. Both poets were well aware that flowers did not carry specific meanings, as the popular sentimental flower books might have us believe; rather, Petrino argues that flowers constituted a 'language of gesture that implied meaning through a series of codes rather than through overt statement'.¹⁷ The inherent irreducibility of flowers to specific meanings made them illusive and deniable mediators of private messages, serving variously to obfuscate and reveal women's true desires.¹⁸ The rose in Jerichau-Baumann's

here under the umbrella of 'naïve' reading. For a critique of Pippin see Kathleen Fitzpatrick, 'On the Impossibility of Naive Reading', <https://kfitz.info/on-the-impossibility-of-naive-reading/> (accessed 29 April 2020).

¹⁶ This approach has also been inspired by Rita Felski, "'Context Stinks!'", *New Literary History* 42/4 (2011): 573–91.

¹⁷ Elisabeth A. Petrino, "'Silent Eloquence': The Social Codification of Floral Metaphors in the Poems of Frances Sargent Osgood and Emily Dickinson", *Legacy* 15/2 (1998): 140.

¹⁸ Petrino, 'Silent Eloquence', 143.



Fig. 2 Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann, *A Wounded Danish Soldier* (1865), Statens Museum for Kunst, Denmark

painting similarly manages to gesture to some type of meaning while the posture of the woman depicted discloses little.

The plethora of sentimental flower books in the nineteenth century like Charlotte de Latour's *Le Langage des Fleurs* helped establish the notion that flowers could carry encoded messages. Seaton and Jack Goody, among others, trace the inspiration for Latour's language of flowers to an 1809 essay by the Austrian orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856) titled 'Sur le langage des fleurs'.¹⁹ Hammer-Purgstall describes the Turkish *selām*, an object language used between women within the harem using flowers, as well as other nearby objects such as fruit and perfumes.²⁰ Watkins notes that *selām*, as reported by Hammer-Purgstall, was the 'self-conscious product of human intervention'; in other words, it was a closed symbolic economy constructed for and used exclusively by the women of the harem.²¹ For Latour and many others in the nineteenth century, however, *selām* was just one example of a culture that had relearned a pre-existing language of flowers.²² They saw it as evidence of a universal flower

¹⁹ Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, 'Sur le langage des fleurs', in *Fundgruben des Orients* 6 vols, vol. 1 (Vienna: A. Schmid, 1809): 32–42. See also Seaton, *The Language of Flowers*, 61, and Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 234.

²⁰ Hammer-Purgstall, 'Sur le langage des fleurs', 34. Seaton has pointed out that flowers in Hammer-Purgstall's account of the *selām* language did not directly signify concepts or emotions but functioned instead through rhyming. For example, a pear (*armoude*) would rhyme with the word hope (*omoude*). See Seaton, *The Language of Flowers*, 63.

²¹ Watkins, *Musical Vitalities*, 98.

²² Latour, *Le Langage des Fleurs*, 2–3.

language, leading many to ascribe moral and religious meanings to the study of flowers. So, while Latour takes up the idea of a one-to-one language of flowers from Hammer-Purgstall in her own *Langage*, the imagined pre-historic origins of the language prevent her from seeing her own language of flowers as a 'self-conscious intervention'. Sometimes Latour's flowers even speak directly to women, issuing from nature or some otherworldly source. At other times they are portrayed as speaking to each other.

Scholars are quick to point out the inconsistencies and the futility of the all-too-easy 'translations' in this literature. Watkins is unequivocal about language of flowers volumes, seeing their singular definitions as a 'violation' of the Romantic value system by 'converting symbol into sign, metaphor into allegory'.²³ Such pointed dismissals stem in part from the fact that many people today might still harbour the belief that there are legible and culturally inherited meanings behind flowers of which they are ignorant. Nineteenth-century flower books seem to bolster this belief, offering a comprehensible structure to approach and decode floral significances. But even within this literature, there is little congruence between volumes on the specific meanings of flowers. As Goody writes, 'the structure is absent, but', he continues, 'its felt absence is possibly the result of the appearance of these constructed codes which purport to reveal the hidden "truth" that lies behind surface diversities'.²⁴ That is, the evocative and symbolically malleable nature of the flower stems in part from the appearance of or belief in legible meanings. The easy allegories of the popular language of flowers volumes were perhaps not so much a violation of Romanticism but rather its crucial antithesis.

Emanuel Geibel's 'Die stille Lotosblume' ('The silent lotus flower'), first published in 1840 and set by Clara Schumann in 1844, subtly evokes this dialectic of Romantic and sentimental floral poetics in the opening stanza. Glittering, glowing, yet silent, the lotus flower seems laden with Romantic symbolic potential. It is pictured in motion, just as Heinrich's first encounter with the blue flower of his dream caused the flower to move (*bewegen*) and mutate (*verändern*).²⁵ Yet by referring to the white colour of its petals, Geibel indirectly evokes the sentimental side of floral symbology. Most sentimental flower books included not only indices of flower meanings, but also tables of colour significance; a red rose had a different meaning than a white rose, with white often being associated with virginity. Thus, Geibel's poem begins by constructing the lotus flower as a potentially communicative means. Its silence only confirms its reluctance to speak, and the impossibility of communication.

Emanuel Geibel, 'Die stille Lotosblume'²⁶

Die stille Lotosblume
Steigt aus dem blauen See,
Die Blätter flimmern und blitzen,
Der Kelch ist weiß wie Schnee.

The silent lotus flower
Rises out of the blue lake,
Its leaves glitter and glow,
Its cup is as white as snow.

²³ Watkins, *Musical Vitalities*, 99.

²⁴ Goody, *The Culture of Flowers*, 253.

²⁵ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen: Ein Roman*, ed. Wolfgang Frühwald (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2008): 11.

²⁶ Translation © Richard Stokes, author of *The Book of Lieder*, published by Faber, provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder (www.oxfordlieder.co.uk).

Da gießt der Mond vom Himmel
 All seinen gold'nen Schein,
 Gießt alle seine Strahlen
 In ihren Schoß hinein.

Im Wasser um die Blume
 Kreiset ein weißer Schwan,
 Er singt so süß, so leise
 Und schaut die Blume an.

Er singt so süß, so leise
 Und will im Singen vergehn.
 O Blume, weiße Blume,
 Kannst du das Lied verstehn?

The moon then pours from heaven
 All its golden light,
 Pours all its rays
 Into the lotus flower's bosom.

In the water, round the flower,
 A white swan circles,
 It sings so sweetly, so quietly,
 And gazes on the flower.

It sings so sweetly, so quietly,
 And wishes to die as it sings.
 O flower, white flower,
 Can you fathom the song?

The introduction of the moon in the second stanza, which 'pour[s] its rays into the lotus flower's bosom' (*Gießt alle seine Strahlen / In ihren Schoß hinein*), consequently genders the flower as female. Given that the word 'Schoß' can also mean 'womb', Geibel introduces a deferred heterosexual sexual desire between a penetrating moon and sexualized lotus flower. In this moment, symbol transforms into metaphor; the flower becomes woman, and a male poetic persona emerges as her yearning lover. A swan then enters as another projection of male desire, gently troubling the serene stillness of the scene. This is even felt on the stress at the beginning of the second line of the third stanza on the word *Kreiset*, which sends a ripple through the gentle iambic rhythm of the poem. Into the silent void, the swan gently begins to sing in a highly alliterative line – *er singt so süß so leise* – that places the swan's secret song into the lisping mouth of the poet. Yet the flower remains silent: unknowable to the male poet, the male moon and the male swan. As in Jerichau-Baumann's painting, the flower's abundant potential for meaning promises to mediate the gulf between man and woman. But its stubborn silence stops the flower from revealing its secret messages. Finally, the poet asks the flower directly if it can comprehend the swan's song and his unrequited love: *Kannst du das Lied verstehn?* This final question for the lotus flower switches the direction of communication issuing now from poetic persona towards the flower.

