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Author(s): Maynard Solomon

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Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini

MAYNARD SOLOMON

In a letter to Joseph von Spaun of 27 November 1825, Anton Ottenwalt was perhaps the first member of the Schubert circle to observe that Schubert was subject to "the passions of an eagerly burning sensuality."¹ Four years later, in his obituary notice for Schubert, the poet Johann Mayrhofer discreetly sounded the same note: Schubert's character, he wrote, "was a

mixture of tenderness and coarseness, sensuality and candor, sociability and melancholy."² There the matter rested until 1857, when Alexandre Oulibicheff asserted, *en passant*, in his monograph on Beethoven, that Schubert had been "enslaved by *passions mauvaises*."³ In that same year, the dramatist Eduard Bauernfeld explained to a would-be biographer that "Schubert had, so to speak, a double nature, the Viennese gaiety being interwoven and ennobled by a trait of deep melancholy. Inwardly a poet and outwardly a kind of hedonist."⁴ Perhaps to make the point less subtly, he elsewhere wrote of the "coarse and sensual [*derb und sinnlich*]" element in Schubert's character.⁵

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, Baltimore, 1988. It utilizes several paragraphs from my "Franz Schubert's 'My Dream'," (*American Imago* 38 [1981], 137–54), in which I discussed Schubert's homosexuality from a psychoanalytic standpoint. For corrections and suggestions, I am grateful to Andrew Porter, Randolph Trumbach, Joseph Kerman, Eric Sams, Richard Kramer, Ernest H. Sanders, and Tina Maxfeldt.

¹Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: A Documentary Biography* (hereinafter *SDB*), trans. Eric Blom (London, 1946), p. 476.

²Deutsch, *Schubert: Memoirs by His Friends* (hereinafter *Memoirs*), trans. Rosamond Ley and John Nowell (London, 1958), p. 14.

³Alexandre Oulibicheff, *Beethoven: ses critiques et ses glossateurs* (Leipzig, 1857), p. 37.

⁴Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 45. To Ferdinand Luib.

⁵Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 234.

But it was in the following year that Josef Kenner, who, along with many other young friends of Schubert had attended the Kremsmünster seminary and Vienna University, put the matter in its most dramatic terms. Schubert's "body, strong as it was, succumbed to the cleavage in his—souls—as I would put it, of which one pressed heavenwards and the other bathed in slime [*im Schlamm badete*]." In a subsequent letter, Kenner added: "Anyone who knew Schubert knows how he was made of two natures, foreign to each other, how powerfully the craving for pleasure dragged his soul down to the cesspool of slime [*zu ihrem Schlamm-pfuhl niederzog*]." ⁶

All of this calls for clarification. For the weight of this testimony—coming, as it does, from many of those who knew Franz Schubert most intimately—suggests that the composer's sexuality has yet to be understood. Several of Schubert's biographers drew from such testimony the inference that he patronized prostitutes, with disastrous results. However, few men of Schubert's generation in Vienna regarded relations with prostitutes as immoral, let alone as signs of moral degradation. The chastity commissions of Empress Maria Theresa had long since been disbanded, and prostitution flourished in the Austrian capital as in all the cities of Europe. ⁸ An easygoing hedonism was characteristic of "Alt-Wien" in the post-Congress of Vienna period. ⁹ This is confirmed even by Beethoven's crabbed biographer, Anton Schindler, who condemned "the decadence of the aristocracy," which by its indulgence "in the crudest excesses"—i.e., by its sexual license—had caused "virtue and moral-

ity" to disappear "from the highest strata of the capital's society." ¹⁰ According to a contemporary traveler, ordinary Viennese had "no great need of streetwalkers or stews, in a city where every *liaison* which a stranger may choose to form, can be carried on, without offence to morals, even in his own hotel or lodgings." ¹¹

Venereal infection was widespread, and Schubert contracted a sexually transmitted disease—apparently syphilis—which led to his hospitalization sometime in 1823 and to a painful convalescence lingering until 1825 or even 1826. ¹² Schubert's intimate friend Franz von Schober attributed Schubert's condition to "excessively indulgent sensual living and its consequences," a fairly direct description of reckless sexual behavior; Wilhelm von Chezy was somewhat more circumspect. "Schubert," he wrote, "with his liking for the pleasures of life, had strayed into those wrong paths which generally admit of no return, at least of no healthy one." ¹³ In view of tolerant contemporary attitudes toward nonmarital heterosexual activity, it is worth exploring the possibility that Schubert's friends were suggesting not simply that he was sexually promiscuous, but that his promiscuity was of an unorthodox character.

II

The young Schubert's conflicts with his father centered on the usual patriarchal issues of career, religion, and marriage. Ultimately he did not give ground on any of these, but he tried to avoid religious controversy and temporized about pursuing a school-teaching career. ¹⁴ It

⁶Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 82, letter to Anton Kenner (for Ferdinand Luib); Deutsch, *Schubert: Die Erinnerungen seiner Freunde* (Leipzig, 1957), p. 67.

⁷Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 86; Deutsch, *Schubert: Die Erinnerungen seiner Freunde*, p. 70.

⁸See Lujó Bassermann, *The Oldest Profession: A History of Prostitution* (New York, 1967), pp. 166–76. There were 1,500 registered prostitutes; "secret prostitution . . . with all its accompanying phenomena, prevailed on a huge scale" (p. 175).

⁹See, e.g., Henry Reeve, *Journal of a Residence at Vienna and Berlin* (London, 1877), p. 25; John Russell, *A Tour in Germany . . . in the Years 1820, 1821, 1822* (Boston, 1825), pp. 396–98; John Strang, *Germany in MDCCCXXXI* (London, 1836), II, 338–39; Lulu Thürheim, *Mein Leben. Erinnerungen aus Oesterreichs grosser Welt, 1788–1819* (Munich, 1913), II, 19 and passim; *Beethovens Konversationshefte*, ed. Karl-Heinz Köhler and Grita Herre, vol. I (Leipzig, 1972), p. 141 and passim.

¹⁰Anton Schindler, *Beethoven As I Knew Him* (London, 1966), p. 245.

¹¹Strang, *Germany in MDCCCXXXI*, II, 338.

¹²Eric Sams, "Schubert's Illness Re-examined," *Musical Times* 121 (1980), 15–22, shows how the course of Schubert's illness as reflected in contemporary documents correlates closely with the usual course and treatment of syphilis. Certainty is not possible, because medical science at that time could not readily distinguish one venereal disease from another. It was only in 1837 that Philippe Ricorde "effectively proved that syphilis and gonorrhea were separate diseases." Vern Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Women and Prostitution: A Social History* (Buffalo, 1987), p. 190.

¹³Deutsch, *Memoirs*, pp. 261, 266.

