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BEETHOVEN'S REWORKING OF LIEDER

by

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ABSTRACT

Beethoven's career as a song composer has been unjustly neglected. He composed some eighty lieder at a time when the genre was beginning to take shape, and when the value of the through-composed song as against that of the strophic, folk-style song was being hotly contested in German poetic circles. This paper examines four song texts that Beethoven set more than once. His motivations for reëvaluating an existing composition were never the same from one song to another, and a spectrum of levels of re-working is revealed. In Chapter Two this process involves the simple correction of the details of phrasing and accompaniment, in the case of the parallel settings of Stoll's lyric "An die Geliebte". At the other end of the continuum are Beethoven's four simultaneous settings of Goethe's "Sehnsucht", a set of discrete, if similar, musical entities. Chapter Three deals with the more thoroughgoing revision of a setting of Tiedge's "An die Hoffnung". The later setting of 1814 represents a completely new approach to the text. Chapter Four deals with Matthisson's "Opferlied", which reappeared in Beethoven's work in slightly altered forms over a period of thirty years.

While it is impossible to prove precisely why Beethoven felt compelled to re-compose these songs, their texts all seem to have had a particular value to him and he went to considerable trouble in his search for an optimal setting of each of them. An unusually large body of

documents records the evolution of these songs and their impact on Beethoven's biography. Some of the sketches for these songs survive and the compositional process revealed by a brief analysis of them reveals the persistence of a few key musical motifs, in the late reworking of *Opferlied*, in contrast to the rich diversity of material used in the fashioning of the *An die Hoffnung* settings.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the judgement of posterity, Beethoven's career as a song composer remains a sideline. What little attention his lieder have received has been swamped by the studies of his ground-breaking instrumental works, and of the hundreds of vocal works scholars have been mainly attracted to the late large-scale creations that mark the path to the albeit unsuspected ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The obvious candidates for this category include the *Missa Solemnis*, *Fidelio*, and above all the *Ninth Symphony*. Martin Cooper's study of Beeethoven's last decade is a good example of this unbalanced preoccupation with the larger works.[1] The miniatures of the 1820s commissioned and performed only once or twice in the composer's lifetime played a prominent role in his correspondence and daily life, and Cooper's picture of Beethoven is quite incomplete without them. Chapter Four will show that Beethoven took pains to produce two versions, in 1822 and 1824, of a song that had long preoccupied him.

Analysis of the lieder, in English language scholarship, has been mostly restricted to isolated works notable for their originality, such as *An*

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[1]Martin Cooper, *Beethoven's Last Decade* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

die ferne Geliebte with its unprecedented use of cyclic form,[2] or to songs whose sketch history reveals a particularly interesting evolution.[3] The nearly two hundred folk-song settings of the British Isles have also attracted their share of attention.[4] Comparison with the similar efforts of Haydn, Pleyel, Weber and Hummel is irresistible.

For German scholars the Beethoven lieder were addressed in 1928 in a classic study by Hans Boettcher, *Beethoven als Liederkomponist.*[5] Belying his book's title, however, Boettcher concentrated less on the compositional process of individual songs, and less still on their place in Beethoven's biography, than on the taxonomy and evolution of formal aspects of lieder as a whole within the Beethoven oeuvre. Boettcher's preoccupation was with Beethoven's contributions to the establishment of a new and important musical genre. This makes his book a very different work than for instance the exactly contemporary study of *Brahms' Lieder* by Max Friedlaender, with its chronological survey of an entire lieder output, and careful discussions of each song.[6] Boettcher did, however,

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[2]Joseph Kerman, "*An die Ferne Geliebte*" , in *Beethoven Studies*, ed Alan Tyson (New York: Norton and Norton, 1973), 123-157.

[3]Lewis Lockwood, "The Sketches for Beethoven's *Sehnsucht*" in *ibid.*, 97-122.

[4]C. Hopkinson and C. B. Oldman, "Thomson's Collections of National Song, with special References to the Contributions of Haydn and Beethoven." *Transactions of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society,* ii pt i (1940), addenda and corrigenda iii pt ii (1954), 123.

[5]Hans Boettcher, *Beethoven als Liederkomponist* (Augsburg: Dr Benno Fischer Verlag, 1928).

[6]Max Friedlaender, *Brahms' Lieder: An Introduction to the songs for one and two voices.* translated by C. Leonard Leese (London: OUP, 1928).

provide a useful "Übersicht über die Lieder L. v. Beethovens" in table form as an appendix.

A Beethoven song handbook of the Friedlaender variety is in fact difficult to imagine, in light of the unevenness of these eighty or so works which puzzled contemporaries as much as later students. The diversity of motivation behind this array of small pieces stands in sharp contrast to the homogeneity of purpose behind the art songs of composers beginning with Schubert. By Brahms's time the lied was well established as a concert vehicle for a professional team of singer and pianist. The role of the accompaniment was established on an equal footing with that of the voice. Certain kinds of poetry were considered appropriate, while others, those for instance expressing partisan sentiments or embodying peculiar localisms, were long outmoded in favour of a more universal emotional appeal. For Beethoven, song-singing could certainly take place in the sort of circumstances made famous by the Schubert-Abend, but in some songs the connotations of the Masonic lodge, of the entracte, or of the patriotic or political meeting, are unmistakable. Many of his songs are undeniably slight efforts, unself-conscious trifles which arouse little interest from the point of view of form or technique. Of these small pieces some are only a few measures long and take the form of the ballad with many verses. It must be remembered however that this was a form not at all scorned by Schubert, and one which has always retained its popularity outside the concert hall.

Simple secular lieder of this kind came into their own in the 1770s and 80s as a result of new printing techniques, making the publication of

songs intended for the amateur middle-class public into a viable commercial proposition. This growing market never threatened to displace patron-oriented compositions (as Beethoven's own career reminds us); it was a small-scale venture even for the most successful early song producers, Neefe, Schulz and Reichardt.[7]

The beginnings of the new genre were marked by a well-known polemic which in some ways continues to this day. At issue was the ideal of the folk-song, and Beethoven's contribution to this discussion consisted not only of the folk-song arrangements commissioned by George Thomson between 1809 and 1816 but also of songs derived from a particularly lyrical body of German poetry, notably his settings of Goethe whose feelings on the question of the *Volkston* were unambiguous. Beethoven's most ingenuous lieder virtually embody Goethe's dicta regarding the honesty of direct communication in song. Goethe never laid out a manifesto, but his views are consistently clear in his autobiographical reflections, in the nearly 850 letters he exchanged with Zelter, and in accounts we have of his reactions upon first, and in some cases more sympathetic second hearings of particular lieder. (His revised opinion, late in life, of Schubert's *Erlkönig* deserves to be one of the most famous of nineteenth-century musico-poetic anecdotes. It was sung to him by Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient on 24 April, 1830, and Goethe told her, laconically "I have heard this composition once before, when it did not appeal to me at all; but sung

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[7]Margaret Mahoney Stoljar: *Poetry and Song in Late Eighteenth Century Germany* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 88.

in this way the whole shapes itself into a visible picture.")[8] The propaganda efforts on behalf of the folk-song style were left to such lesser workmen as J. A. P. Schulz (1747-1800), the composer of the *Lieder in Volkston* , a term he coined for his anthologies of 1782 and 1785 . With great sense of purpose, the *Lieder in Volkston* set out publicly to apply the Enlightenment doctrine of the social worth of art, while at the same time distancing the composer from the facile urbanity of the *style galante*.[9]

The ideal of *Volkstümlichkeit* was a product of the philosophical emphasis on the Nation stemming from Hegel and Herder. The issue is a complicated one, drawing upon mid-century arguments involving Rousseau's theory of the natural forms of song and the original modes of expression developed by the species. For Rousseau the first language was "le cri de la Nature"[10], and contemporary theories, propounded by the *philosophe* Condillac and by Vico before him, speculated that these first animal cries were sung and not spoken. In the course of this inquiry Herder collected the contemporaneous equivalent, folk poetry and ballads, which he published as *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* in 1778. This highly influential volume bridges philosophical inquiry and the founding of a German national literature. Herder had already had a huge impact on the impressionable young Goethe in the autumn of 1770, opening his eyes to

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[8]Maurice J. E. Brown, "Schubert", *The New Grove Encyclopaedia of Music and Musicians* ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), Vol 16 p 755.

[9]Stoljar, *op. cit.*, 148.

[10]Quoted in *ibid.*, 46.

the new sources of poetry in folk-song. So concerned was Goethe to take full advantage of this inheritance that he composed ersatz folk-poetry to existing melodies, reversing the process in which Beethoven was involved. Many of these verses, for example "Heidenröslein", have acquired unofficial status as folk-songs,[11] along with three similar efforts by Matthias Claudius, the "Abendlied", "Der Tod und das Mädchen", and the "Rheinwein Lied".[12] Of those that appeared in the *Taschenbuch fur das Jahr 1804*, Schiller said that they were "excellent, and one can say that they elevate the melodies and fit them even better than the original texts for which the tunes were invented."[13]

Beethoven's feelings towards Goethe remained strong throughout his life, but a loyal accommodation of the poet's views on the setting of lyrical texts became difficult for him. Chronologically speaking, there is in Beethoven's works no simple evolution towards more complicated forms of solo song. Perhaps the most outstanding example of his experiments along folk-song lines comes from 1807-08, at the height of Beethoven's middle period, in his four settings of Goethe's 'Sehnsucht'. These will be examined in the first chapter.

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[11]Edgar Istel, "Goethe and Music", *Musical Quarterly* XIV (1928), 230.

[12]Henry Garland and Mary Garland, eds., *The Oxford Companion to German Literature*, (Oxford: OUP, 1986), 140.

[13]Frederick W. Sternfeld, *Goethe and Music: A List of Parodies and Goethe's Relationship to Music* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1954), 8.

The objections that Goethe voiced to Beethoven's forceful personality in the wake of a shadowy incident at Teplitz parallel an unease with his music, which is revealed in Goethe's well-known remarks concerning the Fifth Symphony and even more specifically in his objection to Beethoven's 1809 setting of Mignon's song, "Kennst du das Land?" from his novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Goethe objected to songs not laid out in verse form in general, but in particular to one supposed, in the context of the novel, to come from the mouth of a tired, lonely little girl. "I should have thought the same marks which recur in each of the three stanzas at the same place would have been sufficient to indicate to the composer that I expected of him nothing but a *Lied*. Mignon, according to her character, can sing a *Lied* but not an aria."[14] This was a crucial distinction for Goethe, whose musical insights came from his associations with his own in-house composers such as Karl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832) and Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814), his collaborator in the production in 1789 of the *Singspiel Claudine von Villa Bella*. Much of the debate is crystallized in Goethe's careful vocabulary: "aria" is a term which alludes to the Italian stage, with its elaborate artifice and temperamental professional musicians. The lied, on the other hand, was for Goethe part and parcel of a German lyrical poetry with its origins in folk-song. An examination of Op. 75 no. 1 readily reveals the features to which Goethe must have objected. It is by no means a virtuoso piece. *Pace* Goethe, the song is set strophically and it is no more adventurous

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[14]Quoted in *ibid.*, , 21

harmonically than many a song by Reichardt, but Goethe's objections must be evaluated. The features of the song that stand out are manipulation of the key, accompanimental interludes, radical tempo changes, variation form, as opposed to straight strophic setting, and unauthorized repetition of the text. The reiteration of the word "dahin" is necessary because of the odd musical proportions; fifteen measures set the first four and a half lines, and another fifteen are needed for the remaining line and a half. Even the music critic Rochlitz agreed with Goethe in the *Allgemeine Musicalische Zeitung* review which deplored the "style of the Italian *ariette*."[15] Leslie Orrey takes Goethe's side in our own day in a surprising neo-*Volkston* discussion in *The Beethoven Reader*: "It is the kind of problem that Mozart might have solved."[16]

In spite of the scant attention many of his lieder have received, Beethoven's career as a song composer was a constant thread in his life. Maynard Solomon amongst others takes pains to remind us that

> Beethoven's propensity for instrumental music is often exaggerated; more than 40 percent of his Bonn works are for voice. This percentage correspondes closely to the proportion governing his entire output; approximately half of his 600 works are vocal. Naturally, statistics do not properly express the relative importance of different works, but they do give some indication that Beethoven was drawn to the voice throughout his career.[17]

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[15]*Ibid.*

[16]Leslie Orrey, "The Songs", in *The Beethoven Reader* ed. Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune (New York: Norton & Co., 1971), 430.