The most striking aspect of Clara Schumann's setting of Geibel's poem is the quiet magic of her harmonic writing. The scene is set from the beginning with an opening cadential gesture that pauses on a hanging dominant seventh (see Ex. 1). Beginning as if *in media res*, this half cadence feels like entering a conversation in the middle of someone else's story. Like Geibel's lotus flower, Schumann's opening cadence hints at the potential for communication without saying anything. This feeling is extended throughout the first strophe, in which each phrase ends on the dominant seventh of A-flat. When we do hear the expected tonic, it is always at the beginning of a new stanza (bars 3, 11 and 22), sounding more like a renewed search for clarity than a structural harmonic resolution. At other times (bars 6–7 and 14–15) the dominant seventh (E-flat) mutates into its parallel minor (E-flat minor), intimating the quiet mystery of the lotus flower. Such moments remind us of the mutability of the flower, able to transform itself to something totally opposite just when we think we have figured it out.

It is not until the second half of the song that the harmonic potential of the minor dominant is fully realized. Beginning at bar 26 when the swan begins to sing to the mute flower, the shift to E-flat minor triggers a flat-wise descending progression all

Sehr getragen.

Die stil - le Lotos - blu - me steigt aus dem blauen See, die
Blät - ter flimmen und bli - tzen, der Kelch ist weiß wie Schnee. Da gießt der Mond vom
Him - mel all' sei-nen gold'nen Schein, gießt al-le seine Strah - len in ih - ren Schoß hin
ein. Im Was - ser um die Blu - me

Ex. 1 Schumann, 'Die stille Lotosblume', op. 13 no. 1

the way to C-flat major. This motion bears a passing resemblance to the moment in Robert Schumann's 'Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen' from *Dichterliebe* where there is a harmonic shift from the tonic B-flat major to G major (I to \sharp VI) when the flowers begin to speak. Watkins describes this moment as an 'enharmonic gateway to another world': a dream-like world where men are actually able to hear the flowers speak.²⁷

²⁷ Watkins, *Musical Vitalities*, 92.

24 *p* krei - sest ein weißer Schwan, er singt so süß, so lei - se und schaut die Blu - me an. *pp* Er

30 *pp* singt so süß, so lei - se und will im Singen vergehn.

35 *Innig.* O Blu - me, weiße Blu - me, kannst du das Lied ver - stehn? o Blu - me, weiße

41 *rit.* Blu - me, kannst du das Lied ver stehn? *rit.* *pp*

Ex. 1.1 Schumann, 'An einem lichten Morgen', Op. 23 No. 2, bars 8–20.

Where Robert crosses the flat–sharp threshold to create this gateway, the analogous passage in Clara's song instead sinks further into the flat realm (I to VI), as if falling into an ever-deeper slumber. This harmonic progression similarly attempts to induce a harmonic gateway to a dream-like world, in the hope the flower might answer the swan, but it yields no flower speech. The song lingers on C-flat for the beginning of the final stanza, as the singer, now in hushed tones, repeats the alliterative singing of the swan. At this moment, the piano separates itself from the melodic outline of the

vocal line, bisecting the last stanza with a small interlude. In this last attempt to commune with the flower, the swan's song is pushed further into a musically symbolic space, one without words. Returning on an extended dominant pedal in the tonic (bar 36), the singer re-joins the song with his question for the flower. But it is answered only by a repeat of the song's opening fragmented half cadence: the poet's question remains unanswered.

This harmonically unresolved ending to this song has provided ripe interpretative material for musicologists. Janina Klassen, for one, understands this half cadence as 'a soft, unsettling echo of an impossible communication of love'.²⁸ Janet Schmalfeldt, on the other hand, hears this moment as an expression of Geibel's half-told story, concluding that 'we will never know whether the lotus blossom succumbs to the swan or remains indifferent to him'.²⁹ While both acknowledge a sense of absence at this moment, I argue that this ending is an extension of the 'felt absence' expressed throughout Schumann's setting. Schumann achieves this through a careful balancing act between the presence of the male speaker and female flower, where one neither subsumes nor communes with the other. This equilibrium extends not only to the harmonic major-minor turns, but even to the alternation between triplets and duplets in the accompaniment. Such elusive dialectics, whether discursive, gendered, harmonic or rhythmic, are at the heart of the flower's construction as a communicative means in the nineteenth century and its 'felt absence'. Out of these dialectics, Schumann's lotus flower becomes not so much a passive or unaware recipient of the moon's, swan's or poet's attention; rather, its silence is recalcitrant. She keeps the flower's secrets, while gesturing ever towards the (im)possibility of meaning.

Speech and Agency

In 1853, around a decade after the composition of Op. 13, Schumann once again turned to lieder composition, producing the Op. 23 lieder collection based on poetry from Hermann Rollett's novel *Jucunde* (Leipzig, 1853) as well as a stand-alone setting of Goethe's 'Das Veilchen'.³⁰ These songs, many of which centre around floral imagery, would be her last essays in the genre despite living another 43 years. In June 1853, however, Clara Schumann was enjoying a renewed zest for composition. Nancy Reich attributes this to having her own room out of earshot of Robert in their new dwellings on Bilker Straße in Düsseldorf, where they lived from September 1852.³¹ Even though it was becoming harder to ignore Robert's worsening mental illness, this period of composition appears to have been a happy respite. On 22 June she wrote in her diary:

Today I set the sixth song by Rollett, and thus I have collected a volume of songs, which give me pleasure, and have given me many happy hours ... There is nothing

²⁸ 'ein leiser, verstörender Nachklang der unmöglichen Liebeskommunikation'; Klassen, *Musik und Öffentlichkeit*, 226.

²⁹ Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 244.

³⁰ Hermann Rollett, *Jucunde* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1853).

³¹ Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, rev. ed. (London: Cornell University Press, 2001): 112. Reich notes, too, that during this same short period in 1853, Clara Schumann also completed a set of variations on a theme by Robert Schumann (Op. 20), the Three Romances for piano (Op. 21) and the Three Romances for violin and piano (Op. 22).

which surpasses the joy of creation, if only because through it one wins hours of self-forgetfulness, when one lives in a world of sound.³²

Hermann Rollett was an unusual choice of poet for Clara Schumann, not least because the writing of this now-obscure Austrian author and political exile is by no means considered among the best of the period.³³ It seems, however, that Robert had read and enjoyed *Jucunde* at the beginning of 1853, commenting in his own diary that the poems were 'very musical'.³⁴ Reich suspects that this may have inspired Clara to take up the task of setting them to music.³⁵ In the end she chose to set six poems from the first part of Rollett's three-part novel, and later published them as her Op. 23. In these settings, Schumann engages not only with the conflation of flowers with women's bodies, but also the flowers' agential potential in song.

For my purposes here, and because this novel is neither well-known nor readily available, it is worth briefly outlining the plot of this section. We encounter the young poet Brunold as he makes his way through the forest towards a nearby mountain. On his way he happens to pass near the cottage of his recently widowed cousin Jucunde, who he finds singing to herself with a harp. This is a phantasmagorical landscape, where, among the ultra-Romantic tropes of trees, birds, brooks, mountains and flowers, strange and upsetting things occur.³⁶ As Brunold continues his walk through the forest, he passes an old hut inhabited by the village fiddler. Brunold finds him obsessively playing over the body of his dying daughter, Magdalena, who has been jilted by a villainous nobleman. He rushes back to Jucunde to fetch a doctor for Magdalena, but he arrives too late. Magdalena dies as her father continues to play his dissonant, psychotic music. As they solemnly return to Jucunde's cottage, she recounts her own sad story of being orphaned and forced to marry her foster father at a young age. It quickly becomes apparent that she now seeks a new husband, ideally in Brunold. While he seems to reject her at first, by the end of the novel they finally unite as a couple.

Brunold first encounters Jucunde sonically, as the 'waves of sound' (*Tonwellen*) of her song, 'An einem lichten Morgen', drift through the forest.³⁷ This song, set as the second in Schumann's Op. 23 collection, bears some similarities to 'Die stille Lotosblume' in its floral imagery and projection of sexual desire. In Rollett's poem, a yearning sun describes its wish to consummate his love with a silent and passive flower. But where Geibel concluded his poem with a question for the flower, waiting eternally in vain for an answer, Rollett's sun speaks in the

³² Bertold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life*, 2 vols, vol. 2, trans. Grace E. Hadow (London: Macmillan, 1913): 37.

³³ Susan Youens has recently delved into the revolutionary poetics of Rollett's *Jucunde* and Schumann's setting of 'Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort', Op. 23, No. 3. See Susan Youens, 'Disillusionment and Patriotism: Clara and Robert Schumann in the Wake of the 1848–1849 Revolutions', in *Clara Schumann Studies*, ed. Joe Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021): 32–56.