¹⁴Aware that Schubert rejected Catholic dogma and authority, his brother Ignaz warned: "If you should wish to write to Papa and me at the same time, do not touch upon any religious matters." Letter of 12 October 1818, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 105. See also letters to his father of 25 July 1825 and to Ferdinand Schubert of 21 September 1825 (Deutsch, *SDB*, pp. 434–35, 467).

was more difficult, however, to disguise his attitude toward the sensitive issues of sex and marriage. For several years (probably between 1814 and 1816—the precise dates are uncertain), he claimed to be courting Therese Grob.¹⁵ (The Grobs and Schuberts were on close terms, and Schubert's brother Ignaz eventually married into her family.) Whether it was a genuine attachment or a subterfuge to deflect his family's concern, the courtship's negative outcome was vividly foretold in his diary entry for 8 September 1816. First, Schubert inscribed a pair of untroubled aphorisms: "Happy is he who finds a true friend. Happier still he who finds a true friend in his wife"; he continued, however: "To a free man matrimony is a terrifying thought these days; he exchanges it [i.e., his freedom] either for melancholy or for crude sensuality. . . ."¹⁶

Therese Grob's manuscript album of Schubert's Lieder contains nothing composed later than about the end of 1816, suggesting that the diary entry expressing Schubert's antipathy to matrimony coincided with his withdrawal from the courtship. For her part, Therese Grob told Schubert's first biographer, Kreissle von Hellborn, that Schubert "was like an adopted son" in her father's house; she gave no hint that there had been any special intimacy, or any understanding, between her and Schubert.¹⁷ Be that as it may, there is no evidence that Schubert ever courted another woman or that he ever again contemplated marriage. His name was seriously linked with that of only one other woman, Countess Karoline Esterházy (1805–51), whose family employed him as a music teacher at their country estate in Zseliz during the summers of 1818 and 1824. It is difficult to give credence to this timeworn tale of a poor

musician's unrequited love for a highborn countess—recounted, not without some hints of irony, by Schober, Spaun, Bauernfeld, and Karl Schönstein—for it is unsupported by contemporary letters or documents, and it doesn't quite square with Schubert's letters from Zseliz. "I sit here alone . . .," he wrote in a letter of 1824, "without having a single person with whom I could speak a sensible word."¹⁸ That is not very surprising, for the countess was somewhat retarded—her mother sent her to play with her hoops when she was thirty, and, though she married as she neared forty, an annulment followed shortly thereafter.

Other reports of Schubert's relations with women are extremely meager and somewhat defensive, perhaps because some of his contemporaries seemed to feel a responsibility to clear him of charges of immoral behavior. Schindler, who scarcely knew Schubert, blundered into the issue in his usual manner: "And yet the false idea has spread and taken firm root that Schubert led a disorderly life, was addicted to drink and such like."¹⁹ Leopold Sonnleithner, though he admitted to Luib that he knew little about Schubert's relationships with women, felt obliged to say that Schubert "was certainly not indifferent," adding, confusingly, that "with him this tendency was not nearly so much in evidence as it usually is in men of lively imagination."²⁰ Spaun became quite exercised about what seemed to him the clearly excessive interest taken in sexual matters by Schubert's first biographer; in particular he objected to Kreissle's notion that Schubert was unfaithful to Countess Karoline, even "secretly interested in someone else on the side." "What is the point of such gossip?" he asked; "I am absolutely convinced that . . . Schubert had no relations of the kind indicated with any other girl; but even in the quite inconceivable event of the above assertion being true, was it really neces-

¹⁵Reported by Anton Holzapfel and Anselm Hüttenbrenner. See Deutsch, *Memoirs*, pp. 61–62, 70, 182.

¹⁶Entry of 8 September 1816, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 71. Even as late as 1819, in a letter to his brother Ferdinand from Steyr, where he was traveling with Vogl, Schubert sought to reassure the family by underscoring his interest in pretty girls: "At the house where I lodge there are eight girls, nearly all pretty. Plenty to do, you see." Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 121, letter of 13 July 1819. For related reassurances, see letters to his siblings of 29 October 1818 and to Ferdinand Schubert of 21 September 1825 (Deutsch, *SDB*, pp. 109, 466).

¹⁷Kreissle von Hellborn, *The Life of Franz Schubert*, trans. Arthur Duke Coleridge (London, 1869), I, 35, n. 1. Elsewhere, Kreissle reports the story of Schubert's supposed love affair with Therese Grob, but without conviction (p. 144, n. 2).

¹⁸Deutsch, *SDB*, pp. 374–75, letter to Schober, 21 September 1824. Schubert's F-Minor Fantasy, D. 940 (op. 103), published in 1829, was dedicated to Countess Esterházy. See Schubert's letter to Bernhard Schott's Sons, 21 February 1828 (Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 739). An earlier dedication, of two German Dances, op. 18, in 1821, was withdrawn. The countess was scarcely thirteen in 1818; and Schubert was convalescing from venereal infection in 1824.

¹⁹Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 320.

²⁰Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 114.

sary, in describing the artist's life, to make it known to the world?"²¹

Others chose their words more carefully, perhaps hoping to clothe the matter in some ambiguity. Thus, Albert Stadler recalled that Schubert "was always rather reserved in this regard," while Bauernfeld wrote that while he "was fairly realistic in regard to certain things, Schubert was not without his infatuations."²² Elsewhere, though he purveyed the legend of Schubert's "unhappy love" for the retarded countess ("his adored pupil"), the playwright could not resist a teasing parody of it:

Schubert was in love with a pupil,
One of the young countesses;
But in order to forget her he gave himself
To another—to someone entirely different.²³

Bauernfeld left to the imagination of his readers the identity of the person who consoled Schubert.

Anselm Hüttenbrenner had a different perception of Schubert's attitudes toward women. He was concerned because, "from the time I got to know Schubert [i.e., from 1815], he did not have even the suspicion of a love affair."²⁴ Further, it troubled him that Schubert was "cold and unforthcoming toward the fair sex at parties," so that Hüttenbrenner "was almost inclined to think he had a complete aversion for them." His curiosity aroused, he asked Schubert "if he had never been in love" and received for his trouble Schubert's classic bachelor's response, that for three full years he had courted Therese Grob, whom he described (perhaps not in all seriousness) as a "pock-marked" young singer with "a heart of gold," while he sought but was unable to "find a position which would have provided for us both."²⁵ Disappointed that she found a better provider in master baker Johann Bergmann, Schubert avowed, "I still love her and there has been no one else since who has

appealed to me as much or more than she." Although outwardly receptive to Schubert's explanation, Hüttenbrenner weighed the evidence and came to a blunt conclusion: from that time forward, he wrote, Schubert had "a dominating aversion for the daughters of Eve."²⁶

Surely Hüttenbrenner mistook Schubert's defensiveness concerning marriage for misogyny, of which there is no substantive trace, whatever the nature of his sexuality. The preponderance of contemporary references by such women as Sophie Müller, Johanna Lutz, and Marie Ottenwalt, though few in number, are friendly and quite unambivalent toward Schubert. True, Frau Ottenwalt once felt neglected by Schubert and he, in his turn, felt that Anna Hönig had insulted him, but these were only the inevitable strains of friendship. And Schubert unfailingly exhibited genuine tenderness toward the women in his extended family. Nevertheless, Hüttenbrenner's general conclusion should be borne in mind as one reads the Schubert documents, with their full measure of tender and affectionate letters to male friends—all using the intimate form of address—but not a single such letter to any woman. Indeed, apart from several letters written jointly to his sister and stepmother, Schubert's only letters to women are quite formal ones to Helmina von Chezy and Marie Pachler.²⁷ And not a single intimate letter to Schubert survives from any of his young women contemporaries, even from those central to the Schubert circle. Of those very few women who wrote to or left memoirs of the composer, none touch on sensitive or personal matters. It was, perhaps, for such reasons that Kreissle, after interviewing all the survivors of the Schubert circle, came to believe that Schubert "was somewhat indifferent to the charms of the fair sex."²⁸

Whether Hüttenbrenner's conclusions are

²¹Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 362.

²²Deutsch, *Memoirs*, pp. 154, 233.