[17]Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1977), 47.

His earliest efforts include a number of simple songs, such as "An einen Säugling" and "Schilderung eines Mädchens", which were notated on two staves, with only the simplest accompaniment in the right hand of the piano. This two-stave arrangement, the style of the generations of C.P.E. Bach and Reichardt, has performance practice implications: these songs seem to have been intended for solo performance, the singer accompanying him- or herself.

We know a good deal about Beethoven's apprenticeship to a series of established composers and teachers including Haydn, Albrechtsberger and Neefe. From Salieri he sought to learn the craft of setting Italian texts. The result was a series of experiments, between 1793 and 1802, in setting Metastasio's texts, several of which were completed and took their place in the inventory of his songs as Op. 82.

But after this youthful apprenticeship, it was with the poets themselves that Beethoven sought to associate himself. It is no coincidence that of the few song texts which he set more than once, the most significant are by Goethe, Matthisson, and Tiedge, who number amongst the half-dozen poets that we can easily identify as his favorites. Besides these three, we know on Anton Schindler's authority of Beethoven's esteem for Count Haugwitz, whose "Resignation" the composer set in 1817 after he had virtually abandoned song composition, and for Alois Jetteiles, the poet who provided the text for *An die ferne Geliebte* . Schindler goes on to enumerate Matthisson and Tiedge in this pantheon.[18]

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[18]AntonSchindler, *Beethoven as I knew him*, trans. Constance S. Jolly (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 337.

Mention has already been made of Goethe who, as he did later with Schubert, remained aloof to Beethoven's protestations of affection. Their rather one-sided relationship can be documented on the basis of letters, dedications of works, and Goethe's remarks in his carefully recorded conversations with others, including Zelter and Bettina von Arnim. Beethoven's esteem may be judged *prima facie* from the consistent setting of Goethe's poetry, from the Bonn years until the end, to say nothing of the *Egmont* music, or Beethoven's unrealized plans for setting *Faust*, *Erlkönig*, and *Heidenröslein*.[19] Rochlitz is the source of an interesting and much-quoted observation, whose negative tone may well have prejudiced later audiences of Beethoven's lieder. In the summer of 1822 Rochlitz, the editor of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, met Beethoven, and recorded his impressions of the composer at length.

> "But", said he, "you really live at Weimar, do you not?...Then it is not likely that you know the great Goethe?" I nodded my head vigorously. "I know him, too," said Beethoven, throwing out his chest, while an expression of the most radiant pleasure overspread his face... "Goethe -- he is alive, and he wants us all to live with him. That is why he can be set to music. There is no one who lends himself to musical setting as well as he. I do not like to write songs..."[20]

Goethe in person seems to have lived up to Beethoven's expectations, and Rochlitz' account shows that after their meeting in 1811 the composer remained effusive. *Meerstille und glückliche Fahrt* Op. 112,

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[19]Paul Nettl, *Beethoven Handbook* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1956), 75.

[20]*Beethoven: Impressions of Contemporaries*, ed. O.G. Sonneck (New York: G. Schirmer Inc, 1926), 125-126.

first sung on Christmas day, 1815, was dedicated to its poet, "the Immortal Goethe". Notwithstanding the business prospects at stake, Beethoven's attitude is still clear in his last letter to Goethe, dated February 8, 1823. He wrote to Goethe and to several other European dignitaries in an attempt to sell the proposed publication of the *Missa Solemnis* through subscriptions. The attempt fell through, but his remarks to the poet reflect the attitudes of a lifetime:

> The admiration, love, and esteem which I have cherished since my youth for the one and only immortal Goethe have persisted... I feel constantly prompted by a strange desire to say all this to you, seeing that I live in your writings.[21]

For all Schindler's notorious unreliability in matters of fact, his insistence on Beethoven's admiration for the poet Friedrich von Matthisson (1761-1831) accords with the evidence of a letter of August 4, 1800. Moreover his testimony demonstrates the endurance of these strong feelings, since Schindler only became an acquaintance after 1814, and on intimate terms with the composer after about 1822. Beethoven completed four settings of Matthisson's poetry including "Andenken", WoO 136, "An Laura", WoO 112, and the popular *Adelaïde* Op. 46. Schubert set these same texts in 1814 along with twenty-three others by Matthisson, all early in his

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[21]*The Letters of Beethoven.* Trans. Emily Anderson (London: Macmillan, 1961): 998.

career. The implication is that Schubert's development as a song writer outstripped the usefulness of an eighteenth-century society poet.

Beethoven's *Adelaïde* was composed in 1797 and promptly published, with a dedication to Matthisson. In 1800 Beethoven, clearly hoping for another poem to inspire him so successfully, sent the poet a copy of his song "with a certain amount of apprehension." He was effusive about "the heavenly pleasure which your poetry in general has always given and *will ever give me.*"[22]

To date Matthisson had been in print for nearly twenty years since the 1781 publication of his *Lieder* in Breslau, and he does not seem to have replied to the young composer's entreaties. This is a pity, for Beethoven's interesting letter dates from an important period of self-appraisal and introspection. The "Heiligenstadt Testament" is only two years away. Beethoven, on the verge of being forced on account of his deafness to abandon a career as a performer, is forging his artistic credo, and he shares his reflections with the poet ten years his senior:

> You yourself are aware what changes a few years may produce in an artist who is constantly progressing. The greater the strides he makes in his art, the less is he satisfied with his earlier works.

His sense of urgency and his confidence in his own ineluctable progress obscure Beethoven's seemingly deliberate omission of an earlier, simpler setting of a text by Matthisson, the "Opferlied", which lay

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[22]*Ibid.*, 41.

unpublished until 1808. The implications of this apparent dissimulation will emerge in Chapter Four.

Beethoven's involvement with the poet Christoph Adolph Tiedge (1752-1841) was closer, but once again the surviving documents suggest a one-sided relationship. Tiedge was successful and briefly popular in his own day, never more than with the publication of *Urania* in 1801. Beethoven's two settings of the same text from this long work seem to have been precipitated by his labours at producing an opera. In Tiedge Beethoven felt he had met a kindred spirit,[23] whom he could greet with the informal "Du", and form as close a relationship as Goethe had with Zelter. But in the end it seems that Beethoven alienated this poet as well.

It is unremarkable for a composer to go through several stages of composition to produce a song, as opposed to finishing it in a single flash of inspiration, as for example in the anecdote concerning Schubert's composition of the *Erlköning* in one afternoon in the late autumn of 1815. Beethoven in particular is notorious for having bequeathed to posterity the mass of material showing his various attempts over a longer or shorter period of time to resolve compositional problems in the course of a series of sketches. This process will be explored briefly in the case of two of the songs he reset.

But it is another thing to have published, a song, and then return to the source of the work, its literary text. To start afresh is to suggest dissatisfaction with and unresolved feelings for the earlier work, and to

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[23]Edgar Istel, "Goethe and Music", 228, 230.

become self-critical in a way that has consequences for the role of the artist in the modern era. In one sense the post-classical urge for originality, the continual progress of which Beethoven speaks in his letter to Matthisson, inveighs against this kind of revision. To take Beethoven at his word, if there is only progress, then there can be no looking back, no returning to dwell on a job that has clearly been completed, however unsatisfactorily. Yet the process of revision was vitally important in his career.

Beethoven seems to speak directly to this matter in a letter to George Thomson, who had apparently desired of the composer that he alter the accompaniment and ritornellos of nine out of seventy-one folk-song settings he had submitted. Beethoven replied somewhat self-defensively,

> Je ne suis pas accoutumé de retoucher mes compositions; je ne l'ai jamais fait, pénétré de la verité que tout changement partiel altère le charactère de la composition.

(Unaccustomed or not, he seems to have made the requested alterations.)[24]

Beethoven left a number of songs unfinished. They remain in fragments amidst sketches for other projects. Some of these were drawn upon over a span of many years; the compostion of the little song *Der Kuss*, for instance, is testimony to Beethoven's tenacity, hoarding earlier materials for reference over a period of decades in some cases. *Der Kuss* was roughly sketched in the Grasnick I Sketchbook of 1798, and lay silent

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[24]*The Letters of Beethoven*,, I 405.

until twenty-five years later it was finally spruced up and published. as Op. 128. The autograph was tersely marked "1822 in decemb."[25]

But in the case of the songs dealt with in the following pages, Beethoven had been sufficiently pleased by the fruits of his labour to commit himself to their early versions. Sometimes these bore a dedication, sometimes opus numbers of their own, or they appeared in monthly almanacs following the practice of an earlier generation. Op. 32 was favorably reviewed in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. A "genuine text", sometimes elusive amidst conflicting versions of a work, can be said to exist for all of these early versions. But the applicability of the term "version" varies from one of these texts to another. In the first two songs, examined in Chapter Two, the alternate settings are close alternatives to each other, differing in detail only. In the example from his middle years, represented here by his two settings of *An die Hoffnung*, Beethoven was not content with anything less than a radical alteration, a fresh start. And as Chapter Four shows, Beethoven explores the possibilities of an earlier version of the *Opferlied* to provide a newly enriched, "informed" version of an old song from his youth. He has thus come full circle. And with these reworkings of lieder Beethoven anticipates the tendency of succeeding composers to reappraise song texts, as for instance Schumann with his two settings of Möricke's *Das verlassene Mägdelein* , (1847 and 1849).

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[25]Tyson, "A Beethoven Price-list of 1822" in *Beethoven Essays: Studies in Honour of Eliot Forbes* ed. Lewis Lockwood and Phyllis Benjamin (Combridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 61

An examination of these reworkings throws light on Beethoven's changing approch to composition in general. We know a surprising amount about the details of commissions, first performances, and the reception of these works, and can judge how much care Beethoven put into them by analysing some of the sketches. Our critical assessment of these multiple settings thus promises to shed new light on significant, yet hitherto neglected aspects of "Beethoven als Liederkomponist". An overview of the works to be discussed is shown in Figure 1.