³⁴ Robert Schumann, *Tagebücher: Pt. 3, Haushaltbücher (1837–1856)*, 2 vols, vol. 2, ed. Gerd Nauhaus (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1982): 802.

³⁵ Reich, *Clara Schumann*, 239.

³⁶ Benedict Taylor has explored in depth the Romantic phantasmagoria of Eichendorff's prose and poetry, and the 'danger or deception' behind the 'beautiful allure of Romantic visions'. See Benedict Taylor, 'Absent Subjects and Empty Centers: Eichendorff's Romantic Phantasmagoria and Schumann's Liederkreis, Op. 39' *19th-Century Music* 40/3 (2017): 201–22.

³⁷ Rollett, *Jucunde*, 13.

imperative. The sun does not seek an answer from the flower, instead dominating 14 of the poem's 16 lines with its voice. Rollett further emphasized the passivity of the flower through euphemistic language that aligns the flower with the female sexual anatomy. This is especially apparent in the second stanza, in which the sun asks the flower to 'open confidently your little blossom heart [*Blütenkammerlein*] and let my burning love-beams into your holy shrine'. In this patriarchal fantasy, the female flower's passivity to the sun is a sexual passivity.

Rollett, 'An einem lichten Morgen'³⁸

An einem lichten Morgen,
Da klingt es hell im Tal:
Wach' auf, du liebe Blume,
Ich bin der Sonnenstrahl!

Erschließe mit Vertrauen
Dein Blütenkammerlein
Und laß die heiße Liebe
In's Heiligtum hinein.

Ich will ja nichts verlangen
Als liegen dir im Schoß
Und deine Blüte küssen,
Eh' sie verwelkt im Moos.

Ich will ja nichts begehren
Als ruh'n an deiner Brust
Und dich dafür verklären
Mit sonnenheller Lust.

On a clear morning
The valley resounds brightly:
Wake up, dear flower,
I am the ray of the sun!

Trust me, and open up
Your little flower chamber
And let burning love
Penetrate your sanctuary.

After all, I only wish
To lie on your bosom
And kiss your blossoms,
Before they wither in the moss.

After all, I only desire
To rest on your bosom
And transfigure you
With sun-bright joy.

Floral references to sexual organs and sexuality became especially prevalent in the nineteenth century due in part to the widespread reception of the eighteenth-century Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778). He is famous for popularizing the Latinized taxonomy of plants that is still used today. Central to his work is the observation that flowers have a sexual function, understood through analogy to social-sexual human relations. In his botanical writings, plants had courtships, husbands and wives, even penises and vaginas. As Amy M. King points out, 'the Linnaeus system articulated a plant morphology that was not unlike human anatomy and physiology, creating a system of representation that went a long way toward conflating the human and the vegetative, and breaking down the notion that the relationship between humans and plants was purely poetic'.³⁹ The result of this was the reification of long-held associations of flowers with women and sex.⁴⁰

³⁸ Translation © Richard Stokes, author of *The Book of Lieder*, published by Faber, provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder (www.oxfordlieder.co.uk).

³⁹ Amy M. King, *Bloom: The Botanical Vernacular in the English Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 12.

⁴⁰ Art historian Alison Syme notes that the conflation of the vegetable and human, specifically the vegetable and genital, predates Linnaean botany, citing the etymology of orchid from the Greek *orchis* (testicle), and vanilla from the Latin *vagina*. We might also add to this the verb 'to deflower' (in German *deflorieren*) from the Latin *deflorare* as a term for taking a

8 An ei - nem lich - ten Mor - - gen, da

11 klingt es hell im Tal:

14 wach' auf, du lie - be

17 Blu - - me, ich bin der Son - - nen - strahl!

Ex. 2 Schumann, 'An einem lichten Morgen', Op. 23 No. 2, bars 8–20.

This conflation of flowers and women became ingrained in the imaginations of nineteenth-century Europeans, as demonstrated in the poetry of Geibel, Rollett and other Romantics.⁴¹

woman's virginity. Syme's work shows how prevalent the flower became in nineteenth-century visual culture, particularly in reference to queer sexualities and women's bodies. See Alison Syme, *A Touch of Blossom: John Singer Sargent and the Queer Flora of Fin-de-Siècle Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 26.

⁴¹ Robert Schumann's seldom-discussed 1851 oratorio *Der Rose Pilgerfahrt* (Pilgrimage of the Rose), Op. 112, provides an example of his own interest in flowers, and in particular their conflation with women. This rhymed fairy-tale by Moritz Horn tells the story of a rose who magically becomes a human woman, marries a forester, and has a child. Having finally experienced the happiness of love and motherhood, she gives her rose to her daughter, and dies.

In 'An einem lichten Morgen' the material conflation of the vegetative and human serves literally to objectify women as silent, passive and decorative flowers. But Schumann's approach to this poem subtly challenges the botanical conflation of flower and female body in male-authored literature and criticism. She sets the text to an uncomplicated melody, here with most syllables assigned to a crotchet. In the context of the novel, the singing persona is Jucunde, who, in Schumann's setting, innocently ventriloquizes the male sun's lust for the flower. The luscious piano arpeggios that swell and break around the singer's innocent melody can also be heard as the sound of Jucunde's harp and its *Tonwellen* described in the novel. Yet the simmering passion of this accompaniment, which threatens at times even to overpower the voice, runs contrary to Rollett's floral and sexual fantasy of Jucunde's passivity. Indeed, this accompaniment is anything but passive.

Despite the technical disparity between the voice and piano parts, they often act in parallel with each other. In the passage shown in [Example 2](#), one can observe how the peaks of the piano's arpeggios meet the same pitches in the voice (bars 8–12), leading to a piano interlude that foreshadows the consequent vocal phrase (bars 13–16). Together the voice and accompaniment tell two sides of the same story, in which the piano reveals the inner desires of the singing persona. In Schumann's rendering of the song, the flower is no longer the passive recipient of the sun's (and Rollett's) lustful glances. With the undulating arpeggiations of her piano accompaniment, Schumann wrests the sexualized flower from Rollett's control, turning them into a sonic force that has the potential to even overwhelm the simple melody that carries Rollett's text. Schumann thereby grants a form of agency to the flower in her accompaniment by reifying the interpellation of Jucunde as the flower and actualizing her sexual reciprocity. As in 'Die stille Lotosblume', the flower's silence becomes a musical presence: heard yet unspoken.

Flowers were not always silent, however. They could also break their silences to speak directly to their observers, underscoring another aspect of the nineteenth-century anthropomorphization. This is exactly what happens in 'Was weinst du, Blümlein', which opens the Op. 23 lieder collection. In this poem a little flower quickly corrects the poetic speaker who asks why it is weeping, saying that its tears are actually the tears of joy (*Freudenträne*). The same staged mishearing is repeated in the next two stanzas, as the speaker addresses the brooks and the red sky, which, in speaking, adopt a symbolic trait most commonly associated with flowers. Where Schumann in 'An einem lichten Morgen' revealed the subtle agency of a silent flower, here the flower declares its own presence. Schumann's setting shows, however, that direct flower speech can also conceal or reveal meanings depending on the gender of the listener.

Rollett, 'Was weinst du, Blümlein'⁴²

Was weinst du, Blümlein, im Morgenschein?	Why are you weeping, little flower?
Das Blümlein lachte: Was fällt dir ein!	The little flower laughed: 'What do you mean!
Ich bin ja fröhlich, ich weine nicht –	I am happy, I do not weep –
Die Freudenträne durch's Aug' mir bricht.	It's tears of joy that well in my eyes'.

⁴² Translation © Richard Stokes, author of *The Book of Lieder*, published by Faber, provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder (www.oxfordlieder.co.uk). The format of the stanzas here reflects the strophes of Schumann's setting. In Rollett's original the first two lines were presented as a single stanza: 'Was weinst du, Blümlein, / im Morgenschein? / Das Blümlein lachte: / Was fällt dir ein! //'. The stanza in italics was not included in Schumann's final version of the song and has been copied from Rollett's original (see Rollett, 18–20) and translated by the author.