²³Deutsch, *Memoirs*, pp. 233–34; Eduard von Bauernfeld, *Buch von uns Wienern* (Leipzig, 1858), p. 34. The original reads:

Verliebt war Schubert, der Schülerin
Galt's, einer der jungen Komtessen;
Doch gab er sich einer—ganz Andern hin,
Um die—Andere zu vergessen.

²⁴Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 70.

²⁵Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 182.

²⁶Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 70.

²⁷Schubert uses the "Du" in an album entry for Albert Stadler's sister Katerina (1798–1861) written in Steyr on 14 September 1819: "Ever enjoy the present wisely: thus will the past be a fair remembrance for thee and the future holds no terror." Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 125. These lines appear to be a literary quotation; there is no other reference to Katerina Stadler in the Schubert documents.

²⁸Kreissle, II, 166. Kreissle is not wholly consistent on this point, adopting a more conventional view elsewhere: Schubert "certainly coquetted with love, and was no stranger to deeper and truer affections." Kreissle, I, 143.

overstated or not, Schubert's rejection of marriage was clearly deep-rooted, for it apparently was fundamental to his refusal to submit to patriarchal norms and imperatives. In later years he no longer felt the need to dissimulate or to disguise his attitude: writing to his father and stepmother in July 1825, he observed of his brother Karl that "a married artist's duty is to supply works of nature as well as art, and if he succeeds in both kinds, he will be very praiseworthy." But he added unequivocally, even disdainfully, of the prospect of fatherhood: "I renounce it myself."²⁹ In his letters to his friends, too, Schubert tended to view marriage as a departure from principle, referring to those who married or had love affairs in a caustically humorous tone that sometimes bordered on derision.³⁰

III

The autumn of 1816 was a time of decision for Schubert, as he approached his twentieth birthday. Even as he was registering his aversion to marriage in his diary, he was taking abrupt leave of his teacher, Antonio Salieri, and forcing a drastic change in the relationship to his father by refusing to resume his teaching post at the schoolhouse in the Rossau district.³¹ And it was in the autumn of 1816 that Schubert moved out of his father's house and took up residence at the family home of Franz von Schober (1796–1882) in the Landskrongasse in the inner city. Schubert and Schober were to live together for several extended stretches of time until shortly before Schubert's death in November 1828.

Schober was charged by contemporaries with having led Schubert astray. Kenner bluntly called him "Schubert's seducer"; he wrote: "Schubert's genius subsequently attracted, among other friends, the heart of a seductively amiable and brilliant young man, endowed with the noblest talents. . . . This scintillating personality, as I was told later, won a lasting and

pernicious influence over Schubert's honest susceptibility."³² Similarly, an anonymous source, writing in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1859, spoke of Schober's "bad influence" on Schubert "in moral matters."³³ In her memoirs, Johanna Kupelwieser, née Lutz, wrote that Schober "took possession of Schubert, which was harmful to the poor fellow, for Schober was unprincipled and very dangerous, even though he clothed everything in aesthetic garb."³⁴ Other close observers, including Ottenwalt and Holzapfel, also maintained that Schober had "lured several of his friends, Schubert included, into loose living."³⁵

Obviously, it is altogether too facile to blame Schubert's promiscuity on the influence of a libertine companion; Schubert was scarcely a passive victim of another's will. But from the start, Schober was indeed the main force in the Schubert circle: often it resembled a cult of which he was the undisputed charismatic leader, expounding on aesthetics, philosophy, and worldly issues in rooms carpeted and upholstered in Persian style, while he affected the manner of an oriental prince. He was adored by many, including Moritz von Schwind, Schubert, Leopold Kupelwieser, and Anton Doblhoff; and in these relationships there are pervasive signs of homoerotic feeling. For example, Doblhoff wrote to Schober:

Yet in that small room my heart always opened so warmly, nay glowingly and bloomingly, so that now I want to be with you again for good and not part with you until the sun shines sweetly and lures me into the pine forest. . . . Unhappily all this is a dream—but was it not a fair one, and have I not so often lived it in reality?³⁶

Bauernfeld, perhaps not without a touch of jealousy, for he and Schwind were passionate

²⁹Letter of 25 July 1825, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 436.

³⁰See, e.g., Schubert's letter to Anselm Hüttenbrenner, 19 May 1819: "Now one girl, now another turns your head: well, then may the devil take all girls, if you allow them to bewitch you in this manner. For God's sake, get married and there's an end of it!" Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 117. Translation revised.

³¹Kreissle, I, 29 and 109–10.

³²Deutsch, *Memoirs*, pp. 85–86. Elsewhere, Kenner alleged that many others "were seduced" by Schober, who "embellished sensuality in such a flattering manner." Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 86.

³³*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 51 (1859), 129.

³⁴Cited in Rupert Feuchtmüller, *Leopold Kupelwieser und die Kunst der österreichischen Spätromantik* (Vienna, 1970), p. 209.

³⁵Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 230. Deutsch refers to letters of 1816, 1817, and 1825 from Ottenwalt to Josef von Spaun; I have been unable to locate the originals of Ottenwalt's letters. Holzapfel told Luib that he was well aware of "Schober's equivocal moral behavior." Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 62.

³⁶Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 271, letter of spring 1823 (?).

friends, recorded that Schwind “worships” Schober “like a god.”³⁷ This was no exaggeration, for Schwind’s voluminous letters to Schober, which the aged Schober chose to reveal after the renowned painter’s death in 1871, are filled with the frankest expressions of love, which one cannot readily explain as merely typifying the *schwärmerisch* and extravagant style in male friendships of the period. “I love with the fullest love in the world, I live in thee,” wrote Schwind. “I know that you rejoice in me and if I no longer can know you, it would be better, much better, to die.”³⁸ And again: “Schober, beloved! eternally beloved! as sound trembles in the air so shall thy nearness encompass and set me aglow.”³⁹ A letter of 6 April 1824 will have to stand for many similar examples in the correspondence:

I see myself in thy heart’s love like an angel, who binds us together and I rejoice that you speak to me, to me, who rests calmly and with total love in thy arms, as I do. . . . I want to dance naked, but in the highest sense and in front of everyone. . . . O if I could once again possess thee, then I would know all and be capable of everything.⁴⁰

Although more restrained than Schwind, Schubert did not conceal his own feelings for Schober. On receiving a letter from Schober in the summer of 1818, he wrote from Zseliz: “As I broke it open, loud cries of joy from me on beholding the name of Schober. I read it in a neighboring room, with continual laughter and childish pleasure.”⁴¹ Schubert used the intimate “Du” form to Schober and dubbed him “Schober,” as though to intertwine their names. A more somber tone pervades his later letters to his friend, especially during their long separation in 1823–25. There, Schubert wrote of his “longing” for Schober: “Only you, dear Schober, I shall never forget, for what you meant to me no one else can mean, alas!”⁴² A later letter, written in sadness, speaks of his wretchedness at their separation and recalls the “sweet time . . . when one inspired the other and thus united striving after the highest beauty enlivened us

all.”⁴³ Schober responded consolingly, though he did not refrain from reminding Schubert that others shared his love:

My good, ever true friend, you continue to value my affection. You have cared for me for my own sake, just as my Schwind and Kupelwieser also will be faithful to me. And are not we precisely those who have found our life in art? . . . [E]ven if all fails, [I shall] return more worthily and at least as lovingly to your arms, you who now are the only beings I care for. . . .⁴⁴