SONG	SKETCHES AND DATE	TRANSCRIPTION OR LOCATION	EDITION
Opferlied (Matthisson)	Kafka (Grasnick 8), 1794 3v-6 Grasnick 1, 1798 6v-7r Kessler, 1802 3v-7v London add MS 29947*	Kerman, Kafka Miscellany E. Szabo dissertation Nottebohm, Brandenburg London	Simrock, Bonn: No. 3 of 3 Deutsche Lieder, 1808
An die Hoffnung (Tiedge)	Mendelssohn 15, 1804-05 151-157	This thesis	Im Kunst und Industrie Comtoir Vienna, 1805
Sehnsucht (Goethe)	Sketchbook of 1807-08 Landsberg 12 p. 70 Bonn Mh 75, 76 1-2 (second setting only)*	Berlin DSB	No. 3 in Prometheus 1808; the remainder Simrock, Bonn 1809
An die Geliebte (Stoll)	Petter Sketchbook 1811-12 148 Grasnick 20a 1		Simrock, Bonn, 1817
An die Hoffnung	Sketchbook of 1814-15 3v	Tours	Steiner, Vienna, 1816
Opferlied	Autograph 11/2, 1824-5, 18,19* Grasnick 4, 1824 21-22 Autograph 45/2v* Ms 53*	Berlin, StPK Berlin, DSB Paris	Schott, Mainz, 1825

*Listed in Hans Schmidt, "Verzeichnis der Skizzen Beethovens", Beethoven Jahrbuch vi (1965-68) 7-128. Other information culled from Tyson, Winter, Johnson, The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History - Reconstruction - Inventory (Berkeley, 1985)

FIGURE 1: SELECTIVE CHRONOLOGY OF SONGS

CHAPTER TWO

I

"An die Geliebte" WoO 134

There is no intrinsic requirement for a German song text to be continually reappraised along the lines of Renaissance or Baroque musical craft. Many early operas were composed to the same plot, if not the identical text. Metastasio's immense popularity as a librettist need only be recalled; composers were only too happy to re-set his familiar stories. Church composers would reharmonize the same melody dozens of different ways in changing contexts, and compose many different pieces in such genres as parody mass or organ chorale-prelude, all based on the same tune-text matrix, each time viewing the received musical material in a new light and from a different perspective.

The same cannot be said for Beethoven's four simultaneous settings of Goethe's *Sehnsucht*, which appear practically identical when compared to, for instance, Bach's preludes on the chorale "Nun komm der Heiden Heiland". What "Sehnsucht" represents is not reappraisal so much as dissatisfaction, and at the top of the autograph page stands the composer's gruff self-assessment: "There was not enough time to produce something good, therefore several attempts."[1]

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[1]Quoted in Max Unger, "Zu den Erstdrucken einiger Werke Beethovens", *Die Musik* 105 (1938), 140.

The degree to which a song can be rewritten begins with the simple correction of its details of phrasing and accompaniment. This case of minor differences applies to Beethoven's pair of settings of Stoll's lyric, "An die Geliebte" , whose autographs are both dated December, 1811. The earlier version, with triplets in the accompaniment, differs hardly at all in terms of melodic contour from that which appeared in the Vienna *Friedensblätter* of August 12, 1814.[2] The songs share an index number, WoO 140, and are distinguished from each other in the *Gesamtausgabe* only through the indication of the purportedly earlier setting as "Frühere Bearbeitung."

This song seems to be one of Beethoven's efforts motivated by extramusical concerns. Maynard Solomon, at pains to reveal conclusively the identity of the "Immortal Beloved" of the famous letter of 1812, points out that this love-song was written for Antonie Brentano, and its original version, with the triplets, is for use with that other popular accompanying instrument of the day, the guitar, on which Antonie was proficient.[3]

The guitar setting remained unpublished until 1825. A song with guitar-style accompaniment is unique in Beethoven's output, and the biographical conclusions that Solomon wishes to draw are compelling. The small song is a love offering pencilled into the last page of the Petter Sketchbook. Stoll's poetry had not yet appeared in print:

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[2]Hans Boettcher, *Beethoven als Liederkomponist,* Tafel IX.

[3]Solomon, *Beethoven*, 175.

O let me from your placid eyes
In their loveable shining
Drink from your cheek the tear
Before the earth swallows it up!

It is lingering on your cheek
And ardently wishes to devote itself to fidelity.
Now that I receive it so in a kiss,
Now your sorrows are mine also.[4]

Beethoven's approach to setting this text is musically interesting. The poignancy of the composer's threefold reiteration of the last line is enhanced, in the guitar version, by the addition of an unauthorized "ja" for emphasis. Rather than setting this text as a strophic song, Beethoven chose to work it into an ABA form, and these last two lines form a kind of recapitulation. The allusion to sonata form is justified by Beethoven's manipulation of key. The second half of the first stanza, analogous to a sonata exposition's second subject, turns to the dominant, A-major. The restoration of the tonic is effected by the recapitulation in m.17, and this time the music is varied so that the song ends in D-major.

An autograph, marked in Antonie's hand as "requested of me from the author on 2 March, 1812", was presented to her along with several other compositions of late 1811 (including, coincidentally, the three Goethe songs of Op. 83). The autograph of the piano version, now held in Vienna at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, is marked "An die Geliebte 1811 - im

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[4]Adapted from Ludwig van Beethoven, *Songs for Solo Voice and Piano* (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), xvi. All the song translations used in this thesis are from this anonymous hand, but have been altered to give a line-by-line rendering of the poems.

December." This date is made suspect, however, by the fact that the paper for this copy has a watermark which suggests that it dates from 1814, closer to its publication in the *Friedensblätter* of 12 July 1814.[5] This version is by no other means easy to identify as a later improved song, and a comparison of the two pieces makes it difficult to decide which one would have been the basis for the other song. Their difference seems to imply a closer mutual relationship between these two versions.

Moreover, the lateness of the sketch, on the very last page of the Petter sketchbook, sparked a controversy between Thayer and Nottebohm. The latter, arguing from the date of the bulk of the sketchbook's contents, postulated that the sketches for the song were made after the completion of the first version, and that these were sketches for a revision made in late 1812. It is now believed that sometime in the fall of 1811 the last leaf of the sketchbook was folded around the front and written on.[6] Closer examination of this sketch reveals that it is in fact a draft of the guitar version. But that Nottebohm could have made such a conjecture indicates a certain amount of confusion concerning the nature of the "revision" of "An die Geliebte."

A possibility that no-one seems to have considered is that the two versions are one and the same song copied down by Beethoven from memory after an interval of a few years. He has not consciously set out to improve the piece, but his reliance on memory could have suppressed the

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[5]Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 241.

[6]*Ibid.*

singer's ornamentation, the sort of graces that may have been improvised in 1811 when Antonie first sang the little song. But the melodic outline and more importantly the scheme of mini-sonata form remained, though the details of how the recapitulation avoids turning to the dominant have changed. The interpolated beats of rest vary in length, but the difference is nearly made up and the versions have lengths of twenty-six and twenty-five measures. As far as Beethoven was concerned, this was no revision at all and he felt no compunction about indicating its date as 1811. What he was copying out was a *Klavierauszug*, and as Antonie Brentano presumably still had his fair copy, Beethoven relied, with only a few slips, on his memory. Although this is conjecture, it seems to explain the existence of the two versions of this song more adequately than the idea of improvement of a defective prototype.

The rewriting, or recopying, of this song falls within the categories of revision proposed by Willy Hess.[7] Hess begins with changes Beethoven made for purely utilitarian purposes, and which aspired to no higher artistic purpose, typically involving the working-out of a piano reduction of an orchestral accompaniment. This is what seems to have happened to WoO 140, in which case we might be disinclined to consider it a revision at all.

The second type of reworking involves a radical recasting "dependent on earlier thematic material only for its foundation," such as might describe the process of evolution through a series of sketches. Hess's

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[7]Willy Hess, "Beethoven's Revisions of His Own Works", trans. David Galliver in *Miscellanea Musicologica: Adelaide Studies in Musicology* V (1970), 1-26.

final, rather loose category takes *Fidelio* as the exemplar of a revision that is thoroughgoing, but does not alter the actual genre. In this category the process of revision is a struggle for ever greater perfection.

Song reworking, however, with its dependence on a pre-existing text, stands apart from any categorization that adheres strictly to musical matters. As we shall see in Chapter Three, the examples from Tiedge are versions of a song clearly taxonomically bound to each other, but so musically different as to have only their text in common. There may or may not be dependence on earlier thematic material. The four versions of "Sehnsucht" are similar in shape, length, form and even key; yet none seemed the optimal solution to Beethoven.

II

"Sehnsucht" WoO 134

Beethoven, who had been setting Goethe texts since 1798 with "Neue Liebe, neues Leben" (WoO 127), did not come to the poet's attention until 1810. Bettina Brentano met Beethoven in Vienna on May 10 of that year, and he presented her with some songs to Goethe texts.[8] Bettina wrote to Goethe, and in one of her effusive letters she attributes the following remarks to the composer:

Beethoven stopped in the oppressive sunshine and said:

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[8]*Beethoven: Impressions of Contemporaries* 78.

"Not only because of their contents, but also because of their rhythm, Goethe's poems have great power over me. I am tuned up and stimulated to composition by this language which builds itself into higher orders as if through the work of spirits and already bears in itself the mystery of the harmonies."[9]

But as far as song output was concerned, this was mostly after the fact. Beethoven had set almost all the Goethe texts he was to complete by the time the two met in Teplitz in the summer of 1811. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* had been published in 1795-6, and this novel was packed with short lyrics suitable for extraction as songs. It also is the source of some of Goethe's writings on music.

These Goethe texts proved to have a remarkable appeal for nineteenth-century song composers. Of the lyric "Sehnsucht", not to be confused with Goethe's other short poem of this name, nor with the text by Reissig which Beethoven set as WoO 146, one source lists no less than 56 settings of which the most well-known is Tchaikovsky's "None but the Lonely Heart". There are 84 settings, moreover, of Mignon's song alluded to earlier, "Kennst du das Land?" Goethe may have taken umbrage at Beethoven's setting of this latter but of "Sehnsucht" Schumann remarked in 1836 that apart from it, none could compare to the poem *without* any musical setting. This included the six settings made by Franz Schubert[10].

Schumann does not specify which of Beethoven's four settings is his favourite. The third of these songs appeared in print in the Spring, 1808

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[9]*Ibid.*, 81.

[10]Kenneth Whitton, *Lideder: An Introduction to German Song* (London: Julia MacRae Books, 1984), 158.

issue of the almanac *Prometheus* , only after the appearance of the other three in March of that year.[11]

The four versions resemble a student's exercise, in which prescribed boundaries are set and the composition must be worked out as felicitously as

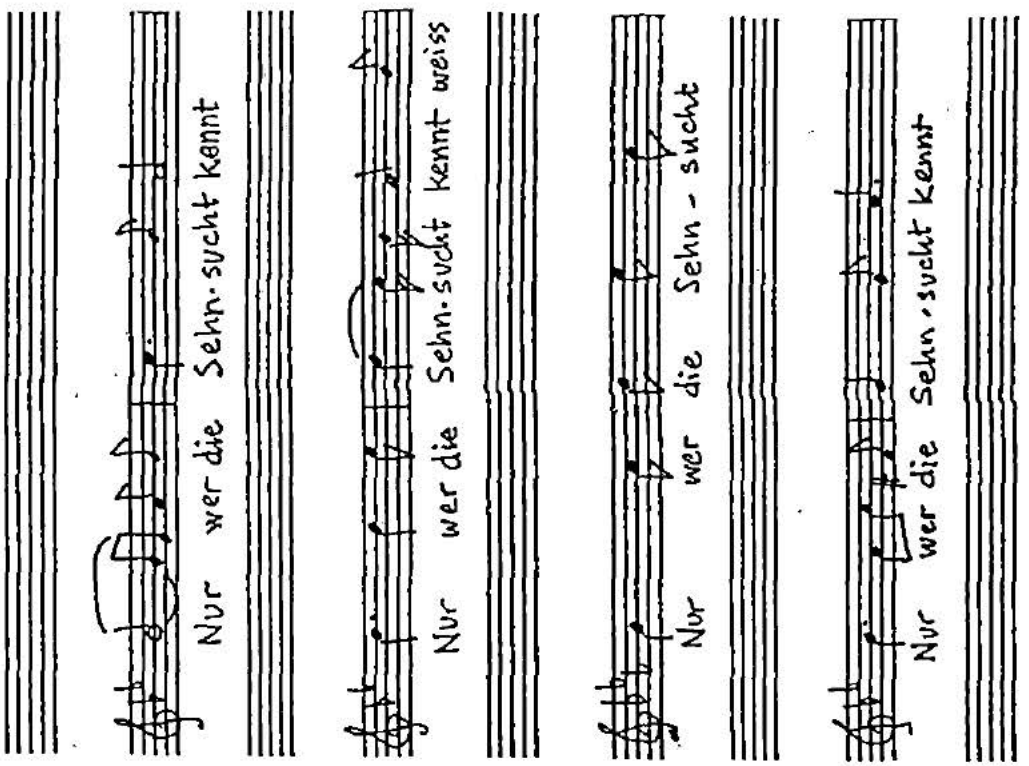

FIGURE TWO: BEETHOVEN'S SETTINGS OF SEHNSUCHT

[11]Unger, "Zu den Erstdrucken", 140.

weiss, was ich lei- de! Al- -lein und ab-ge- trennt von al-ler

was ich lei- de! Al- lein und ab-ge- trennt von al-ler

kennt weiss, was ich lei-de! Al- lein und ab-ge- trennt von al- ler

weiss, was ich lei- de! Al-lein und ab- ge- trennt von al- ler

Frau-de seh' ich ans Fir-ma-ment nach jen-er Sei- -te.