<p><i>Ich frug das Bächlein: was rinnst du dahin Wie ein Thränenstrom durch's Wiesengrün? Da klang es heraus aus der Wellenbrust: Mein Strömen ist Freude, ist Brausen der Luft!</i></p>	<p><i>I asked the little brook: why do you flow through the green meadows like a flood of tears? From the sound of the cresting waves, it replied: My streams are the joys and roars of passion!</i></p>
<p>Du Morgenhimmel, bist blutig rot, Als läge deine Sonne im Meere tot? Da lacht der Himmel und ruft mich an: Ich streue ja Rosen auf ihre Bahn!</p>	<p>O morning sky, you are blood red, As though your sun lay dead in the sea. Then heaven laughed and called out to me: 'I spread roses on its path!'</p>
<p>Und strahlend flammte die Sonn' hervor, Die Blumen blühten freudig empor. Des Baches Wellen jauchzten auf, Und die Sonne lachte freundlich darauf.</p>	<p>And with blazing beams the sun arose, Flowers bloomed joyously upwards. The waves of the brooklet rejoiced, And the sun broke out in happy laughter.</p>

Typically, flower speech, as it appears in the Romantic writings of Novalis, Hoffmann and Heine, can only be heard by men and only in the realm of dreams and hallucinations. Watkins demonstrates this well in her discussion of Robert Schumann's 'Am leuchenden Sommermorgen', mentioned above. Within Watkins's Kittlerian perspective, centred on the poetic nexus of Woman/Nature/Love, to have flowers speak in the waking reality of their own worlds would transgress their rarefied symbolic status, becoming precariously akin to the legible phrases proffered by sentimental flower books. If a flower, as part of the transcendental Nature/Woman/Love nexus, is to be a 'language channel' of poetic inspiration and creativity, then it has to be 'dissociated from its usage by actual women and transposed into a mystical realm'.⁴³ The Romantic flower is a mediator of the ineffable, rather than a sentimental and material intermediary of human-to-human communication. Robert's 'enharmonic gateway', which beckons the speech of the flower, evinces this dissociation.

Clara Schumann's setting of 'Was weinst du, Blümlein' differs from this transcendent theorization of flower speech in one fundamental way: in Rollett's novel the 'singer' of the text is Jucunde, as in 'An einem lichten Morgen', meaning the flower speaks to a woman and not a man. The dissociation of material Woman/Nature/Love from actual women and flower noted by Watkins (via Kittler) is therefore not so clear cut in this text. Likewise, Clara Schumann makes no harmonic distinction between the poetic speaker and the flower, keeping the song largely within the diatonic bounds of A major. Yet this does not mean that Schumann is oblivious to the symbolic potential of flower speech; rather, her setting suggests a different way of approaching the voices of flowers, particularly in its subtle harmonic turns.

At the beginning of the second strophe, on the mention of the 'blood red sky', there is an unexpected turn to D minor where in the first strophe there was a D major sonority (see Ex. 3). In addition to being reminiscent of the major–minor juxtapositions in 'Die stille Lotosblume', this turn reminds us that, as in Rollett's novel, there is a more sinister side to this seemingly innocent scene. Such moments also bear a resemblance to the reversals of mood (often termed *Stimmungsbrücke* or *Stimmungsbrechung*) in Robert Schumann's settings of Heine.⁴⁴ Benjamin Binder,

⁴³ Watkins, *Musical Vitalities*, 96.

⁴⁴ See V. Kofi Agawu, 'Structural "Highpoints" in Schumann's "Dichterliebe"', *Music Analysis* 3/2 (1984): 159–80.

24 *ritard.*
 Du Mor-gen-himmel, bist blu-tig rot, als lä-ge dei-ne Son-ne im Mee-re tod? Da

Ex. 3 Schumann, 'Was weinst du, Blümlein', Op. 23 No. 1, bars 24–32.

for example, has interpreted the 'swapping' of major and minor in Robert's 'Dein Angesicht' as a way the composer carefully tempers the *Stimmungsbrücke* of this song. Showing in the couple's letters how much Clara distained Robert's use of ironic remarks to temper his true feelings, Binder hears the sudden modal change as capturing 'Robert's desire to both temper his melancholy and maintain a positive demeanour'.⁴⁵ Perhaps because of her distaste for irony, Clara's modal juxtapositions are not so easily traced to such *Stimmungsbrücke*. Melinda Boyd, in her discussion of Clara's 'Er ist gekommen', interprets its shifts from F minor to A-flat major as a way of 'differentiat[ing] between male fantasy and female delusion in the text'.⁴⁶ That is, rather than using major–minor turns to capture a sudden change in mood, Clara is more likely to employ the technique to reflect simultaneous or contrasting subject positions.

In 'Was weinst du, Blümlein' the sudden turn to D minor in bar 27 triggers a six-bar passage in the tonic minor (A minor) as the poet expresses concern for the red sun, remarking that it looks as if it 'lay dead in the sea'. This minor-mode passage makes the sky's response back in the tonic major seem all the more joyous as it explains that the red is not blood but the roses that it spreads along its path. Schumann's major–minor juxtaposition emulates the mutability and emotional dialectics of Romantic symbols in Rollett's poem and novel, where sounds of laughter can easily be heard as weeping. This becomes even more apparent when one adds in the missing stanzas that did not make the final cut (indicated in italics above). *Figure 3* shows the omitted strophe, dramatically and purposefully crossed out for unknown reasons.⁴⁷ Like the second strophe in the final published song, there is also a modal turn from major to minor, yet it occurs at a later moment. In *Example 4* I have placed the missing strophe back (4b) into the song, indicating where in the stanza Schumann switches to the minor mode. This figure highlights how the minor mode creeps further towards the opening of each strophe, lingering longer in what is now the third strophe

⁴⁵ Benjamin Binder, 'Robert, Clara and the Transformation of Poetic Irony in Schumann's Lieder: The Case of "Dein Angesicht"', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 10/1 (2013): 21.

⁴⁶ Melinda Boyd, 'Gendered Voices: The "Liebesfrühling" Lieder of Robert and Clara Schumann', *19th-Century Music* 23/2 (1999): 151.

⁴⁷ James Deaville has suggested that the omission was likely an issue of quality control for Rollett's mediocre verse. See James Deaville, 'A Multitude of Voices: The Lied at Mid-Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, ed. James Parsons (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 157.

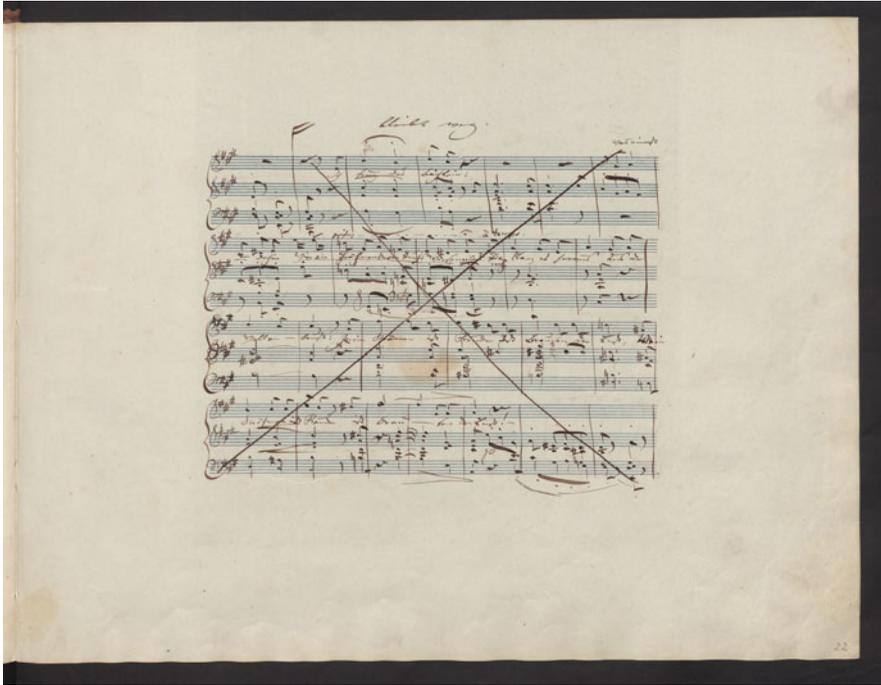


Fig. 3 Crossed out strophe of 'Was weinst du, Blümlein' in the autograph.⁴⁸

(4c). Schumann positions these modal turns against the grain of the poetry, defying the formulaic pattern of mishearing in the poem and anticipating a thought that maybe *this* time round the poetic persona will not mishear the sorrows of nature.