Despite this deep attachment, then, it is clear that their friendship did not demand exclusivity. And this was true as well for Schwind, who, notwithstanding his passion for Schober, lived in intimacy with Bauernfeld and others. To Kupelwieser he wrote on 9 June 1824: “Seeing how I sought you and Schubert and [Franz von] Bruchmann for long, and was almost ashamed of this seeking, and trembling at the thought of finding, how I came among you and found myself loved, while I dared wish for nothing more than to see you, how then should I have become different from what I was?”⁴⁵ To Schober he wrote: “You yourself have numbered me with thee and Schubert and I could not bear the delight of it. Thus has pain cleansed me, so that to be third among thee means everything to me.”⁴⁶ Schubert reciprocated Schwind’s affection; according to Bauernfeld, he jestingly called him “his beloved” and “took him completely to his heart.”⁴⁷

Though he was present in Vienna at the time, having abandoned the law to try his hand as an artist, Schober disappears from the Schubert documents during 1819–20.⁴⁸ Coincidentally or otherwise, between October 1818 and January 1821, Schubert shared a room in the Wipplingerstrasse with the poet and state censor Johann Mayrhofer, who was ten years his senior. Eccentric, misogynist, deeply disturbed, and ultimately a suicide, Mayrhofer was in the early circle of Schubert’s friends, and their creative

³⁷Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 428.

³⁸H. Holland, *Moritz von Schwind: Sein Leben und seine Werke* (Stuttgart, 1873), p. 6, letter of 12 December 1823.

³⁹Holland, *Moritz von Schwind*, p. 13.

⁴⁰Holland, *Moritz von Schwind*, pp. 12–13.

⁴¹Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 98, letter of 8 September 1818.

⁴²Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 301.

⁴³Deutsch, *SDB*, pp. 374–75, letter of 21 September 1824.

⁴⁴Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 385, letter of 2 December 1824.

⁴⁵Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 351.

⁴⁶Combines Holland, *Moritz von Schwind*, p. 10, and Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 324, letter of 20 January 1824.

⁴⁷Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 239.

⁴⁸“The secret that Schober is devoting himself to landscape painting is kept no longer,” wrote Ferdinand Schubert to Schubert in October 1818. Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 106.

association began as early as December 1814; in the course of the next decade they collaborated on fifty *Lieder*, including several of Schubert's greatest works.

Early in 1821, Schubert left Mayrhofer's room and, for the first time in his life, set up as an independent lodger at a nearby house in the same street.⁴⁹ Following this separation, Mayrhofer composed "An Franz" for his erstwhile companion and collaborator:

Thou lov'st me! Deeply have I felt it,
Thou faithful youth, so gentle and fair;
Then let us steel ourselves, already united,
In noble, youthful valor.⁵⁰

Schubert resumed his close association with Schober and together they held the first so-called "Schubertiad" in late January.⁵¹ Early in the summer they were together at Atzenbrugg for a gathering, and in September they traveled to St. Pölten, where they stayed at the Ochsenburg castle, collaborating on the opera *Alfonso und Estrella*. "Our room at St. P. was particularly snug," wrote Schober to Spaun on 4 November 1821: "The twin beds, a sofa next to the warm stove, and a fortepiano made it all very domestic and cosy."⁵² Upon their return to Vienna, in late October, Schubert moved in with Schober at 1155 Göttsweigerhof and remained there until the onset of his venereal disease compelled him to return to his father's house in the Rossau district.⁵³

IV

Recent historical research has confirmed what many have always suspected: that male homosexual subcultures have existed almost continuously in the major cities of Europe from the Renaissance to the present. Homosexuals sought in the capital cities the companionship

of like-minded persons and the relative safety from persecution offered by metropolitan anonymity. Although Enlightenment and Napoleonic Europe had reduced criminal penalties for sexual deviance, which now came to be regarded primarily as "a morals offense and a matter of public order," legal and social proscriptions continued in force, compelling a variety of prudent strategies, including extreme caution concerning spoken or written records.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, with the help of contemporary memoirs and trial records, historians have succeeded in reconstructing and describing several of these subcultures, which often turn out to be strikingly similar to each other in their general outlines.⁵⁵

In many respects, these communities resembled clandestine or secret societies, with "a full panoply of modes of recognition and behavioral patterns, and a distinct argot."⁵⁶ Because of the secretive nature of the sexually nonconformist subcultures, much of their figurative language has not found its way into slang dictionaries, making its decoding an uncertain process. But

⁴⁹E. William Monter, "Sodomy and Heresy in Early Modern Switzerland," in *Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality*, ed. Salvatore J. Licata and Robert P. Petersen (New York, 1981), p. 50.

⁵⁰Systematic histories of homosexual behavior in the German-speaking capitals have yet to be written, but there is no reason to believe that the situation in Vienna during Schubert's time differed in any significant ways from those described elsewhere. This is confirmed by the availability of detailed information about the homosexual communities in Vienna and Berlin in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. See esp. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins drittes Geschlecht* (6th edn. Berlin, 1904) and Xavier Mayne (pseud. of Edward I. P. Stevenson), *The Intersexes: A History of Similisexuality as a Problem in Social Life* (privately printed, 1908; rpt. New York, 1975), pp. 441, 447–49 and passim. For the slow pace of research on the German and Austrian subcultures, see Wayne R. Dynes, *Homosexuality: A Research Guide* (New York, 1987), p. 122. "Numerous places of rendezvous existed under the guise of literary clubs and athletic societies," Jeffrey Weeks, "Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Annes," in *Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality*, p. 126. "Now and then dire scandals" surround the clubs, societies, and dramatic groups, "and with more or less social horrors they suddenly disintegrate," to be replaced by new groups (Mayne, *The Intersexes*, pp. 431–32).

⁵¹Arthur N. Gilbert, in *Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality*, p. 58; Randolph Trumbach, "London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behavior and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Social History* 11 (1977), 15–23; see also Trumbach, "Sodomitical Subcultures, Sodomitical Roles, and the Gender Revolution of the Eighteenth Century: The Recent Historiography," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 9 (1985), 109–21.

⁴⁹Deutsch, *Memoirs*, p. 265.

⁵⁰Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 190. Translation revised. For unstated reasons, Deutsch suggests that the poem may have been written for Schober rather than Schubert, but there is no reason to doubt it was written for the latter. See entry, "Mayrhofer," in Constantin von Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich, 1750–1850* (Vienna, 1856–91), XVII, 188.

⁵¹Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 162. Josef Huber to Rosalie Kranzbichler, letter of 30 January 1821. Deutsch notes that the party was "exclusively male."

⁵²Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 195.

⁵³Maurice J. E. Brown, *Schubert: A Critical Biography* (London, 1958), p. 127.

even if definitive conclusions cannot be drawn, it is worth looking closely at some of the apparently coded references to sexual matters in the Schubert correspondence and memoirs.

Schubert's letter to Schober of 8 September 1818 appears to set out his sexual opportunities among the Esterházy household staff in Zseliz:

A companion of the count, a gay old fellow (*ein alter lustiger Geselle*) and a capable musician, often keeps me company. The cook, the lady's maid, the chambermaid, the nurse, the manager, &c and two grooms are all good folk. The cook rather a rake; the lady's maid 30 years of age; the chambermaid very pretty and often my companion; the nurse a good old thing; the manager my rival. The two grooms are more fit for traffic with horses than with human beings.⁵⁷

Schubert's "rival" is usually read as his competitor for the favors of the chambermaid; but it seems equally likely that it is for those of the count's companion.