Freu-de seh' ich ans Fir-ma-ment nach jen-er Sei- -te.

Freu- -de seh' ich ans Fir-ma-ment nach jen-er Sei- te.

Freu- de seh' ich ans Fir-ma-ment nach jen-er Sei- te.

possible within these parameters. Eliot Forbes has written comparing the efforts of Rochlitz, Beethoven, and Schubert in this regard,[12] but the point is best made by examining a side-by-side comparison of these four versions (Figure 2). With only minor adjustments, the words flow along at the same regular pace in a similar space of time. For the most part, the stresses in the lines fall where one might expect; the most interesting cases involve the violation of the majority case, for instance accenting "ich" of "seh ich an's Firmament", which happens only in the fourth setting; and with the

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[12]Eliot Forbes, "*Nur Wer die Sehnsucht Kennt*: An Example of a Goethe Lyric set to Music." in *Words and Music: The Scholar's View. A Medly of Problems and Soluons in Honor of A. Tillman Merritt by Sundry Hands*. ed. Lawrence Berman (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972).

third version's accenting of "und" in the phrase "allein und abgetrennt". These are awkward blemishes which do not mark the first version, the one richest in melismata and which Forbes preferred. It is doubtful, in light of the judgement he pronounced on "Kennst du das Land?", that Goethe would have agreed with him.

What is more striking is the congruity between the midpoint measures that set the text "abgetrennt von aller Freude": there is almost exact rhythmic correspondence here. It is also noteworthy that even in a song of eleven measures Beethoven imposes an ABA' form. In the first three songs, the reprise begins with the last two lines of each of the two verses Beethoven has created from Goethe's twelve lines. In the last, longer song, the effort to make a recapitulation is enhanced by a more adventurous middle section. This song is complicated not only by its through-composed approach to the twelve lines, but by a rich harmonic language and poignant use of diminished triads. The reprise here is not only musical, it anticipates Beethoven's procedure in *An die Hoffnung* Op. 94 since it repeats the opening lines of poetry as well as their music.

It is fruitless to attempt a chronology; the paucity of sketch material and the brevity of the compositions suggest little time spent on these settings, and there is ultimately no definitive version. It may be that the first version, which Forbes prefers, was the original inspiration, and that it defeated attempts at improvement. Similarities between versions, for instance the chromatic descent from the dominant to the mediant which anticipates the recapitulation in versions one and four, may be a link but the influence could have gone in either direction.

CHAPTER THREE

I

An die Hoffnung Op. 32

Op. 32, the early version of Tiedge's *An die Hoffnung*, can be found in many anthologies of Beethoven's songs at the beginning of the volume with his most popular song, *Adelaïde* Op. 46. The figuration of their respective accompaniments, combined with their proximity of key, make these two songs seem a likely pair, even though they are eight productive years apart. Adelaide received its inflated opus number only when the song was reprinted by Artaria and listed in a later catalogue. By chronological rights it should have followed the F-major and g-minor cello sonatas as Op. 6. The overlooked setting of *An die Hoffnung* is the more interesting song as an example of Beethoven's way out of a particular compositional problem.

C. Adolph Tiedge, "professing in a splendid way the ideas of Kant"[1], secured fame in his day with several long poems. Tiedge, who dedicated the work to his older friend and colleague J. W. L. Gleim (1719-1803), had been educated at Halle, and it was there that *Urania, über Gott , Unsterblichkeit und Freiheit* was first published in six cantos in 1801. So successful was it

[1] Paul Nettl, *Beethoven Handbook* 271.

that three "improved" editions appeared in 1803, 1806 and 1808.[2] Seven reprints of this last version appeared in the poet's lifetime, but after mid-century his work, with the exception of one of the *Elegien und vermischte Gedichte* of 1803-07, fell into oblivion. It is suggestive that Schubert seems to have set none of his wordy poetry.

Beethoven's engagement with a text devoted to Hope is irresistibly congruent to the popular myth of the composer as a struggler, overcoming immense obstacles for the sake of artistic aspirations. Tiedge's high-minded verse, however, must have appealed to the bookish side of the composer's imagination, to Beethoven the aging collector of esoterica revealed in the *Tagebuch*.[3] That the sketches made for *An die Hoffnung* in 1804 are found in the midst of work in progress on *Leonore* is more than a coincidence, and as we shall see, the plans for the opera's revival are connected with the reworking of the song ten years later.

Tiedge's poem could not have been fermenting long in Beethoven's mind, since the first edition of these verses, published in 1801, shows considerable disparity with the text set to music. The entire second verse, for instance, is a product of Tiedge's revision (see Figure 3), proving that the second edition of 1803 was Beethoven's source for both the early setting and Op. 94. In the course of the first Canto these verses appear:

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[2] Karl Goedicke. *Grundrisz zur Geschichte der Deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen* (Dresden: Verlag Lehlermann, 1893) Vol. 5 Zweite Abteilung, 454-455.

[3]These diaries, kept between 1812 and 1818, were transcribed by Maynard Solomon in his *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univeristy Press, 1988), 233-295.

Is there a God? Will He one day fulfil
What my longing weepingly promises itself?
Will this mysterious Being reveal itself
On some Judgement Day?
Man must hope! He must not question!

14

Süße Hoffnung! unter Jedem Trümmern
Sah ich oft am finstern Saume
Meiner Tage ein leises Schimmern:
Das warst du, war dein Vergöttrungsträumen.

Du, die du gern im Abenddunkel feierst,
Und sanft und weich den Gram verschleierst,
Der eine zarte Seele quält,
O Hoffnung, laß, durch dich empor gehoben,
Den Dulder ahnen, daß da droben
Ein Engel seine Tränen zählt,

Und blickt er auf, sein Schicksal anzuklagen,
Wann Licht und Friede in seinen Tagen,
Wie Nebelsterne, niedergehn:
Dann laß ihn um den Rand des Erdentraumes
Das Leuchten seines Wolkensaumes,
Von einer hohen Sonne, sehn.

15

Aus den Blicken dieser Hoffnung schimmert
Wärmes Leben in den kalten Schooß
Eines Daseyns, dem ein hartes Loos
Jede Ruh und jeden Trost verkümmert.
Wenn sie aufgeht — o wie still und groß
Wie ein Engel, still und groß erscheinend!
Was Tyrannen kalt und seelenlos
Vor sich niederkraten, neigt sich weinend,
Selig weinend hin auf ihren Schooß.

Aber weg aus meinen Tagen
Floh die Hofnung, wie ein schöner Traum;
Düstre kalte Zweifel jagen
Nachtgewölk in diesen lichten Raum.
Wankend irr ich in der dunkeln Höhle,
Die den Blick ins Freie mir beschränkt,
Und die Seele — doch was ist die Seele?
Weißt du, wie sie lebt und wie sie denkt?

FIGURE THREE: TWO EDITIONS OF TIEDGE'S URANIA
Above: 1801 Below: 1835

Eine andre jagt den Zweifel auf.
„Sagt, wo wird dieß Streitgetön verhallen?“
Fragt des Dulders thränenvoller Blick.
„Wohnet dort in jenen Sonnenhallen
Ein versöhnendes Geschick?
Unter welcher neuen Frühlingskrönung
Wird die Liebe ihren Himmel weihn?
Oder wird kein Fest der Weltversöhnung,
Und wird nirgends Recht und Friede seyn?“ —
Ob ein Gott sey? ob er einst erfülle,
Was die Sehnsucht weinend sich verspricht?
Ob, vor irgend einem Weltgericht,
Sich dieß räthselhafte Seyn enthülle? —
Hoffen soll der Mensch! er frage nicht!
Die du so gern in heilgen Nächten feierst,
Und sanft und weich den Gram verschleierst,
Der eine zarte Seele quält,
O Hoffnung! laß, durch dich empor gehoben,
Den Dulder ahnen, daß dort oben
Ein Engel seine Thränen zählt!
Wenn, längst verhallt, geliebte Stimmen schweigen;
Wenn unter ausgestorbnen Zweigen

Verödet die Erinnrung sitzt:
Dann nahe dich, wo dein Verlaßner trauert,
Und, von der Mitternacht umschauert,
Sich auf versunkne Urnen stützt.
Und blickt er auf, das Schicksal anzuklagen,
Wenn scheidend über seinen Tagen
Die letzten Strahlen untergehn:
Dann laß ihn, um den Rand des Erdentraumes,
Das Leuchten eines Wolkensaumes,
Von einer nahen Sonne, seyn: —
Aus den Blicken dieser Hoffnung schimmert
Warmes Leben in den kalten Schooß
Eines Daseyns, dem ein hartes Loos
Jede Ruh und jeden Trost verkümmert.
Wenn sie aufgeht — o wie still und groß!
Wie ein Engel, still und groß erscheinend!
Was Tyrannen kalt und seelenlos
Vor sich niedertraten, neigt sich weinend,
Selig weinend hin auf ihren Schooß.
Süße Hoffnung! unter Friedensharfen
Bildete sich dein Vergöttrungstraum;
Kalte Todesstürm' und Zweifel warfen
Nachtgewölk in diesen lichten Raum.

These lines are used as a preamble in recitative form in Op. 94 only. In this later setting the music and verse continue immediately with what follows, the complete text of Op. 32:

> You that so gladly take repose during sacred nights,
> And gently and softly spread a veil over the sorrow
> That tortures a tender soul,
> O Hope, let the patient sufferer, uplifted by you,
> Divine that up above
> An angel counts his tears!
>
> When loved voices that have long since died away are silent;
> When in desolation beneath withered branches,
> Memory sits:
> Then appear to the place where your forsaken one mourns
> And, surrounded by the gloom of midnight,
> Leans upon sunken urns:
>
> And if he looks up to denounce his fate,
> When the last rays depart from his days
> And perish,
> Then let him, at the brink of his earthly dreams,
> See the rim of a cloud
> Illumined by a nearby sun.[4]

Carl Dahlhaus points out that this particular type of song, unique in Beethoven's output, is properly classified as a Pindaric ode.[5] This sort of poetry, with its metric scheme of 11. 9. 8. 11. 9. 8., is very difficult indeed to render into felicitous English. While not a "lyric" in the midst of a longer text, as with the songs from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, these lines of Tiedge's are set apart metrically from the surrounding text

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[4]Translation adapted from Ludwig van Beethoven, *Songs for Solo Voice and Piano* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1986) , viii.

[5]Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* , trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 97.