These major–minor turns thus do more than represent the essential mutability of flowers: they serve to blend the subject position of the poetic speaker and the symbolic traits of the flowers, plus other symbols that adopt their traits. Rollett's *Jucunde* is privy to the voices of flowers, and in Clara Schumann's setting, sympathizes with them. In this way, the flower of this song has more in common with the sentimental discourse of flowers, where women are considered to be uniquely able to understand the 'language of flowers' to which men are deaf. Indeed, Schumann captures Brunold's inability to commune with the flowers in the fourth song, 'Auf einem grünen Hügel'. This song has much in common with 'Was weinst du, Blümlein' with its simple accompaniment, strophic setting and uncomplicated melody. Unlike the happy flower of the first song, however, its silent red rose and the blue flowers on the little green hill – possibly a burial mound – invoke a tearful response.⁴⁹ They can reflect back only what Brunold projects onto them.

⁴⁸ '23 Lieder; V, pf', Mus.ms.autogr. Schumann, K. 5, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv: 22r [45]. This autograph is public domain and available in digitized form at [http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001CEF000000000](http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001CEF00000000).

⁴⁹ Birgit Lodes has pointed to the associations of "Hügel" with burial mounds "(Stein-)Hügel" in her reexamination of the dedication for Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*. See Birgit

The image displays three staves of a musical score for the song 'Was weinst du, Blümlein'. Each staff is labeled with a letter (a, b, c) and a bar range. Above each staff, boxes indicate the key signature: Major for (a) and (c), and Minor for (b). The score includes vocal lines with German lyrics and piano accompaniment. Performance markings such as 'Allegretto', 'a tempo', 'ritard', 'p', and 'mf' are present. The lyrics for (a) are: 'Was weinst du, Blümlein, an Mor-gen schienst? Das Blümlein lach-te was fällt dir ein, Ich bin ja fröhlich, ich'. The lyrics for (b) are: 'Ich frag' das Blümlein: Was rindest du da-bin? Wie ein Trü-ner-strom durch's Wie-sen-grün? Du klang es her-aus aus der'. The lyrics for (c) are: 'Du Mor-gen-himmel, bist bliu-tig rot, als li-ge dei-ne Son-ne in Meer-re todt? Du lacht der Himmel und'.

Ex. 4 Major–minor turns in ‘Was weinst du, Blümlein’ with omitted strophe

Accordingly, there are no glimpses here of the dialectical/modal turns we saw in the first song; Schumann sets the entire song firmly in the minor mode. Taking into account the gender of the characters assigned to the poems of Op. 23, the modal turns of ‘Was weinst du, Blümlein’ comes to represent a feminine perspective on the mutability of flowers not afforded to the male Brunold.

Schumann employs the piano, her own instrument, as a means not only to perform a feminine perspective on floral poetics in ‘An einem lichten Morgen’ and ‘Was weinst du, Blümlein’, but also to animate the emergent agencies of flowers and female subjects beyond their construction in male-authored texts. This is not without precedent in her lieder. For instance, many critics have noted the independence of the piano accompaniment in her song ‘Liebst du um Schönheit’ from the Rückert lieder collection co-authored with Robert.⁵⁰ Boyd sees the accompaniment of this song as a way that Clara Schumann makes ‘explicit’ the ‘implicit’ female

Lodes, ‘Zur musikalischen Passgenauigkeit von Beethovens Kompositionen mit Widmungen an Adelige: An die ferne Geliebte op. 98 in neuer Deutung’, in *Widmungen bei Haydn und Beethoven: Personen – Strategien – Praktiken*, ed. Bernhard R. Appel (Bonn: Verlag Beethoven-Haus, 2015): 192.

⁵⁰ While not dealing directly with the issue of gender construction or agency in this song, Susan Wollenberg draws attention to the ‘ambivalent modality’ of the accompaniment, adding that it ‘could be seen as conveying the complex mixture of uncertainty and assurance that characterizes the series of poetic utterances’. See Susan Wollenberg, ‘Clara Schumann’s “Liebst du um Schönheit” and the Integrity of a Composer’s Vision’ in *Women and the Nineteenth-Century Lied*, ed. Aisling Kenny and Susan Wollenberg (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015): 137.

gender of the poem's speaker. She takes issue with Rufus Hallmark's assessment of the speaker's gender in this poem, which she believes is largely based on the gender of the song's composer. She argues that the poem's themes of deep, spiritual love over fleeting vanities are apposite to either gender. For Boyd, it is only towards the end of the poem, and its ideals of 'pure, reciprocal love' that an implied female speaker emerges. This is emphasized by Schumann in a 'harmonic acceleration' towards the words 'dich liebe ich immerdar' ('I will love you forever'), that also breaks away from the gentle rollicking accompaniment of the song.⁵¹ As Hallmark reveals, even in its own time, critics noted the independence of the accompaniment in her song 'Liebst du um Schönheit'. A review in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1842 complains that 'the accompaniment becomes more important than the simple melody', understanding it as an embodiment of a 'sympathetic soul who is moved by the thoughts the voice expresses'.⁵² Building on this observation, Hallmark understands the accompaniment of this song as the persona of the male beloved addressed by the female speaker/singer.⁵³

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) provides a useful vocabulary to conceptualize how Schumann's accompaniments 'animate' alternative perspectives in relation to the poetic speaker. ANT's concept of 'agency', in particular, characterizes well the result of this animation, where the flower takes on a musical presence or force not necessarily indicated by the text alone.⁵⁴ Such terms come with ANTs characteristically slippery ontology, which blurs the social and disciplinary boundaries between subject and object. While Bruno Latour's work centres around social science methodologies, he has also noted the ways that novelists in particular are able to 'mix up' the traits typically ascribed to subjects (and subjectivity) and objects (and objectivity).⁵⁵

This trait exchange is apposite to the nineteenth-century representation of flowers, in which not only are flowers anthropomorphized as women, but women are objectified as flowers. As I have shown especially in the first two songs of Op. 23, Schumann responds sympathetically to this trait exchange, allowing her to animate what seemed at first to be an unremarkable stock symbol of Romantic poetry. The symbolic conflation of women and flowers becomes through her hands and her instrument, a material and psychic conflation. To that end, Schumann's settings defy Kittler's transcendental dissociation of Women from women, Nature from flower, discussed by Watkins. Where Robert engaged with opposing discourses of flowers, Clara Schumann addresses flowers' material and symbolic ties to women.

⁵¹ Boyd, 'Gendered Voices', 151–3.

⁵² 'Robert Schumanns Gesangskompositionen', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 44/3 (19 Jan. 1842): 61–62. Quoted in Rufus Hallmark, 'The Rückert Lieder of Robert and Clara Schumann', in *Of Poetry and Song: Approaches to the Nineteenth-Century Lied*, ed. Jürgen Thym (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010): 353.

⁵³ Hallmark, 'Rückert Lieder', 353.

⁵⁴ To say that, for example, the flower of 'An einem lichten Morgen' has agency, does not mean that it acts like an autonomous human subject; rather, it more simply means that we recognize some form of action in this flower within its music-poetic context. As Benjamin Piekut points out, ANT 'puts forward a weak claim about agency'. Benjamin Piekut, 'Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques', *Twentieth-Century Music* 11/2 (2014): 196.

⁵⁵ Bruno Latour, 'Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene', *New Literary History* 45/1 (2014): 8.

Speakers and Authors

My final case study, 'Das Veilchen', also features the major–minor juxtapositions that have come to typify Schumann's engagement with the mutability of flowers. Like 'Was weinst du, Blümlein', this song begins in an easy, *volkstümlich* style and without an introduction. We immediately learn that this innocent little violet stands in the meadow unnoticed and with a bowed head. On the word *unbekannt*, the harmony gently turns from F major to F minor, adding a tinge of pity to the otherwise cheerful introduction of the violet, and foreshadowing its encounter with the beloved shepherdess. Schumann embraces the minor mode completely in the setting of the second stanza, as the poet reveals the inner thoughts of the violet who longs to be noticed by the shepherdess. Turning back to F major for the final stanza, there is one last momentary twist to F minor, as the shepherdess fails to see the poor violet. This time the minor twist reminds us that the violet's longing to be noticed, to be more than *unbekannt*, is hopeless. Yet the violet still rejoices because it is at least through *her* foot that it perishes.