In the same letter, Schubert describes tenor Johann Michael Vogl as "the Greek bird who flutters about in Upper Austria."⁵⁸ Although Deutsch chooses to take this as a reference to Vogl's classical erudition (and Vogl was also noted for his performances of Greek heroic mythological roles), the homosexual implications of "griechische Vogl" are quite on the surface; this usage of "Greek" was current from the eighteenth century onward.⁵⁹ References to Vogl's dandyism and unconventional sexuality are not uncommon. Bauernfeld's diary for March 1825 describes his visit to Vogl: "An odd old bachelor [*alter Junggeselle*]. He reads Epicurus and is a treasury of pleasant foppery [*angenehmer Geckerei*]."⁶⁰ Kreissle tells how Vogl was haunted by a desire for moral improvement: "but when passion hurried him away, like all strong impetuous natures, to dangerous ventures, he was never weary of self-recrimination, of doubt, nay, almost of despair."⁶¹ In his later years, he was "embittered by a disease which, at his great age, made him a terrible sufferer."⁶²

Occasionally, the correspondence briefly introduces a pleasant young, often anonymous, stranger to the circle. "I greatly recommend you the bearer of this letter," wrote Schubert to Mayrhofer on 19 August 1819, referring to a student named Kahl otherwise unknown to us. "I beg you to let him have my bed for the few days he is there. Altogether, I hope you will look after him in the friendliest manner, for he is a very jolly dear fellow [*ein sehr braver, lieber Mensch*]."⁶³ In the spring of 1825, Albert Schellmann, Jr. asks Schubert to remember him to everyone at Steyr, "and particularly my darling [*meinen Schatz*] whom you will easily ferret out."⁶⁴ In a similar vein, Schwind, ever on the alert for sexual partners, writes to Schober on 2 April 1825 that "Schubert and Bauernfeld turned up with a very amusing stranger"; and to Schubert he wrote on 2 July 1825: "When you come to Ebenzweyer, be sure to mind that you hunt up only pretty things [*nur Schönes auf-treiben*]."⁶⁵

A subsequent letter from Schwind to Schubert, though deliberately opaque, is rich in implications. He tells that their mutual friend, the painter Wilhelm August Rieder, had obtained a post as professor, "but on account of that he is under suspicion of intending to get married." Schwind suggests for Schubert a similar route, which is to say, moderating his sexual behavior as a condition of employment.

If you are seriously competing for the court organist's post, you may succeed equally well. All you will have to do is to live respectably [*ordentlich zu leben*]. . . . You certainly will be compelled to satisfy your fleshly and spiritual needs—or rather, your need for pheasants and punch [*Fasanen und Punsch*—in a solitude that will be in no way inferior to life on a desert island or the condition of Robinson Crusoe.⁶⁶

Schwind immediately went on to complain that opportunities for diversion were in short supply in Vienna at that time: "The theater appears to be quite out of the question, least of all as regards the opera, and since there is no wind

⁵⁷Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 100.

⁵⁸Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 99.

⁵⁹*An Historical Dictionary of German Figurative Usage*, ed. Keith Spalding, fascicle 21 (Oxford, 1968), p. 1140. Spalding mistakenly considers this usage obsolete.

⁶⁰Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 410.

⁶¹Kreissle, I, 121.

⁶²Kreissle, I, 127. See Wurzbach, LI, 172–78.

⁶³Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 124, trans. amended.

⁶⁴Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 415, letter of late April 1825, trans. amended.

⁶⁵Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 411; Deutsch, *Schubert: Die Dokumente seines Lebens* (Kassel, 1964), p. 293; omitted from Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 426.

⁶⁶Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 451, trans. amended.

music [*Harmonie*] at Wasserburger's in winter, we will have to play on our own pipes [so können wir uns was pfeifen]."⁶⁷ Deutsch, knowing that there was never any music at Wasserburger's cafe, a popular meeting place for members of the Schubert circle (who sometimes called themselves "Wasserburgians"), observes that "Harmonie" and the closing phrase seem to have double meanings, but he does not mention the obvious indelicate symbolism.⁶⁸

In early 1827 or 1828, a certain "Nina" invited Schubert and Schober to a party, promising them a delightful entertainment: "The snowed-in nightingales of the Alleegasse will, notwithstanding all the cold rinds, flute with all their might" [*Die verschneiten Nachtigallen aus der Alleegasse werden unerachtet aller kalten Rinden auch gehörig flöten*].⁶⁹ The gender of the "nightingales" is unstated but the nature of their flute-playing is fairly straightforward.⁷⁰ "Rinden" (bark, rinds, skins) is surely a reference to condoms, which were *de rigueur* in an age of unchecked venereal infection. ("How readily would I shed all this cold bark," wrote Schwind to Schober on 6 May 1824.⁷¹) The invitation closed with Nina's imperious injunction: "We expect implicit obedience on the part of our vassals."

We have already seen the imagery of hunting evoked, in Schwind's references to "pheasants" and to the hunt for "pretty things." Along similar lines, Franz Bruchmann wrote to Leopold Kupelwieser on 2 December 1823: "Huber was still much teased about the hazel-hen [*Hazelhuhn*], and when Schwind drew his naked form on the table at the Wasserburg, he was so upset that he has for some time been lost to our gatherings."⁷² The bird, of course, whether the refined nightingale or the wild pheasant, is a fre-

quent symbol of a sexual object.⁷³ And it is the evocation of another such bird that may provide a deeper insight into Schubert's sexual nature.

V

In August 1826, Bauernfeld wrote in his diary: "Schubert is out of sorts (he needs 'young peacocks,' like Benvenuto Cellini)" [*Schubert halbkrank (er bedarf 'junger Pfauen' wie Benvenuto Cellini)*].⁷⁴ The reference is to one of the most famous of all creative homosexuals, for Cellini was formally charged with and convicted of sodomy on two occasions and accused of it several times more.⁷⁵ In his *Memoirs*, he quotes Bandinelli as calling him "you dirty sodomite," to which he appended his claimed eloquent response: "Would to God I did know how to practise so noble an art, for one reads that Jove practised it with Ganymede in paradise, and here on earth there use it the greatest emperors and the grandest kings in the world."⁷⁶ Despite the denial, Cellini's *Memoirs* record his frequent erotic attachments to young men, first to those of his own age, and later, to his adolescent apprentices, such as Paulino, for whom he "conceived the strongest affection . . . that the human breast can hold." He records how, from time to time, "I took in my hand my flute: he used then to smile in so graceful and affecting a manner, that I am not the least surprised at the fables which the Greeks have written concerning their deities."⁷⁷

As the foregoing suggests, Cellini was a master of both the well-turned phrase and of the bawdy double entendre. One must bear this in mind when reading his several descriptions of

⁶⁷Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 451, trans. amended.

⁶⁸Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 453. For the phallic meanings of "Pfeife," see Spalding, *An Historical Dictionary of German Figurative Usage*, fascicles 31–40 (Oxford, 1984), p. 1855.

⁶⁹Deutsch, *Schubert: Dokumente*, pp. 405–06; Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 601, letter of 6 February [no year]. Translation amended.

⁷⁰For the bawdy implications of "Flöte" and "Flöten," see Heinz Küpper, *Illustriertes Lexikon der deutschen Umgangs Sprache*, vol. III (Stuttgart, 1983), p. 903. "Nachtigall" is often "used for both sexes." Spalding, *An Historical Dictionary of German Figurative Usage*, fascicles 31–40, p. 1744.