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of the first Canto in all editions. In the second edition Tiedge has not even clearly delineated three stanzas by indenting them. Yet they stand apart from the rest of the poem, and commanded the composer's attention.

The surviving sketches for Op. 32 come from the "Mendelssohn 15" sketchbook of 1804, where ideas for the song occupy all of pages 151 through 157 in the midst of Beethoven's early work on *Leonore*.[6] The sketching is restricted almost entirely to forging the melodic line for the first verse. Obviously we should not infer that he contemplated an abbreviated piece, but rather that when thinking out the implications of his melodic line he was singlemindedly concerned with the text of the first stanza. He must have felt that Tiedge's verses were sufficiently emotionally congruent that what worked for the first would suit all three. This has important implications for the compositional process of lieder, and particularly of strophic lieder, before Schubert.

One of the song's most striking features is the wandering arpeggio which serves as interlude and introduction. It is the only feature of the accompaniment which appears in a preliminary form in the sketches, and its triplet motion stands in relief from the duple figuration of most of the rest of the song. As a ritornello, it has the important formal role of punctuating the halfway point of each verse and announcing the repeat of the second half of each stanza, and its peculiar shape anticipates the

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[6]This MS, Mus ms autogr. Beethoven Mend-stift 15, is housed in the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Berlin. A Microfilm copy was kindly made available to the University of Victoria in 1988. No facsimile edition or complete published transcription yet exists. Photocopies and transcriptions of the relevant pages are included as appendices.

significant motif of the rising sixth and fifth, into which these interludes lead.

The accompaniment in the finished composition is confined to the customary devices of arpeggiation, reiteration of a chord within a measure, and harmonic downbeats placed by the left hand. These same figures accompany most songs of the time, including Beethoven's four "Sehnsucht" settings of 1808. But these simple figurations conceal a harmonic plan unusually rich and ambitious for so short a work as Op. 32. Even more than the celebrated *Adelaïde*, this song embodies an effective balance between complexity and simplicity.

The arpeggio motif marks out each half-verse, making the reiteration of the last three lines of each stanza effective musically. Eight measures of verse-setting is followed by a ritornello leading to C-major; another eight measures set the remaining three lines of the stanza, leading back towards the tonic but allowing an interruption; then the ritornello and eight more measures of repeated text return us to the E-flat major opening. In its distribution of the text the song harks back to *Adelaïde*, whose repetitions of whole lines and verses can be explained in terms of structural purposes. This is of course a different matter than the many quasi-operatic examples, throughout the repertoire, of reiterating a word or two to spin out a melodic idea.

But here the similarity with Op. 46 ends, for unlike the "Kantata", or quasi-sonata, form of *Adelaïde*, this first setting of *An die Hoffnung* is an unvaried strophic song. The effectiveness of this technique in setting a text so rich in images may be questioned. As we have seen, Beethoven's

sketches are exclusively concerned with the text of the first verse (see Figure 4). The placid opening eight measures of the melody suit the idea of taking repose, and are compatible with the next verse's ideas of withering branches and silent voices but not, it might well be argued, with the opening line of verse three with its denunciation of fate. Beethoven took advantage of the possibilities of through-composition in Op. 94 to give a more dramatic presentation to these later lines. The simplicity of the technique of *Volkslieder* is arguably inadequate for a text of such sophistication. Perhaps Schubert, with his skill at varying the music in the course of a strophic song, might have been best able to balance these conflicting expectations.

But the figure which appears first amongst the sketches, the distinctive "accidental" major sixth for the words "O Hoffnung", fits each verse. Tiedge has structured these lines so that each verse is not merely an apostrophe, but a request to Hope for some sort of action: "lass...", "nahe dich", and again "lass ihn".

This motive is in the first identifiable sketch of the song, and it recurs in Mendelssohn 15 several times. Examination of the whole sketchbook reveals that Beethoven is appropriating an idea from his proposed setting of *Leonore*' s text "die Hoffnung flüstern sanft mir zu", the solo in the midst of the prisoners' chorus 's (see Figure 4). The importance of the concept of "Hope" is central both to the song, which personifies and apostrophises it, and, predicably, to many parts of Beethoven's rescue opera. A glance at the libretto of *Fidelio* confirms this. Hope is expressed not only by Marzelline in the opening scenes, but by Florestan and

alsoLeonore, whose recitative and aria in Scene 6 of Act I echo some of Tiedge's sentiments:

> For me a rainbow shines,
> Showing bright against the storm-clouds:
> It looks down on me in peace and calm,
> Recalling days gone by
> And soothing my fevered soul.
>
> Come, Hope, let not your last star
> Be eclipsed in Despair![7]

Moreover, Florestan, wasting away in the dark confinement of Pizzaro's dungeon, has a prescient hallucination of his rescuer in the form of an angel, though one of a more practical bent than to merely count his tears.

This melodic idea of the rising major sixth, associated with the invocation to Hope in Op. 32, can be found in the Mendelssohn 15 sketchbook on page 1, line 3 and page 3 line 9. In the context of the opera it was later abandoned, but the motive is in fact the first sketch for the song which begins on page 151 (see Appendix). The persistence of this melodic germ in the sketches for Op. 32 stands out in relief from Beethoven's ten unsuccessful attempts at completing the opening melody. His sketches consistently show scalar passages down, not up, to the word "gern" . One sketch (p. 156) is particularly clear, and shows the persistent major sixth and its turn to the subdominant C-major, and after this part of the sketch breaks off there is a later passage back in the tonic, "oben ein

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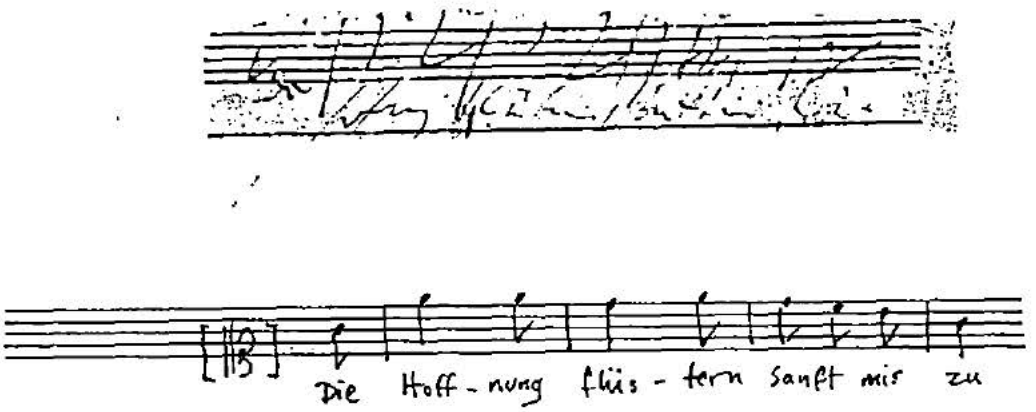
[7]Translation in booklet, Beethoven, *Fidelio*. Wiener Philharmoniker, conducted by Leonard Bernstein (Polydor International, 1978). Sound recording.

Engel seine Thränen zählt", but there is no clear means of returning to E-flat major. The setting of the repeated half-verse is also inconclusive, with the false cadence at "zählt" not yet in place.

The completed song went to the publisher, mysteriously (and perhaps significantly)[8] bearing no dedication, and emerging in September 1805 "Im Kunst und Industrie Comtoir zu Wien". Op. 32 makes no subsequent appearances in the

[8]Harry Goldschmidt mentions an interesting biographical matter in a lecture of 1986. Goldschmidt points out that the song was a love-offering to Josephine Deym, and that Beethoven's difficulty setting the word "Engel", which could only refer to Josephine, led to some awkwardness between the two. The dedication was suppressed. Harry Goldschmidt, "Another Paradigm for Ananlysis", paper presented at the Northwest Beethoven Festival and International Symposium on Beethoven's Orchestral Music, Friday, March 21, 1986.



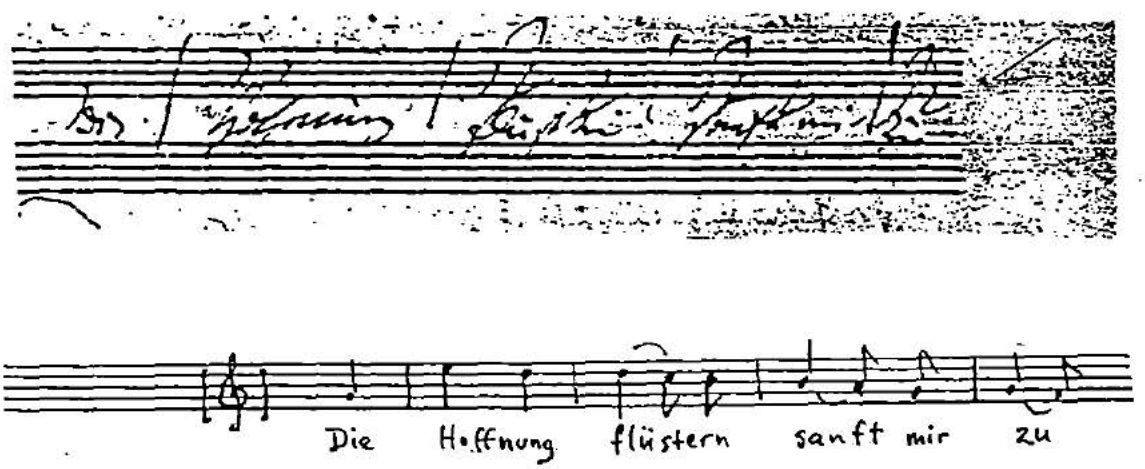


FIGURE FOUR: TWO EXCERPTS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS
Above: Page 1 line 7
Below: Page 3 line 9

surviving documents after being generously if briefly reviewed in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* of that month:

> Eine Kleinigkeit, die nicht übersehen werden sollte! Das Lied ist mit Gefühl aufgefasst und eben so, bey aller Einfalt wiedergegeben.[9]

The repetition of the latter half of each stanza, that is to say Beethoven's urgent repetition of the invocation to Hope to act, was the sort of reinterpretation of the text so objectionable to the Goethe camp. This plan, making each verse into an ABB' musical form, also shows up in Beethoven's early sketches for the song. It is clear by his seventh attempt on page 153. The composer was committed to working out the implications of his tonal gesture, the move to the subdominant major, and the extra eight or ten measures of repetition help to balance the return of the music to the tonic E-flat major from the fairly distant key of C-major. It is worth stressing how unmistakably committed Beethoven shows himself in the sketches to have been to this melodic-harmonic inspiration. In the course of his fifteen attempts to make a working melody, he abandons the turn to e-natural on only one or two occasions. It needs only a moment at the piano with Beethoven's sketched attempts to appreciate his struggles to make a successful return to the tonic, but some form of extension was necessary to give the right sense of proportion to a song of thirty-two measures' length.

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[9]*Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, Jahrgang 8 No. 51 (September 17, 1806), 815-816.