Goethe, 'Das Veilchen'⁵⁶

Ein Veilchen auf der Wiese stand,
Gebückt in sich und unbekannt;
Es war ein herzigs Veilchen.
Da kam ein' junge Schäferin
Mit leichtem Schritt und muntrem Sinn
Daher, daher,
Die Wiese her, und sang.

A violet was growing in the meadow,
Unnoticed and with bowed head;
It was a dear sweet violet.
Along came a young shepherdess,
Light of step and happy of heart,
Along, along
Through the meadow, and sang.

Ach! denkt das Veilchen, wär ich nur
Die schönste Blume der Natur,
Ach, nur ein kleines Weilchen,
Bis mich das Liebchen abgepflückt
Und an dem Busen matt gedrückt!
Ach nur, ach nur
Ein Viertelstündchen lang!

Ah! thinks the violet, if I were only
The loveliest flower in all Nature,
Ah! for only a little while,
Till my darling had picked me
And crushed me against her bosom!
Ah only, ah only
For a single quarter hour!

Ach! aber ach! das Mädchen kam
Und nicht in Acht das Veilchen nahm,
Ertrat das arme Veilchen.
Es sank und starb und freut' sich noch:
Und sterb' ich denn, so sterb' ich doch
Durch sie, durch sie,
Zu ihren Füßen doch.

But alas, alas, the girl drew near
And took no heed of the violet,
Trampled the poor violet.
It sank and died, yet still rejoiced:
And if I die, at least I die
Through her, through her
And at her feet.

(Das arme Veilchen
Es war ein herzigs Veilchen!)

(The poor violet!
It was a dear sweet violet!)

This song differs from Schumann's other flower-centric lieder for two main reasons. First, the flower's implied gender is not specifically female. Assuming a

⁵⁶ Translation © Richard Stokes, author of *The Book of Lieder*, published by Faber, provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder (www.oxfordlieder.co.uk). The last two lines in parentheses only appear in Mozart's setting.

heteronormative reading the violet's encounter with the shepherdess actually genders the flower instead as male. Second, and perhaps most strikingly, her setting bears a close resemblance to Mozart's setting (K476) of the same text.⁵⁷ This is clear right from the opening melody and accompaniment to the first stanza, which shares a nearly identical opening motif to the Mozart (see Ex. 5). L. Poundie Burstein brings these two elements together in his own reading of the song, noting that Schumann's setting portrays an active, rather than passive, maiden in contrast to Mozart's focus on the male character/violet.⁵⁸ I add to this reading by treating the flower as its own character, enabling a reading of both Mozart and Schumann that engages more closely with the gendered poetics of flowers.

Despite clear similarities between the settings, there has been some doubt about the extent to which Schumann knew of the Mozart. Berthold Litzmann, in his biography of Clara Schumann's life based on her letters and diaries, reports that she did not know of Mozart's setting, and was even embarrassed when Robert pointed out the similarities.⁵⁹ We have to take Litzmann's word for it, as not only does he not quote any diary passage here, but the diary itself is now lost and likely destroyed. The extant marriage diaries, however, tell a different story. In an entry from early February 1841, Clara Schumann reports with enthusiasm on hearing Mozart's setting of 'Das Veilchen' performed at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. She writes, 'despite its great simplicity the lied moved me – it made a singular impression on me'.⁶⁰ Though this was admittedly 12 years before she decided to put pen to paper on her own setting, Mozart's song was undoubtedly known to her.⁶¹

Mozart contrasts a major mode setting of the first stanza of Goethe's poem with the tonic minor at the beginning of the second stanza. Rather than a return to the tonic (G major), Mozart veers suddenly to E-flat major at the beginning of the final stanza as the poem describes the ultimate fate of the flower (see Ex. 6). The sudden nakedness of the voice from the line 'das Mädchen kam', echoed by piano accompaniment, transforms this passage into a quasi-recitative. In switching momentarily from a lyric to a narrative mode of expression, Mozart performs a separation of the speaker and the flower that was earlier implied through the contrast of the tonic major and tonic minor. The speaker becomes a sympathetic storyteller describing the death of the flower. Mozart's setting returns to G major with the final speech of the flower, collapsing the separation between the speaker and the flower. As the

⁵⁷ The poem was part of Goethe's first *Singspiel* libretto *Erwin und Elmire* (1773), set by a number of composers including Johann André (1775), Anna Amalia (1776) and Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1791). The poem also bears a close resemblance to the folksong 'Röschen auf der Heide' collected by Johann Gottfried Herder, and reimagined by Goethe in 1771 under the title 'Heidenröslein', in which a young man plucks the female flower.

⁵⁸ L. Poundie Burstein, 'Their Paths, Her Ways: Comparison of Text Settings by Clara Schumann and Other Composers', *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 6 (2002): 18–21.

⁵⁹ Litzmann, *Clara Schumann*, vol. 2: 37.

⁶⁰ Gerd Nauhaus, ed., *The Marriage Diaries of Robert & Clara Schumann: From Their Wedding Day through the Russia Trip*, trans. Peter Ostwald (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993): 57.

⁶¹ It is also worth noting that two German publishers had printed new editions of the song in 1852–53 that were advertised in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. It is possible these may have reminded her, perhaps even unconsciously, of Mozart's setting. See 'Intelligenzblatt', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 37/1 (2 Jul.1852): 11. 'Intelligenzblatt', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 39/25 (16 Dec. 1853): 272.

(a) Mozart, "Das Veilchen", K476, bars 7-14

Ein Veilchen auf der Wie-se stand, ge-bü-ckt in sich und un-be-kannt: es war ein her-zig's Veil-chen.

(b) Schumann, "Das Veilchen", bars 1-6

Ein Veil-chen auf der Wie-se stand ge-bü-ckt in sich und un-be-kannt; es war ein her-zig's Veil-chen,

Ex. 5 Comparison of Mozart's and Schumann's openings to 'Das Veilchen'

nur, ach- nur ein Vier-tel-stünd-chen lang. Ach, a-ber ach! das Mäd-chen kam und nicht in Acht das Veil-chen nahm, er-trat das ar-me Veil-chen. Es

Ex. 6 Mozart, 'Das Veilchen', K476, bars 39-51

vocal line ascends to a top G, the speaker/singer shares the terrible joy of the flower.⁶² Both flower and speaker are thus coded as male. Mozart adds the lines 'Das arme Veilchen! Es war ein herzigs Veilchen' ('The poor violet! It was a dear sweet violet') as if to confirm the speaker's embodied empathy with the flower.

⁶² John Arthur and Carl Schachter, 'Mozart's "Das Veilchen"', *The Musical Times* 130/1753 (1989): 154-5.

Table 1 Tonal plans of Mozart's and Schumann's 'Das Veilchen'

Poem	Mozart (G major)	Schumann (F major)
Ein Veilchen auf der Wiese stand, Gebückt in sich und unbekannt; Es war ein herzigs Veilchen.	I	I
Da kam ein' junge Schäferin Mit leichtem Schritt und muntrem Sinn Daher, daher, Die Wiese her, und sang.	V	V
Ach! denkt das Veilchen, wär ich nur Die schönste Blume der Natur, Ach, nur ein kleines Weilchen, Bis mich das Liebchen abgepflückt Und an dem Busen matt gedrückt!	i (bIII)	i (bIII)
Ach nur, ach nur Ein Viertelstündchen lang!	i	i
Ach! aber ach! das Mädchen kam Und nicht in Acht das Veilchen nahm, Ertrat das arme Veilchen. Es sank und starb und freut' sich noch: Und sterb' ich denn, so sterb' ich doch Durch sie, durch sie, Zu ihren Füßen doch.	bVI I	I

As Table 1 shows, Schumann's setting employs a strikingly similar harmonic outline. But where Mozart launches into a recitative-style passage at the beginning of the final stanza, Schumann recapitulates the opening of her song in the tonic major. Only the aforementioned major–minor turn subtly acknowledges the fate of the violet in the previous stanza. Schumann therefore maintains a subtle distinction between the speaker and flower. While her speaker is similarly sympathetic to the story of the violet, the setting does not perform the separation and eventual melding of subjectivities observed in the Mozart. In Schumann's setting the last words of the flower, beginning 'Und sterb' ich denn' ('And if I die'), in effect become quoted speech: audible to the speaker but not necessarily twinned with the emotions of the speaker. In deviating from the Mozartian model in this third stanza, Schumann undermines the male camaraderie that initially seemed inherent to Mozart's setting and initially to the poem itself.