⁷¹Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 601.

⁷²Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 303.

⁷³See Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. II: *Sexual Inversion* (3rd edn. Philadelphia, 1933), p. 4. "Game" is slang for prostitute in various languages. The gift of a game bird by an adult male to a youth was evidence of amorous interest among the Greeks. See James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven, 1986), p. 148.

⁷⁴*Aus Bauernfelds Tagebüchern*, ed. Carl Glossy, vol. I (Vienna, 1895), p. 34; Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 548.

⁷⁵Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance*, pp. 150, 234, n. 1; see Luigi Greci, *Benvenuto Cellini nei delitti e nei processi fiorentini ricostruiti attraverso le leggi del tempo* (Turin, 1930), pp. 16–24, 65–76.

⁷⁶Benvenuto Cellini, *Memoirs Written by Himself*, trans. Thomas Roscoe (London, 1928), pp. 440–41.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 41–42; he also describes how, accused of seducing young Cencio, he fled Florence to avoid arrest (pp. 414, 421–22).

his pursuit of game birds. In chapter 5 of the *Memoirs*, Cellini describes how, during a plague of "the French disease," he often diverted himself in the Roman ruins, where he "procured a considerable quantity of game," returning home "laden with pigeons of the largest size"; this "greatly improved my constitution," he writes. Again, in chapter 11, Cellini catches the "Gallic disease" and is treated by the most eminent physicians of Rome; abstinence and precautions result in a cure, so that he becomes "as sound as a roach." Then, "by way of recreation after what I had gone through, winter approaching, I took the diversion of fowling: this made me wade through brooks, face storms, and pass my time in marshy grounds; so that in a few days I was attacked by a disorder a hundred times more severe than the former." Finally, in chapter 28, Cellini writes at some length:

In the part of the city where we lodged the air was rather unwholesome, and on the arrival of summer we were all somewhat indisposed. During this our indisposition we made a discovery of a great waste, about a mile in extent, that belonged to the palace in which we lived, and where several pea-hens came like wild fowl to hatch their eggs. When I perceived this I charged my piece with a certain noiseless powder, and lying in wait for the young peacocks, every two days I killed one of them, which served us plentifully to live upon; and such was the effect of this food that it entirely cured our disorder.⁷⁸

In chapter 24, Cellini tells the "true Story" of a "pigeon" which was pursued but never caught by Cellini's rival, the Milanese goldsmith Giovanni Francesco della Tacca: "The poor creature is so timorous and suspicious, that it scarce ventures to show its head." Cellini charges his "broccardo" (as he called his fowling-piece) and bets the gentlemen assembled in his shop that he could "engage to hit that little bit of a head which peeps out of yonder hole." Naturally, he did not fail to accomplish his purpose.⁷⁹

Almost as though to dispel any lingering doubt about the nature of his pigeons and peacocks, Cellini tells us how he dressed a boy of

sixteen, named Diego, as a girl, adorned him with jewelry, and presented him as his mistress to Giulio Romano, Giovanni Francesco, and the Sienese sculptor Michelagnolo, all of whom were overwhelmed by Diego's beauty: "Though celestial beings are represented as males," said Michelagnolo, "behold there are female spirits in heaven likewise!" And Giulio Romano exclaimed that the other ladies present were only as crows "when compared to one of the finest peacocks that ever was beheld."⁸⁰

Thus Cellini provides the key to the meaning of "peacocks" in homosexual argot: they are beautiful boys in extravagant or feminine dress. And fowling in "wastes" and "marshy grounds" for peacocks and other wild birds is Cellini's euphemism for his forays in quest of youthful sexual partners.⁸¹

VI

That the young men of the Schubert circle loved each other seems amply clear. And, although I cannot be certain that some of the evidence I have offered here may not be wide of the mark, I believe it is reasonably probable that their primary sexual orientation was a homosexual one. By finding sexual release with anonymous partners in Vienna's *Halbwelt* they apparently were able to maintain idealized passionate friendships with each other and to infuse those relationships with some stability. It may be relevant that homosexual cross-age relationships predominated in Italy, Germany, and Austria, in contrast to France, England, and Northwestern Europe, where relationships between a man and

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 52–53, 133, 315.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 268–69. The Symonds translation is a bit more explicit: "I aimed my gun, elevating my arms, and using no other rest, and did what I had promised." *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, trans. John Addington Symonds (Garden City, N. Y., 1927), p. 209.

⁸⁰Cellini, *Memoirs*, pp. 62–63. In a letter of 25 February 1514, Macchiavelli makes absolutely explicit the equation of hunting for homosexual cruising and of game birds for young male sexual objects. *The Letters of Macchiavelli*, ed. Allan Gilbert (New York, 1961), pp. 154–58.

⁸¹For the Elizabethans, "peacock" was the male equivalent to "guinea-hen," "a wanton, whore, or courtesan." Erik Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (New York, 1960), p. 124. Weeks observes that, throughout Europe, homosexual men "often displayed stereotyped 'effeminate' characteristics and adopted female names . . ."; and Trumbach comments that descriptions of the homosexual subculture "always emphasized its effeminacy," citing evidence that young male prostitutes often bore female names and engaged in cross dressing. Weeks, in *Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality*, p. 124; Trumbach, p. 17; for transvestitism in Vienna, see Mayne, pp. 447–49; for earlier historical periods, see, e.g., John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1980), p. 78.

an adult effeminate partner (a "Queen") were prevalent.⁸²

Nevertheless, it seems possible that, in the "Greek" manner, some of the younger men were pederastic objects of older ones. Perhaps Schubert took the ephebe's role with Johann Michael Vogl (who was dubbed his "second father") and Mayrhofer, both considerably older than he was, and here one cannot speculate whether those were examples of spiritual love or carnal love. In the course of time Schubert launched his pursuit of Cellini's peacocks and fell victim to the illness that disrupted the Schubert circle and cast its shadow on his last years. And this pursuit may well account for the outraged and moralistic tone of those who described Schubert as "bathed in slime" or gripped by *passions mauvaises*. I doubt that even a confession of male homosexuality—in an age when overt dandyism and so-called confirmed bachelorhood abounded—would have been met by such outcries. Rather, what may have impelled some observers of Schubert's behavior to speak of abominations and vile practices was the prospect of sexual relations between a man and a youth, with its connotations of child molestation and its glimpse of a taboo realm of experience.