II

An die Hoffnung Op. 94

Despite the lack of evidence about this song in Beethoven's subsequent letters, concert programs, and other documents after 1804, we know that the text must have been on Beethoven's mind for the next ten years. He set no other verses by Tiedge in this interval, though it was the poet's most productive decade and his work continued to be set by other composers, notably by F. H. Himmel (1765-1814), who set many Tiedge verses including, as his Op. 18, thirteen *Gesänge aus Tiedges Urania* . Then, in 1811, Beethoven and Tiedge met in Teplitz, brought together by Tiedge's companion the poetess Elizabeth van der Recke (1756-1833) . Since *Urania*'s publication, Tiedge and van der Recke had been travelling extensively in Italy, and Beethoven never crossed their path, but after meeting Tiedge in the summer of 1811 the composer's enthusiasm was fired. "Every day I blow myself up [putze ich mich selbst aus] for not having got to know you sooner at Teplitz. It is dreadful to see and know what is good for such a short time and then to lose it again immediately."[10]

The two met in the brilliant company of Varnhagen von Ense, Rahel Levin, A. Sebald, Bettina von Arnim and Oliva. But it was Tiedge

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[10] *The Letters of Beethoven*, 335. The original may be found in Emerich Kastner, ed., *Ludwig van Beethovens Saemtliche Briefe* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1975) 199.

with whom Beethoven claimed a close relationship, and this familiarity was, at first, reciprocated. "You welcomed me, my Tiedge, with the password Du, and I accept it. Short though our association was, yet we soon got to know one another and there was no longer any feeling of constraint between us."[11]

But Tiedge's own *Selbstbiographie*, written at the end of his life, is strangely mute on the subject of his relationship with the composer. Indeed with Beethoven's account before us it is hard to understand how, amongst the poet's many references to musical matters, a supposedly happy and mutually beneficial meeting with Ludwig van Beethoven would have been forgotten.[12]

Van der Recke presented him with a new copy of *Urania* on December 6, 1811, after the summer in Teplitz. In light of the growing complexities of his personal life at this time it is tempting to believe that Beethoven may have taken some consolation in the familiar verses.[13] In the through-composed song that eventually emerged as Op. 94 it is easy to sense the effect of new personal stresses, and of the song-writing experience he had gained in these middle years. Boettcher believed the work was virtually completed by the end of this year, judging by the

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[11]This letter of October 11, 1811 is on the back of a letter of the same date to Elizabeth van der Recke. *The Letters of Beethoven,* I 341.

[12]Any reference to Beethoven should come up about page 138. See Carl Falkenstein, *C. A. Tiedges Leben und Poetischer Nachlass* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner Verlag, 1841), vol. II.

[13]*The Letters of Beethoven,* 340 n 4.

evidence of sketches he dated at 1813.[14] But such early sketches were fully elaborated two years later, in time for performance on 25 May, 1816.[15] Evidently he kept his work a close secret even from the song's first performer, the theatrical singer Franz Wild. Beethoven had heard a matinee performance given in January of 1815 by Wild, and according to the singer's proud account,

> The Master, rejoiced at my choice of his song [Adelaïde], hunted me up and offered to accompany me. Satisfied with my singing he told me that he would orchestrate the song. He did not do this, but wrote for me the cantata "An die Hoffnung" (words by Tiedge) with pianoforte accompaniment, which, he playing for me, I sang at a matinee before a select audience.[16]

The surviving sketches are on one leaf of a collection now dated with some difficulty. It may be that the song was in fact completed soon after Beethoven's attendance at the concert. Alan Tyson dates the sketching done in the intact book in question, SV 383, from *circa* December 1814 to July 1815 "*at the most*".[17] The earlier date which Boettcher assumed may have been posited on an inscription on one of the other pages of this now dispersed sketchbook, reading "3 March 1813". But since the book is

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[14]Boettcher, *Beethoven als Liederkomponist.*

[15]Sieghard Brandenburg, "Bemerkungen zu Beethovens Op 96" in *Beethoven Jahrbuch* IX (1977), 17.

[16]Franz Wild, "Selbstbiographie" in *Rezenzionen uber Theater und Musik* 4 (1860), cited in *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Eliot Forbes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 610.

[17]Tyson, Winter, Johnson, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks*, .235-240, specifically 239.

now known to have been assembled by Beethoven from existing scraps, the date may well be unrelated to the intact sketchbook in general, or it may refer to an issue of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* which contained an enthusiastic review of Op. 70. The issue of the dating of the contents of this sketchbook is complicated, but at least it may be said that there is no longer any reason to assume that Op. 94 dates from as early as 1813.

It is hard to believe that so sophisticated and so lengthy a work as Op. 94 would not have required extensive sketching, and a mass of material from this song is probably lost. Interestingly this same leaf, now residing at the Conservatoire National de Region de la Musique in Tours, contains on the reverse side from the Op. 94 entries, sketches for another important lied from this time, "Resignation" WoO 149, together with remarks on the construction of ear-trumpets. More significantly still, two pages of the existing sixteen known to have been part of this dispersed sketchbook are devoted to revisions of *Fidelio*, which would have had to be complete by May, 1814. It would not have been surprising for Beethoven to have consulted the earlier sketchbook now known to us as Mendelssohn 15 to examine his work on the opera's failed prototype, *Leonore*, from ten years earlier. There he would have come upon abandoned musical ideas from Op. 32, and may have decided to rework the text. He seems not to have developed any recognizable earlier material in the new song, however, but rather was driven to create an entirely new work. He had made no promises to anyone to do such a thing (least of all to Franz Wild), and only an inner compulsion combined with a belief in his own ineluctible progress could have driven him to the creation *ex nihilo* of the

remarkable Op. 94. For the sketches, however incomplete, transcribed by Sieghard Brandenburg[18], show that this song, like Op. 32, differs greatly from the preliminary work. A few of the formal ideas are nascent, but what is important for our purposes is that the sketches for Op. 94 do not take any of the earlier song's features as a point of departure.

The new song was given by Wild in a concert in the "Wohnung eines Kunstfreundes" which included "Adelaïde" and Himmel's setting of the same words from *Urania*. The *Wiener Zeitung* of April 22, 1816 reviewed the concert enthusiastically. Beethoven's song was reported as "still in manuscript". Subsequently it was published by Steiner, Beethoven's principal publisher in these years. The legal negotiations with the Kinsky heirs being settled as of January 18th, the song was dedicated to the Princess Kinsky. We know that she was sent a copy by May 1, 1816.[19] The title-page indication "Kantate" seems particularly apposite in the case of this long song, even more so than for "Adelaïde".

The form is that of an ABA structure prefaced by a recitative, with a text he had not set before, in a remote key. The dramatic effect of the shift from diminished sonorities within the key of b-flat minor to the new tonic cannot fail to underline the urgency of the answer provided to the brooding questions posed in the recitative. On a melodic level the reiterated "ob?" of each of these questions climbs steadily in pitch towards the climactic response, "Hoffen!" The melodic subtleties continue until the

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[18]Brandenburg, "Bemerkungen".

[19]Donald MacArdle and Ludwig Misch, eds, *New Beethoven Letters* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 174.

end of the song. Greater plasticity is achieved through feminine cadences, chromatic passing notes that smear the effect of a cadence, and a melodic manipulation which is combined with great rhythmic flexibility to produce a song more in line with the bel-canto tradition than any other in Beethoven's output. Such a moment as

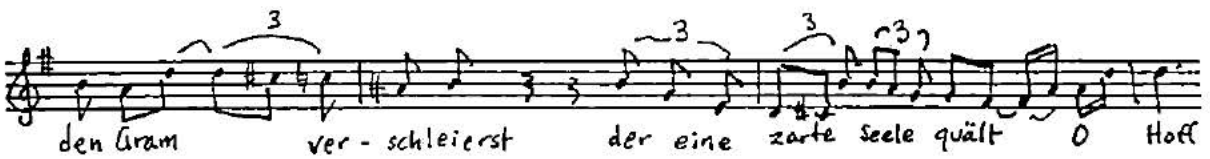

Figure 5. Op 94 mm 32-34

is worthy of the tortured song of the Op. 130 B-flat major quartet's slow movement. The passage quoted, which is recapitulated, achieves such suppleness through its carefully calculated slowings and accelerations and its convoluted melodic turns, to say nothing of the *sospiro* notated after "O Hoffnung, lass'" Beethoven's use of rhythmic intensification in the middle section, immediately before the reprise, is especially effective. The ever-increasing diminution in rhythm in these four measures leads through smaller and smaller basic note values until a climactic fermata is reached at the apogee of the process. But such a scheme, a hallmark of Beethoven's style, looks almost formal and pedantic alongside the freedom of manoeuvre found in the course of the song's exposition.

Certainly the virtuosity with which this melody spans large intervals could not be more antithetical to the notion of the *Lied in Volkston*, but the dramatic urgency of the work suits the changing moods of Tiedge's poetry better than the strophic song of 1804.

Throughout all this the supportive role of the piano is overshadowed by the part it plays as an orchestral accompaniment. We recall that Beethoven's first impulse, according to Franz Wild, was to write an orchestral song, or at any rate an orchestral arrangement. From its beginning as a string-like accompaniment to the recitative, it rapidly evolves its own short-lived quasi-ritornello figure establishing the triplet rhythm which dominates the section. Where rhythmic simultaneity is upset, a slight blurring of the melodic edge occurs:

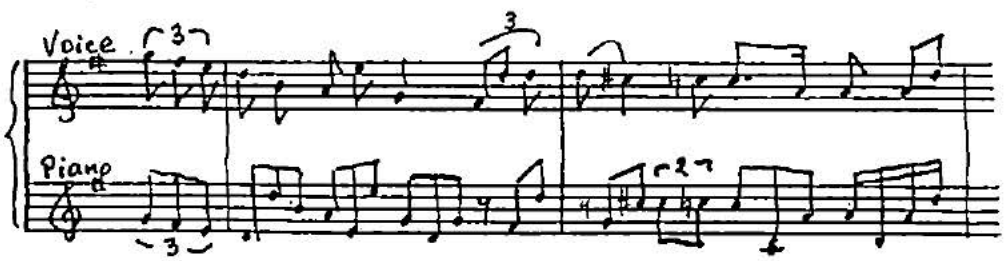

Figure 6. Op 96 mm 36-38.

With the first stanza ends the exposition of this song, and an abrupt modulation to flat-VI opens another halting passage of near-recitative. Here too the rate of diminution of the basic rhythmic unit quickens, through sixteenths and then sixteenth triplets, pianissimo, which rapidly die-out at the mention of the "sunken urns." The turn to the key of d-minor is not unexpected, given the usual augmented-sixth chord function, but the tumultuous d-minor chords, borrowing a sonority from the concertos, convincingly illustrate the defiance of the sorrowful soul denouncing his fate.

The section of increased rhythmic diminution follows. Beethoven is in line here with the standard way of depicting the sun's rays laid down by

the composer of *Die Schöpfung*. A crescendo and acceleration lead to the all-important vocal climax on high a, and the accompaniment retreats with a further orchestral effect, in this case that of woodwinds.

The reprise is a literal one, unlike a sonata's recapitulation. It is not called for, of course, by Tiedge's poem. The reiteration of this first stanza is done on purely musical grounds, to end the song in the tonic and to recall material from the opening in order to lend a rounded form to this long, discursive piece of through-composition. From a literary point of view the repeat is hard to justify, since the verses trace the movement of the patient sufferer through mourning and defiance to enlightenment in the form of the illumined cloud, only to have the composer plunge him back into mourning again. This is the sort of tampering most poets could scarcely be prepared to brook. We have no record of Tiedge's reaction to op. 94, and we can only guess that he ever knew of it.

The song is brought to a close with a feature which on paper looks like a simple plagal cadence but is in fact carefully calculated by Beethoven to stand out aurally. The song has really run its course by the beginning of the last measure, and the final "O Hoffnung" has the character of many an "Amen" tacked onto the end of a sacred work. This may, indeed be the key to the composer's approach to this text, and a tangential approach to the complicated issue of Beethoven's personal beliefs. It recalls the falling fifth which ends the melody of each verse of Op. 32, and like the ending of *Adelaïde*, the postscript to Op. 94 recalls the opening of the song and the answer to the question "ob ein Gott sei?", with

its significant initial pitch, D. It associates Hope with the bright descending perfect fifth, rather than with the dour plagal cadence.