While the flower's relationship to the shepherdess confirms its probable male gendering, it is also perfectly possible that the sympathetic poetic speaker could be female.⁶³ Indeed, there are moments in Schumann's setting in which the assumed gender of the speaker is called into question. At the end of the first stanza, after the introduction of the shepherdess in the dominant, the piano bursts from its otherwise restrained accompaniment into glittering C major arpeggios (see Ex. 7). At the same time the voice suddenly jumps an octave to a high G, exceeding a possible staid ending on the first degree of the scale. Together the piano and voice

⁶³ Hans Kuhn, 'Geschlechtsbezogene Blumenmetaphorik in Liedern der Goethezeit', *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung* 44 (1999): 124–5.

10

Da kam ei-ne jun-ge Schä - fe-rin mit leich-tem Schritt und mun-tern Sinn da - her, da-her, die Wie se her und

cresc.

17

sang.

Ach! denk' das Veil-chen, wär' ich nur die

p

p

Ex. 7 Schumann, 'Das Veilchen', bars 10–22

rupture the otherwise innocent mood of the song with a drastic gesture on the word 'sang'. In so doing, the singer's voice momentarily melds with the imagined song of the shepherdess, linking the speaker of the poem to the singing body of the violet's oblivious sweetheart. By announcing the singing of the shepherdess on this loud, prolonged dominant, one would be forgiven for expecting the actual song of the shepherdess in the following stanza, perhaps in F major. But instead we hear the perspective of the violet in a quiet F minor, emphasizing the chasm between the world of the shepherdess and the violet, and substantiating the impossibility of communion between the men and women thematized in other flower lieder.

By maintaining a close sonic relationship to Mozart's 'Das Veilchen', Schumann can trouble its male-centric enactment of Goethe's floral poem. As a result, she is also able to introduce a gender dialectic that was largely absent in Mozart, especially through the brief embodiment of the shepherdess's voice. The relationship of the poetic speaker to the violet therefore becomes less obviously differentiated. Her speaker/singer does not completely take on the emotions of the flower. Neither does she grant the flower its own agential force, as in the examples from Op. 23. Perhaps, as in 'Die stille Lotosblume', her approach to the song seeks to uphold the flower as a gendered and unreliable communicative means.

What at first appears to be a simple, *volkstümlich* setting of Goethe's famous flower poem in fact turns out to be a complex mix of implied voices and authors. In many ways, this mixture is innately floral. The mutability of flowers, after all, derives to a large extent from their ability to obfuscate and imply overlapping messages and intentions. Like the red rose of Jerichau-Baumann's painting, the flower is a paradoxically full and empty symbol, overflowing with associations and meanings that humans have poured into it. Flowers are unreliable mediators yet, as Petrino observed in the floral metaphors of Dickinson's and Osgood's poetry, it is precisely this quality that nineteenth-century women authors could use purposely to 'uncover and hide their true selves simultaneously'.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Petrino, 'Silent Eloquence', 143.



Fig. 4 Flowers received in Richmond, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, 15 June 1856.⁶⁵

The *Blumenbuch für Robert* is a poignant example of how Schumann herself used flowers to convey feelings while still protecting her innermost thoughts. Next to each flower, Schumann records the date and place they were procured and, where appropriate, from whom she had received them. Seldom does she give any more information or personal reflection than this. Each flower is the nexus of a network of personal relationships and unknowable memories, twinned with cultural, literary and perhaps even sentimental associations. Taken together they insinuate personal stories and feelings without revealing too much.

A *Blumenbuch* entry from July 1856 (Fig. 4) shows well how the assemblage of different people, flowers, places, occasions, thoughts and feelings can fold into one

⁶⁵ From the archives of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau, Germany. See Schumann, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, fol. 83, pp. 210–11.

page in this collection. In the top left there is a miniature bouquet sent to her in London from her daughter Elise (born 1843), which Clara has pasted into her *Blumenbuch*. To the right of this, a rose from her eldest child Marie (born 1841). Both are marked 'zu Papa's Geburtstag' (for Papa's birthday) but were sent to their mother all the way in England. Below are evergreen boxwood and holly leaves from the environs of Richmond, where she was staying while giving performances in London. While each might tell their own story – of concern for parents, abroad and hospitalized, or as a souvenir of a place – it is their combination on this page that gestures to a much more complex emotional state. Robert was at death's door when she assembled this page in mid-July and he would be dead before August. It is as if she counteracts the innocent and thornless roses of her children, offered indirectly to their father, with the prickly spines of the holly leaf. Memories of her spouse in Germany are juxtaposed with the common flora of England, emphasizing in their closeness on the page, the physical distance between herself and family.

The shared and overlapping authorship evinced in this *Blumenbuch* and her setting of 'Das Veilchen' was also a major force in Schumann's personal and professional life, and has wider implications for the study of her life and career. The Rückert lieder collection published under both Robert's and Clara's names immediately springs to mind. So does the well-known fact that her father, Friedrich Wieck, wrote entries on her behalf in her childhood diaries. The marriage diaries, too, authored by both Robert and Clara, see their voices often blend together. Brian Tucker has pointed out that Robert often used this diary to project his feelings onto her, with phrases beginning with 'Clara herself knows'.⁶⁶ In such cases, shared authorship, willing or not, required bending to the whims of the men in her life. But Clara would have also known how to tactfully conceal and reveal her innermost thoughts and feelings in these diaries, conscious of prying eyes. Reich, for instance, points out that it was only after she left home for a tour to Paris in 1838 that her diary started to record 'emotions, reactions and conflicts not found in her correspondence or other documents'.⁶⁷ Shared authorship therefore required the careful management of how she expressed her very subjectivity, deferring it for truly private moments. This guarded subjectivity also became a feature of her playing, too, and did not escape notice from contemporaneous critics. Alexander Stefaniak has tracked the change in the reception of her performances between her adolescent concerts and her 1854–56 concert tour, showing how the likes of Liszt and Hanslick praised her ability to restrain her own individual subjectivity in favour of the authentic performance of male composers' works.⁶⁸

Schumann's guarded subjectivity in these shared texts was a matter of emotional and professional survival for a woman musician in the nineteenth century.

⁶⁶ Brian Tucker, "'Where Words Are Not Enough': Audience and Authorship in the Marriage Diaries of Robert and Clara Schumann', in *Gender, Collaboration, and Authorship in German Culture: Literary Joint Ventures, 1750–1850*, ed. Laura Christine Deulio and John B. Lyon (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019): 287.

⁶⁷ Nancy Reich, 'The Diaries of Fanny Hensel and Clara Schumann: A Study in Contrasts', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 4/2 (2007): 30.

⁶⁸ Alexander Stefaniak, 'Clara Schumann and the Imagined Revelation of Musical Works', *Music and Letters* 99/2 (2018): 194–223, especially 199–216.

What emerges from these conditions, however, is a unique and distinctly feminine mode of authorship, one that not only selects what to reveal but can also tactically placate the voices and wishes of men. Flowers, particularly those represented in her lieder and *Blumenbuch*, epitomize this mode of authorship. Their delicate charms give the allusion of naivety while at the same time their radical mutability resists easy interpretation, choosing where necessary to remain silent, especially to male ears. The silences of nineteenth-century women are keenly felt to this day. Julia Novak notes that Schumann's deliberate and imposed silences in her life and writings reflect a larger problem for feminist biographers: 'the inaccessibility of female experience as a subject of biography'.⁶⁹ Reflecting on similar problems in her biography of Jane Franklin (the sister of Benjamin Franklin), Jill Lepore instead determines to make '[Franklin's] silence the object of my investigation rather than an obstacle to it'.⁷⁰ Flowers can be seen as one way of focusing on and thematizing these silences.

Conclusion

You ask me what my flowers said – then they were disobedient – I gave them messages.