Not everyone will accept the evidence that I offer here. It will be suggested that Schubert's sexual orientation remained undefined for a longer period than I have allowed, or that it passed through a conventional phase before settling into homosexuality. Many will continue to lean upon Therese Grob, Countess Karoline Esterházy, and the "obliging chambermaid" Pepi Pöckelhofer, however slender these reeds may be as indications of Schubert's sexual "normality." The possibility will also be raised that Schubert's promiscuity, which gave rise to the moralizing of the memoirists, took the form of unspecified heterosexual activities, primarily with prostitutes, perhaps of an unorthodox nature. This argument can neither be confirmed nor refuted, but it is worth noting that whereas reports of Mozart's and Haydn's extramarital liaisons and of Beethoven's and Brahms's contacts with prostitutes were always gender specific, reports of Schubert's sexual encounters are almost invariably indeterminate. It will re-

quire a more detailed study to deal with bisexuality in the Schubert circle, to account for some of the marriages and betrothals among Schubert's friends—Schwind's engagement to Anna Hönig, Bauernfeld's long-term affair with Clothilde, or Vogl's, Spaun's, and Kupelwieser's marriages, several of which were enduring ones. Clearly there is some margin for error in my reading of the evidence on such matters, but it might be pointed out that Schwind's engagement was broken off by Hönig's family because of his non-conformist way of life and "lack of piety"; that Schober's engagement, too, was hastily terminated by Justina Bruchmann's family; that Bauernfeld never revealed and no one has ever discovered the identity of "Clothilde"; that Schober's marriage at the age of sixty was dissolved within a short time; and that Vogl's marriage at fifty-eight was a subject of grand merriment among Schubert and his friends.⁸³ It is not surprising that conventional marriages were commonplace in the Viennese homosexual community, with the usual full range of motivations.⁸⁴ On one occasion, Schober even suggested that Schubert take a certain Gusti Grünwedel to wife. The composer was so enraged at what was apparently his intimate friend's recommendation of a marriage of convenience that, Schober reported, he "rushed out without his hat, flushed with anger . . . [and] let himself go to pieces."⁸⁵

VII

"Schubert is better," wrote Schwind to Schober on 24 December 1823, "and it will not be long before he goes about with his own hair again, which had to be shorn owing to the rash," the rash with attendant hair loss being typical symptoms of the secondary stage of syphilis some three to eight months after infection.⁸⁶ Nor was Schubert alone in exhibiting such symptoms at this time. During the years 1823–25, several of his most intimate friends fell victim to severe illness, although we cannot be cer-

⁸³For Schwind, see Deutsch, *Franz Schubert's Letters and Other Writings* (New York, 1928), p. 122; for Bauernfeld, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 413; "Vogl is married!!!" wrote Schubert to Bauernfeld, 10 July 1826, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 539.

⁸⁴Mayne, *The Intersexes*, pp. 530–33.

⁸⁵Deutsch, *Memoirs*, pp. 265–66. For Fräulein Grünwedel, see Deutsch, *SDB*, pp. 603, 608.

⁸⁶Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 314, Schwind to Schober, 24 December 1823. Sams, p. 16.

⁸²Randolph Trumbach, personal communication.

tain that they were suffering from venereal disease. On 7 November 1823, Kupelwieser abruptly left Vienna on a tour of Italy in company of a Russian art-patron; the latter did not return, succumbing to a "dreadful *Nervenfeber*" (a contemporary term for any illness characterized by delirium or stupor) that allegedly attacked both men in the summer of 1824 while they were traveling in Sicily.⁸⁷ Upon Kupelwieser's return to Vienna in August 1825, Schwind wrote to Schubert: "He looks splendid and has a perfect head of hair, without which he had to do for a long time owing to typhus. . . ."⁸⁸ Schubert could well appreciate the implications, for his own recovery was signaled by a new growth of hair: "Schubert . . . has given up his wig," reported Schwind to Schober in February 1824; "and shows a charming cygnet's down."⁸⁹ Similarly, Schubert's questions about the publisher Maximilian Joseph Leidesdorf—"how is Leidesdorf? Are things progressing or is the dog losing his hair?"—probably indicates that yet another member of the Schubert circle was suffering the feared symptoms.⁹⁰

Not surprisingly, those afflicted found it expedient to leave Vienna for all or a portion of their convalescence. By the end of May, Schubert removed himself for the summer to Count Johann Esterházy's estate at Zseliz. Schober, too, left Vienna for Breslau in the summer of 1823 and did not return for two years. His recovery from an unspecified illness is suggested in his letter to Schubert of 2 December 1824:

⁸⁷"Kupelwieser," in *Oesterreichische National-Encyclopädie* (Vienna, 1835), I, 319; Feuchtmüller, *Leopold Kupelwieser und die Kunst der österreichischen Spätromantik*, pp. 18–42; Sams, p. 18.

⁸⁸Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 450, letter of 14 August 1825. Deutsch describes Kupelwieser's illness as "malaria" (Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 377).

⁸⁹Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 330, letter of 22 February 1824. Earlier, Schwind wrote: "it will not be long before he goes about with his own hair again, which had to be shorn owing to the rash. He wears a cosy wig." Letter of 24 December 1823, to Schober, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 314.

⁹⁰Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 370, letter of August 1824. My translation. The original reads: "Wie geht es Leidesdorf? Geht's vorwärts oder gehn dem Hund die Haar' aus?" (Deutsch, *Dokumente*, p. 255). Doblhoff wrote to Schober on 2 April 1824 that a certain "Bernhardt"—perhaps the son of one of Schubert's doctors—"has almost wholly recovered from a pretty severe illness, Schubert still complains of pains in his bones, the others are all well." Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 342.

"How glad I am that you are quite well again! I too shall be soon."⁹¹

Absence and illness, added to other centrifugal forces and personal conflicts within the Schober-Schubert circle, led to its eventual disintegration in 1824. "I am quite frightened," wrote Johanna Lutz to Kupelwieser early in that year, "for there is all sorts of vexation in your circle again."⁹² Two months later, Schubert wrote to Kupelwieser: "Our society (reading circle) has done itself to death owing to a reinforcement of that rough chorus of beer-drinkers and sausage-eaters," these perhaps being those ordinary folk—shopkeepers, tradesmen, servants, bureaucrats—who made up the majorities of the homosexual communities in every city.⁹³ On 2 April 1824, Doblhoff reported to Schober: "Yesterday our reading circle was formally suspended. It had grown so much that in the end it devoured itself. . . . Where is the unity of all those noble ones? Many are abroad, many have buried themselves in pandects and codes."⁹⁴ He might have added that several leading members had decided to pursue matrimony as well. Schwind confirmed the close of the Schubert-Schober circle's Golden Age: "Now that all are away, affection sinks down underground, and . . . gay reunion has vanished."⁹⁵

Schober's return from Breslau in the summer of 1825 was thus an occasion for rejoicing—and some comic relief as well, for it seems that he had become a female impersonator during a brief career in a theatrical troupe, playing drag roles under a pseudonym. Enjoying a good laugh as he relayed this news to Spaun, Schubert wrote: "I greatly look forward to seeing him and hope he may bring a more alive and intelligent spirit into the circle again, much as it has shrunk."⁹⁶ Indeed, the circle reconstituted itself as a small group—usually Schubert, Schober, Schwind, Bauernfeld, and Spaun plus, less consistently, Enderes, Gahy, the Hartmanns,

⁹¹Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 386. Schubert's letter to Schober of 21 September 1824 closes: "that you are well I do not doubt," perhaps a reference to an illness. Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 376.

⁹²Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 325, letter of 25 January 1824.

⁹³Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 339, letter of 31 March 1824. See Trumbach, p. 19.

⁹⁴Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 342.

⁹⁵Schwind to Kupelwieser, letter of 9 June 1824, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 351.