This is Beethoven's only drastic re-casting of a song. The composer has rethought his approach to the poem, perhaps due to a decade of personal experiences, and possibly because of having met the poet of these lines a few years earlier. No trace of the earlier song remains. It is likely that Beethoven made extensive sketches for a work of such tonal complexity; the single page remaining in Tours is a sad contrast to the generous, not to say disproportionate amount of surviving working materials for op. 32. If the composer used the earlier song at all as the basis for op. 94, the later song evolved entirely beyond recognition. Certainly the handful of sketch transcriptions establish no links between the two, and these sketches seem to represent a very preliminary approach to the song.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

Opferlied WoO 126

Tiedge's text was striking enough for Beethoven to set to music and subsequently recall it to his consciousness before finally redesigning it in a completely new version. Matthisson's "Opferlied", on the other hand, was part of a musical-poetical complex formulated very early in the composer's career, a complex which resurfaced virtually intact near the end of his life. The different versions of *Opferlied* that came to light between 1795 and 1823 mark a trail through the composer's career, a path which returns to its origins and qualifies the popular image of the aging Beethoven as the creator of the inner world of the late string quartets. There is an important rival strain in his last years, as revealed in his musical output including the Bagatelles, but also in his letters to publishers and his acceptance of works on commission, that is touched upon in a perspicacious remark made by Joseph Kerman: "There is something very moving about the spectacle of the composer, having reached the heights of subtlety in the pure manipulation of tonal materials, battering at the communications barrier with every weapon of his knowledge."[1] This sums up perfectly the relationship between the revised *Opferlieder* of the 1820s and the two versions of *An die Hoffnung*. Op. 94 represents the heights of subtlety

[1]Joseph Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967), 194.

from which, after the crucial years in the middle of the decade, Beethoven retreated. The *Opferlied* Op. 121b returns to a music which, though highly polished in its own way, recalls the immediacy of appeal of an earlier period.

Op. 94's putative dates of composition, from 1813 until 1816, place this song within the orbit of two other important lieder, namely "Sehnsucht" WoO 146 and the highly original cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* Op. 98. This work experimented for the first time with giving musical form to a series of emotional states by means of motivic connexions between songs and the use of an integrated key structure, typically associated with his symphonic works, to form an unbroken chain which returns to its origin. In the pursuit of formal polish the composer lavished much time on *An die ferne Geliebte* during the year 1815, after which, having attained mastery of this form, he virtually abandoned song writing. Only two important lieder were composed after this point, but as Joseph Kerman reminds us, "the incorporation of song into his large-scale instrumental works became more and more important for him as a compositional impetus."[2] If we take his remark to Rochlitz at face value, he never cared for this line of work much anyway; yet just at this juncture the first Schubert masterpieces had begun to appear: *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, written on October 16, 1814, marks the birth of the mature lied.

This same year found Beethoven poised on the brink of the creative impasse that coincided roughly with the start of his long battle for custody

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[2]Joseph Kerman, "*An die ferne Geliebte*".

of his nephew Karl. From this point it seems that only specific catalysts, whether internal or external, could rouse the prematurely aging, debilitated composer. The most famous of these was the elevation of the Archduke to the episcopate and the commissioning of what would finally emerge as the *Missa Solemnis* Op. 123, a work in which the lessons Beethoven had learned as a song composer would bear fruit in more elaborate ensemble vocal writing with full orchestral support.

The late period which emerged on the other side of this four or five year gulf is marked by an emphasis on directness of communication in which the composer had some clear ideological stake; the urgency of the Ninth Symphony, for example, is inseparable from the originality with which its poetic ideals and its pretentions to universality were being expressed in music, the same ideals which to a greater or lesser extent mark all the public works of the later years and which, as Kerman reminds us, are by no means absent from the more intimate late sonatas and quartets.

These ideals were compatible with the sentiments of Mathisson's poem. At first glance a fashionable society poet seems an unlikely source for a musical-poetical idea about which Nottebohm remarked, "It seems always to have presented itself to him in the form of a prayer".[3] But the "Opferlied," first published in the *Vossischen Musenalmanach fur 1790*, meditates on a classic, Hellenic ideal of beauty and truth, and is a good example of the German humanistic strain to which Matthisson adhered.[4]

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[3]Gustav Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana*, 51. Quoted in *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, 193.

[4]Max Friedlaender, *Das Deutsche Lied im 18. Jahrhundert: Quellen und Studien* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962), 402.

(Coincidentally, in the collected edition of Matthisson's works this poem appears opposite "Adelaïde": see Figure 7).

The flame blazes up, a gentle glow
Shines through the gloomy oak grove,
And the fragrance of incense wells up.
Oh, lend a gracious ear to me:
And let the young man's sacrifice to you
Be acceptable, O most high.

Be always the defense and shield of liberty!
May your spirit of life gently breath through
Air, earth, fire and water!
Give me as a young man and as an old,
At my ancestral hearth, O Zeus,
The beautiful together with the good.

Matthisson's poetry went out of fashion less abruptly than Tiedge's, and Schubert among others set many of his texts. But as Nottebohm realized, this poem had a particular significance for Beethoven, and the little song he sketched in the 1790s recurs not only in the early 1820s, but in the intervening years as well. Schindler, who met the composer late in life, is a witness to Beethoven's continuing professed admiration for Matthisson.

The early history of this song is somewhat confused. *Opferlied* WoO 126 was published only after a considerable delay, its existence having been forgotten or concealed by the composer in his letter of 1800 to Matthisson; moreover, its tune was adapted for Masonic services. One is reminded, in the poet's reference to Zeus, of the invocation of Isis and Osiris by name in the course of *Die Zauberflote* , Mozart's fusion of *Singspiel* and opera, whose great popularity in the 1790s must have struck

the young Beethoven deeply. The Masonic "motto" of *Die Zauberflote* is often associated with the overture's key signature of three flats, E-flat major, but the sentiments expressed in certain important arias are associated with differnt keys. In particular, Sarastro's serene aria of clemency, "In diesen heil'gen Hallen", is in the key of E-major, itself a key with exalted and even celestial associations in this period. The sketches for the hymn-like *Opferlied* recur constantly in this key. In only the first early sketch does the composer propose an alternative, G-major, and that only in a short written comment. Thenceforth he seems to have been in no doubt about the appropriate key for *Opferlied*. In its hymn-like form outwardly

FIGURE SEVEN. TWO MATTHISSON TEXTS
From the edition of 1815

Adelaide.

Einsam wandelt dein Freund im Frühlingsgarten,
Mild vom lieblichen Zauberlicht umflossen,
Das durch wankende Blüthenzweige zittert,
Adelaide!

In der spiegelnden Fluth, im Schnee der Alpen,
In des sinkenden Tages Goldgewölken,
Im Gefilde der Sterne strahlt dein Bildniß,
Adelaide!

Abendlüftchen im zarten Laube flüstern,
Silberglöckchen des Mays im Grase säuseln,
Wellen rauschen und Nachtigallen flöten:
Adelaide!

Einst, o Wunder! entblüht, auf meinem Grabe,
Eine Blume der Asche meines Herzens;
Deutlich schimmert auf jedem Purpurblättchen:
Adelaide!

Opferlied.

Die Flamme lodert, milder Schein
Durchglänzt den düstern Eichenhain,
Und Weihrauchdüfte wallen.
O neig' ein gnädig Ohr zu mir,
Und laß des Jünglings Opfer dir,
Du Höchster, wohlgefallen!

Sey stets der Freyheit Wehr und Schild!
Dein Lebensgeist durchathme mild
Luft, Erde, Feu'r und Fluthen!
Gib mir, als Jüngling und als Greis,
Am väterlichen Herd, o Zeus,
Das Schöne zu dem Guten!

resembling the pious *Gellert-Lieder* of 1803, this song has associations which are distinctly Masonic. The ideals of the German *Aufklarung* were all around the young composer, and although no evidence links him firmly with Masonry, Beethoven's early association with the Bonn *Lese-Gesellschaft* probably pointed him in this direction. His first teacher, Neefe, is known to have been prominent in the local Order of Illuminati, a group with Masonic overtones.[5]

Early sketches, transcribed early on by Nottebohm[6] and subsequently in a more complete form by Brandenburg,[7] show that the basic rhythmic contours of the melody were just as quickly laid out as the choice of key. Certainly the most characteristic defining contour, the opening slow arpeggio downwards, was settled early. In contrast to the sketches for Op. 32, the sketches in the Kafka collection show the relatively inexperienced composer taking account of both the first and the second verses of Matthisson's poem. One of the Kessler sketches of 1797 shows the music in fact copied out twice verbatim, underlaid with first one verse and then the next. It is as though the young Beethoven is making doubly sure that the music will fit both verses. The chordal accompaniment that Beethoven finally provided is so simple that it does not appear in most of these sketches at all. The sketches show that the song was virtually ready in a completed version by 1798 at the latest,

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[5]Maynard Solomon, "The Quest for Faith", in *Beethoven Essays,* 217.

[6]Gustav Nottebohm, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: A Description with Musical Extracts* trans. Johnathan Katz (London: Victor Gollancz, 1979).

[7]Sieghard Brandenburg, ed., *Kesslerisches Skizzenbuch* (Bonn: Beethovenhaus, 1976-1978).

around the time of *Adelaïde'* s first publication, though not yet in the form WoO 126 was to adopt.

As we have seen, the letter to Matthisson two years later makes no mention of this poised little piece. It is worth quoting this letter in its entirety here, since it touches upon several other points, including Beethoven's notion of artistic progress, his esteem for the poet, and for the letter's overall tone:

> Vienna, August 4, 1800
>
> Most honorable sir! You are receiving herewith one of my compositions, which was in fact engraved and published some years ago, but of which perhaps, I am ashamed to confess, you may not yet have heard. To excuse myself from my heart and to explain why I dedicated to you a work which welled forth so warmly from my heart and why I told you nothing whatever about the dedication is quite impossible, perhaps because at first I did not know where you were living; and again partly owing to my shyness, which led me to fancy that I had acted too rashly in dedicating a work to you, without first ascertaining whether it would meet with your approval. And even now I am sending you my Adelaide with a certain amount of apprehension. You yourself are aware what changes a few years may produce in an artist who is constantly progressing. The greater the strides he makes in his art, the less is he satisfied with his earlier works. -- My most ardent desire will be fulfilled if my musical setting of your heavenly Adelaide does not entirely displease you and if it inspires you soon to write another similar poem. Provided you do not consider my request immodest, I ask you to send me your next poem immediately; and I will then strive to the utmost to make my setting worthy of your beautiful poetry. --You must regard the dedication not only as an indication of the delight which the composition of your A[delaide] has afforded me but also as a token of my gratitude and my regard for the heavenly pleasure which your poetry in general has always and *will ever give me* . --
>
> When playing my setting of your A[delaide] please remember now and then your sincere admirer
>
> BEETHOVEN[8]

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[8]*The Letters of Beethoven*, 41.

Beethoven was at pains to impress the poet with the nature of his esteem, and it is hard to imagine that the poet would not have been flattered by the suggestion that there were other Beethoven settings of his poetry afoot. By now, the composer's reputation was established. Perhaps the sketchbook page containing his little song of only 34 measures had been temporarily misplaced amongst all the other work of these productive years. Or perhaps *Adelaïde* , in the handsome printed version which Beethoven enclosed, was felt to completely overshadow the smaller work.