Emily Dickinson⁷¹

At the end of July 1856, Clara Schumann returned to Germany and visited Robert in his final days in the asylum at Endenich near Bonn. She had not seen him since his suicide attempt in February 1854, largely at the behest of his doctors, who believed her presence might overexcite and exacerbate his condition.⁷² When he left their home in Düsseldorf for Endenich, Clara had entrusted a bunch of flowers to Dr Hasenclever to be passed on to her husband. In her diary she reports that Robert had handed these flowers out to those who accompanied him in the carriage. Hasenclever returned his flower to her, which she kept 'with a bleeding heart'.⁷³ She would also keep the leaves and flowers picked from the garden at Endenich on 28 July, the last time she saw Robert alive. Preserved still in the *Blumenbuch für Robert*, these three stems of yarrow and a ghost-white petunia stand out in this collection.⁷⁴ Where usually she added little text by each flower other than a date and place, here she assigns them an unambiguous and painful emotion. Underneath the petunia (see Fig. 5) she writes that it was plucked 'In tiefsten Schmerzen!' ('in the most profound anguish').⁷⁵

Throughout this study I have shown flowers to be untameably polysemic, enigmatic and mutable, not only in material collections like the *Blumenbuch*, but also as

⁶⁹ Julia Novak, 'Feminist to Postfeminist', *Angelaki* 22/1 (2017): 226.

⁷⁰ Jill Lepore, *Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013): 270.

⁷¹ Dickinson, Emily. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1958): L. 187. Quoted in Petrino, 'Silent Eloquence', 139.

⁷² Reich, *Clara Schumann*, 123.

⁷³ Litzmann, *Clara Schumann*, vol. 2: 61. We do not know how or where she kept this flower. It was not until November that she received her first *Blumenbuch*.

⁷⁴ Schumann, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, fols 85–6, pp. 220–23.

⁷⁵ Schumann, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, fol. 86, pp. 222–3.

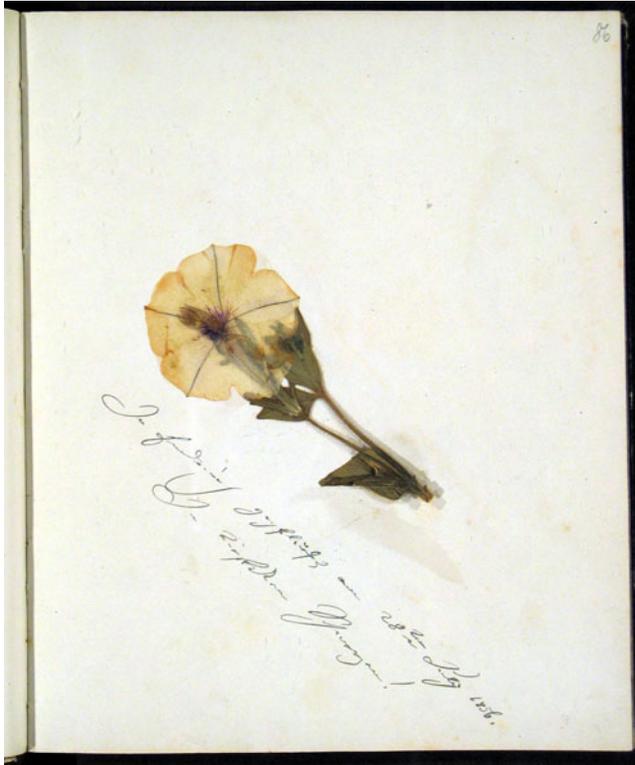


Fig. 5 Petunia from the garden at Endenich, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, 28 July 1856.⁷⁶

artistic and poetic representations. As the above quotation from an 1858 letter by Schumann's trans-Atlantic contemporary Emily Dickinson expresses succinctly, flowers have the ability to communicate *something* yet also conceal much in their symbolic disobedience. Yet here at the end of the *Blumenbuch für Robert* and at the extremes of grief, Schumann attempts to control this disobedience by overwhelming the flower with her projected feelings. The posthumous dedication of the *Blumenbuch* to her husband is similarly a paratextual action that can be seen as an attempt to transform this multi-voiced and polysemic collection into a funeral wreath. Such actions, however, do not necessarily sentimentalize or contradict nineteenth-century floral symbolism. Rather, they show an awareness of how symbolically open flowers can be and their ability to convene on decipherable messages.

The final page of the *Blumenbuch für Robert* includes no flowers, but instead laurel leaves collected from various wreaths laid on Robert's grave on the day of his funeral (see Fig. 6). In the bottom right corner of the page Clara wrote the following inscription:

⁷⁶ From the archives of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau, Germany. Schumann, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, fol. 86, pp. 222–3.

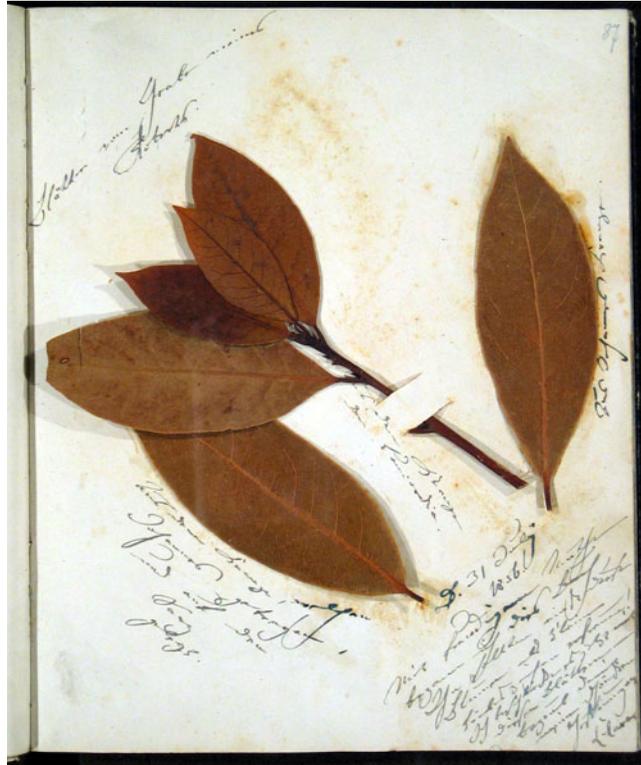


Fig. 6 'Leaves from the grave of my Robert', *Blumenbuch für Robert*, 31 July 1856.⁷⁷

I began this book with joyous feeling, that he should enjoy these flowers as little tokens of love! I now close this book with these leaves – Buried with them all my most beautiful hopes.⁷⁸

Again, the profound emotion of the day attempts to reign in the complex authorship, memories and meanings of the *Blumenbuch*. Yet there is also something familiar about this passage. For one, the metaphor of 'burying' emotions in a grave is one we find at the end of *Dichterliebe*, which ends with the poet placing all his pain (*Schmerz*) into a great coffin that is cast into the sea. Clara's inscription is also reminiscent of the omitted stanza of 'Auf einem grünen Hügel' (Op. 23 No. 4), which depicts a grave where all the poet's joy is buried beneath the roses and blue flowers that lie on the hillock.⁷⁹ Even this moment that seeks to interpret her own flowers is deeply intertextual, gesturing to Robert's most floral song cycle

⁷⁷ From the archives of the Robert Schumann Haus in Zwickau, Germany. Schumann, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, fol. 87, pp. 226–7.

⁷⁸ 'Mit freudigem Muthe began ich dies Buch, Ihn sollten einst diese Blumen als kleine Liebeszeichen erfreuen! Ich beschließe es jetzt mit diesen Blättern – Begrub damit meine schönsten Hoffnungen'. Schumann, *Blumenbuch für Robert*, fol. 87, pp. 226–7. Translation by author.

⁷⁹ 'Auf einem grünen Hügel / Da liegt ein weißer Stein, / Und drunter liegt wohl all' mein Glück / Schon manches Jahr begraben / In einem schwarzen Schrein!' Translation

and one of her own flower lieder. It harnesses the distinctly feminine understanding of the mutability of flowers, in which the expression of complex emotions is divested across different discourses, media and subjectivities. Flowers for Clara Schumann were thus more than Romantic symbols or domestic diversions: they represented a mode of self-expression that was complex, defiant, revealing, and, when needed, silent.

(by author): 'On a green hillock, / there lies a white stone, / and under it lies all my happiness / Buried many years ago / In a black coffin'. Rollett, *Jucunde*, 61.