⁹⁶Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 432, Schubert to Spaun, letter of 21 July 1825.

among others—meeting at favorite haunts several times per week, listening contentedly to Schober's readings from Romantic authors, quietly enjoying each other's company, aware of, but unwilling fully to confront the inevitability of their separation. Bauernfeld's diary inaudibly spoke for the entire circle: "What is to become of us all? Shall we stick together?"⁹⁷

VIII

We may now be in a better position to understand why Schubert confined himself within his own group, why he failed to visit Beethoven, and why Beethoven's nephew wrote in a conversation book for 1823: "They greatly praise *Schubert*, but it is said that he conceals himself."⁹⁸ Schubert and his compatriots inhabited a clandestine realm, one constantly beset by a variety of fears—of surveillance, of arrest and persecution, of stigmatization and exile. These were not idle concerns, for distinctions between religious heresy, political subversion, and sexual deviation were never very finely drawn by hierarchical authority.⁹⁹ Indeed, idealistic and aesthetic impulses often merge effortlessly into quasi-oppositional politics. As early as 1814 Mayrhofer led a group of Schubert associates—among them Kupelwieser, Schober, and the poet Johann Senn—in forming a clandestine association of young male idealists, one "without statutes, without names, without formalities," as Anton von Spaun described it.¹⁰⁰ Soon they were joined by others, including Schubert, Kreil, Kenner, Ottenwalt, and Joseph von Spaun, and in 1817–18 they published two volumes of a journal entitled *Beiträge zur Bildung für Jünglinge*, dedicated to awakening "true and manly patriotic sentiments" in their contemporaries.¹⁰¹ Several members of a successor group

(which the police dubbed the "Freshmen Students Association"), including Schubert, were arrested in 1820 "upon suspicion of subversive activities," and Johann Senn was permanently exiled from Vienna.¹⁰² In 1826, the police raided the convivial gathering place called "Ludlams Höhle" just after Schubert and Bauernfeld applied for membership. Its assets were seized, and it was suppressed at least partly on the grounds that pornographic writings and drawings were circulating there.¹⁰³

There were, however, compensations for Schubert's concealment within the hermetic and self-sustaining world of his own subculture. Through his homosexuality Schubert left a realm of compulsion and entered what—at least momentarily—appeared to be a realm of freedom. To its members, the bohemian-homosexual community represented freedom from the restraints of family and the state, freedom from the compulsions of society and the strait-jackets of heterosexuality, freedom from the imperative to raise a family and to make a living in a routine job—in short, freedom to ignore the reality principle in favor of the pursuit of beauty and pleasure. These were temporarily adequate, if ultimately insufficient, indemnities for a precarious existence on the margins of society.

"Take people as they are, not as they should be," the nineteen-year-old Schubert had written in his diary for 8 September 1816, that same diary in which he had expressed his terror of marriage. Now we can glimpse what he meant when he wrote those words. Now we can understand why, later on, Schubert no longer felt it necessary to plead for the right to be different but would proudly assert it as his inalienable

⁹⁷Glossy, *Aus Bauernfelds Tagebüchern*, I, 40; Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 662. Diary entry of 31 August 1827.

⁹⁸Ludwig van Beethovens *Konversationshefte*, ed. Karl-Heinz Köhler and Dagmar Beck, vol. III (Leipzig, 1983), p. 330.

⁹⁹See Arthur N. Gilbert, "Conceptions of Homosexuality and Sodomy in Western History," in *Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality*, p. 60; Vern L. Bullough, "Heresy, Witchcraft, and Sexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* 1 (1974), 183–201; Arno Karlen, "The Homosexual Heresy," *The Chaucer Review* 6 (1971), 44–63.

¹⁰⁰*Gedichte von Johann Mayrhofer*, ed. Michael Maria Rabenlechner (Vienna, 1938), p. 221. See also Karl Kaspers, "Schuberts Jugendfreunde," *Wiener Zeitung*, 18 November 1928 (No. 266), pp. 3ff.

¹⁰¹Wurzbach, vol. XVII (1867), p. 187.

¹⁰²Brown, *Schubert*, p. 100. See Deutsch, *SDB*, pp. 128–29 for the police report. Hilmar observes, "All documentary evidence, normally part of police records, is either missing or not being made available." Ernst Hilmar, *Franz Schubert in His Time* (Portland, Ore., 1988), p. 21. Despite the risks, Senn's intimate friend Franz Bruchmann soon undertook illegal studies with Schelling at Erlangen, where he and the homosexual poet Count August von Platen became closely acquainted; Bruchmann left Erlangen with high hopes of starting a journal under Platen's editorship and returned to Vienna, where he introduced the poet's works to Schubert and his circle. See Paul Bornstein, *Der Briefwechsel des Grafen August von Platen*, vol. II (Munich, 1914), pp. 225–28, 239, 240; Deutsch, *SDB*, 187–88, 226.

¹⁰³Ignaz Castelli, *Aus dem Leben eines Wiener Phäaken 1781–1862: Die Memoiren des I. F. Castelli*, ed. Adolf Saager (Stuttgart, 1912 [?]), p. 327.

prerogative. It was a young man confident that he had chosen the only possible road for his personal fulfillment who, in November 1822, inscribed Goethe's defiant words in a friend's album:

One thing will not do for all.
Let each live in his tradition,
Each consider his own mission,
And who stands, beware a fall.¹⁰⁴

And we now have a framework within which to sense what Schubert meant when, in his full maturity, he expressed his hatred of "that one-sidedness which makes so many wretches believe that only what they happen to be doing is best, everything else being worthless."¹⁰⁵ And we may also understand why he despaired of transcending his condition:

Imagine a man whose health will never be right again, and who in sheer despair over this ever makes things worse and worse, instead of better; imagine a man, I say, whose most brilliant hopes have perished, to whom the felicity of love and friendship have nothing to offer but pain at best, whom enthusiasm . . . for all things beautiful threatens to forsake;¹⁰⁶

and why he asked Schober: "What ever should we do with happiness, misery being the only stimulant left to us?"¹⁰⁷ We may now be in a better position to fathom Schubert's oscillation between gaiety and sorrow, his attraction to pain.

IX

Schubert's nature has for too long remained hazy, shadowy, and unfocused. Thus far, biographers have not been able to provide even a provisionally convincing portrait of his personality,

to delineate his obsessions, to understand his familial and intimate relationships, and ultimately to glimpse some of the driving forces of his creativity. But it is not too late for us—as it was for Schubert—to understand why he remained for so long in the grip of a hunger for youth and an insatiable sexual appetite. We may never uncover the traces of Schubert's character within his music. But it is transparent that his compulsive hedonism was an essential part of his nature, and arguable that his hedonism closely paralleled the obsessiveness of his prodigious creativity. For if gluttony was central to Schubert's personality, it was a gluttony not only for food and drink, for pleasure and rapture, but for beauty and music as well. Partly we may view Schubert's reckless physicality as a compensation for his labors and deprivations, as his way of being in and of the world, of needing to emerge from the secluded space of his own creativity. Hedonism, however, may well be a devouring form of the play-impulse, perpetually and unappeasably ingesting the objects of delight. There may be a sense in which the pleasure-seeking drive for "pheasants," "peacocks," and "punch" also represents Schubert's drive toward physical extinction, his way of hastening death even while seeking to delay it, of bringing on the shadows by a total immersion in the sensuous moment. If this is true, we may well be witnessing the ultimate sign of the exercise of Schubert's free will—his decision to live and die in his own way, unrestrainedly, proudly, and creatively. It even seems possible that, through a consideration of Schubert's sexual unorthodoxy and his resistance to compulsion, we have touched a heroic region in Schubert's personality.



¹⁰⁴Goethe, last verse of "Beherzigung"; Eng. trans. Eric Blom, in Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 247.

¹⁰⁵From a lost diary of 1824, cit. Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 336.

¹⁰⁶Letter of 31 March 1824 to Kupelwieser, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 339.

¹⁰⁷Letter of 21 September 1824, Deutsch, *SDB*, p. 374.