In any event, we know nothing of a reply by Matthisson; his creative years were all but over. Not until 1808 did Beethoven's setting of the *Opferlied* exist in print when Nikolaus Simrock of Bonn bought its rights. It was published quietly as number two of *III. Deutsches Lieder.* But its dissemination from that date can be traced from a remark made in the course of a well-known letter to Franz Gerhard Wegeler. In May, 1810, Wegeler resided at Coblenz, a mere forty miles from Simrock's press. In his letter the composer makes references to two issues at the heart of Beethoven historiography, namely his relationship to his older brother Ludwig Maria, who died in infancy and with whom Beethoven seems to have identified psychologically from time to time; and his own thoughts on suicide:

If I had not read somewhere that a man should not voluntarily quit

> this life so long as he can still perform a good deed , I would have left this earth long ago - and what is more, by my own hand.[9]

Near the end of the letter he breaks these thoughts off abruptly and makes a seemingly casual business request of his long-time friend: "I am told that in your Masonic Lodges you sing a song composed by me, presumably in E-major, which I myself do not possess. Do send it to me..."

Wegeler recorded his response some thirty years later in the collection of letters and anecdotes he co-edited with Beethoven's piano student and sometime copyist Ferdinand Ries, as *Bibliographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven.*

> Beethoven is wrong here; it was not a song especially composed by him of which he no longer had a copy; it was instead a different text using Beethoven's music of the *Opferlied* by Matthisson. I had done the same with a very early song composed by him: *Wer ist ein Freier Mann?* ...[10]

It is hard to say how Beethoven had been tipped off, but his source was close enough to the Coblenz masons to be able to specify the key signature. Surely Beethoven must have been able to deduce the identity of the mysterious song; "Opferlied" was the only one he had yet composed in E-major, and its mystical classical references would have brought it within the Masons' orbit. In fact, its new text by Wegeler was explicitly Masonic:

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[9]*Ibid.*, 270.

[10]Ferdinand Ries and Gerhard Wegeler, *Beethoven Remembered: The Biographical Notes of Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries* , tr. Frederick Noonan (Arlington, Va.: Great Ocean Publishers, 1987), 46.

Das Werk beginnet! heil'ge Glut
Erhebe froh des Reulings Muth,
Dass wűrdig en's vollbringe;
Sie starke den noch schwachen, schwachen Sinn
Damit er einstens zum Gewinn
Die Palme sich erringe.

Tilg', grosser Schőpfer, allen Wahn
In seiner Seel', dass er die Bahn
Des Guten muthig wandle.
O gib, das er wie es Dir wohlgefallt,
Den bessern Menschen zugesellt,
Stets wie ein Maurer handle.

[Commence the task! With sacred fire
Exalt in youth the firm desire
For worthy work concluded;
Give strength to weakness; make weak youth believe
He will the highest goals achieve
The victor's palm included.

Root from his soul all but the Truth.
Ensure, great Lord, that our brave youth
With righteous men will wander.
Oh grant he will find favour in your eyes.
Urge him and his companions wise
The Mason's life to ponder.][11]

The earliest version of the song appears in the Grasnick 8 sketchbook in the Kafka miscellany, amidst the sketches for the early piano sonatas and work on the c-minor trio which according to tradition Haydn greeted with mixed approval. Eliot Forbes suggested that a sketched

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 61. The French translator of *Notices Bibliographiques* disdained to include these contrafacta: "Nous n'avons pas cru devoir conserver ces transcriptions, qui n'ont aucun interêt pour la bibliographie de Beethoven, et qui d'ailleurs ont été editées même a Paris."

version must be the one for which Wegeler supplied the Masonic text, and that he did so in 1797. [12] In this year, certainly, Beethoven made further sketches for the song in the Grasnick 1 sketchbook, the first he ever used. Still more work was done in 1802-03 in the Kessler sketchbook. Since the matter came up in 1810, shortly after the work's publication at nearby Bonn, and since not even his friend is likely to have had casual access to the sketches Beethoven guarded so jealously, it makes more sense to conclude that Wegeler made his contrafactum on the basis of the Simrock publication of 1808, namely WoO 126. Likewise, the other piece Wegeler mentions in this note, "Der Freie Mann" WoO 117, was sketched in 1792-4 and also published at Bonn in 1808. Wegeler must have made his transcriptions together at this time.

Considering the strangeness of these two letters to Matthisson and Wegeler, it seems possible that Beethoven was exercizing some sort of unconscious suppression of his memory. Just why this may have been so in connexion with this particular poem is far from clear but we know that Beethoven was susceptible to just this sort of psychological process from Maynard Solomon's accounts of the confusion over his own age to which Beethoven's letters attest.[13] For the *Opferlied* to be the victim of some semi-deliberate process of memory-lapse implies that its text may have had a murky significance for the composer that goes beyond Nottebohm's

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[12]*Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Eliot Forbes (Princeton: PUP, 1964), p 194. 694

[13]Solomon, *Beethoven*, Chapter Two.

observation. It is interesting, though perhaps coincidental, that Wegeler was quietly sent a copy of the revision of 1823.[14]

Still not happy with his efforts of 1797, Beethoven had continued working on a third set of revisions in of 1802-1803. The final sketched version that we know of (Figure 8 no. 2) points in some ways to WoO 126 since it dispenses with many of the escape tones and appogiaturas found in the Kafka sketch miscellany (for instance in measures 3 and 4). The hallmark of WoO 126 is its simplicity, and the process of refining the song that extended over a dozen years established its predominance of root-position chords as well as a suppression of decoration, and a melody shaped around arpeggio figures in the first and last lines of each stanza. It was this beguiling hymn-like quality which proved to be useful for the corporate ceremonies of the Coblenz lodge.

II

Opferlied Op. 121 b

So ubiquitous are the sketches of this song in which the opening downward E-major arpeggio begins on the dominant rather than the tonic that WoO 126 stands out as a surprising departure. This is why Boettcher, in his taxonomy, is wrong to list all these versions as the same song.[15] In any

[14]*The Letters of Beethoven* , III 1325.

[15]Boettcher, *Beethoven als Liederkomponist*, Tafel V.

event Beethoven was far from done with this song after 1808. The celebrated tenor Wilhelm Ehlers, whose renditions of strophic songs were admired by Goethe as the acme of singing, commissioned a work in 1822 for a benefit concert in Pressburg. Beethoven responded with a new setting of Matthisson's text, arranging the music from his earlier sketches for the combined forces of a trio of solo voices (including, apparently, Ehlers himself), chorus, and a peculiar orchestration that may have represented the forces available at Pressburg: two clarinets in A, two horns in E, and lower strings only. Although we know nothing of the terms of this commission, the subsequent attempts to sell this new "Opferlied" to a publisher, which began in February of the next year, are well documented. The premiere of this new version took place on Dec 23, 1822 and we know nothing of its reception.

Perhaps to facilitate the commercial success of the proposed publication, Beethoven recast the new "Opferlied" as a solo, for a soprano, to judge by the clef, with chorus and again an unusual complement of orchestral forces, adding bassoons and violins to the Pressburg instrumentation. A cello obbligato in the second verse makes this a varied strophic setting. The predominant wind-band orchestration can only be an attempt to recapture the sounds associated with Masonic lodge meetings, the *Harmonie* forces for which Mozart composed his *Mauerische Trauermusik* K 479a. This revision seems to have been made in the summer or the fall of 1824, following a second performance of the trio version at a Gesellschaft

concert of April 24, 1824.[16] The proposed sale of this work had so far been unsuccessful, beginning with Peters' outright spurning of the work in February, 1823. Peters made it clear "that I want to have good choice things from you," namely extended songs with piano accompaniment.[17] There must have been some puzzlement over the odd orchestration.

To facilitate sales, Beethoven sensibly proposed an edition with a reduced piano accompaniment; the autograph of this version is still extant. We know of at least four rejections before Schott finally purchased it on February 5, 1825, along with the *Bagatelles* Op. 119, *Der Kuss,* and several other small works. The opus number, 121b, was proposed by Beethoven himself. There seems to be no important connexion between this setting and Op. 121a, a series of variations for trio on a song with the opening line "Ich bin ein Schneider Kakadu". After a few revisions carried out by Ries, these pieces were published in July, 1825 and reviewed in the November issue of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* .

In the previous chapter it was suggested that there was some link between Beethoven's returning to work on *Leonore* with an eye to *Fidelio*'s revival in 1814, and his new setting of *An die Hoffnung*. So too, the song *Der Kuss* was sketched early but remained dormant in the pages of the Grasnick I sketchbook until its emergence thirty years later, at about the same time that Beethoven was rewriting the "Opferlied". It is likely that Beethoven's browsings through his early sketchbook, in particular that of

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[16]Kurt Herbst, "Beethovens Opferliedkompositionen", in *Neues Beethoven-Jahrbuch* V (1933).

[17]*Thayer's Life of Beethoven* , 793.

1798, are responsible not only for this *Opferlied* setting but also for *Der Kuss* , which he described to prospective publishers as "a rather elaborate arietta with pianoforte accompaniment."[18] These coincidences suggest that other mysterious links may exist between seemingly unrelated works whose sketches are jumbled together.

As for Op. 121b itself, the process of elaboration is confined to subtle melodic details between the two versions of the 1820s. The melodic contours of the version for a single soloist have been refined (for example at "milder Schein"). The addition of *sospiri* to illustrate the puffs of incense ("Weihrauchdüfte"), and the elaboration of cadence points (wallen), constitute further magnification of the original ideas. The many rhythmic changes Beethoven made are even more subtle refinements, including the opening of the orchestreal introduction in which the initial note, b, is tied over the bar diffusing and broadening the rhythmic contour of the otherwise simple opening gesture.

In both cases a brief instrumental prelude has been appended and the chorus is made responsible for reiterating the second half of each verse. In the last three lines of these stanzas the deity is invoked on behalf of the young man speaking these lines: "lend a gracious ear to me" and then "give me...the beautiful together with the good." The repetition of these lines lends an urgency which justifies Beethoven's new conception of each verse as an ABB' form, and makes the postlude of WoO 126 and the trio version of 1822 redundant.

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[18]*The Letters of Beethoven*, 1000.

"Das Schöne zu dem Guten", the culminating line of Matthisson's poem, continued to resonate in Beethoven's mind. A canon in A-major setting this short phrase was composed in 1825. The line is congruent with the sentiments Beethoven expressed in the *Tagebuch*, entry no. 40 of 1815, and may be the key to his mysterious relationship with this poem: "Everything that is called life should be sanctified to the sublime and be a sanctuary of art. Let me live, even if by artificial means, if only they can be found!" [19]

This ABB' scheme, absent from the straightforward song of 1808, is an idea obvious in the earliest sketches, both those in the Kafka miscellany and in the Kessler reworkings. Particularly interesting is the late sketch, Kessler 6v which suggests, by the insersion of a clef change, an instrumental interlude instead of a text repetition; but the interlude was meant to use the melody that immediately after sets the text "O neig ein gnädig Ohr zu mir". Thus the idea of reiteration existed in an embryonic state. Earlier sketches had indicated "ritornello" at this point (Kessler 6r). In the late versions, this need to fill up time and lend a sense of proportion at this mid-point of the song was satisfied by augmenting the note durations in the middle of each verse (see Figure 10 version 5 m.7 ff.).

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[19] Transcribed by Solomon, "The Tagebuch", *Beethoven Essays*, 233-295.

The instrumental postlude had also been sketched in the 1790s; it is evident in the Kafka sketchbook and also in Kessler 5v and 5r where five measures of a melody full of long suspensions are proposed.

In short, Op. 121b and the version with the trio (which interestingly bears no identification number in the GA) is not a fundamental 'improvement" on WoO 126. Both the version of 1808 and these late arrangements have their roots in a common source, ten years' worth of sporadic sketching. WoO 126 took an unexpectedly different path than these sketches would suggest, and why this is so remains something of a mystery. Beethoven's reworking of the early 1820s restores many of the features abandoned by WoO 126, and brings the composer full circle in his approach to the recomposing of songs.

"Kafka" sketchbook

Die Flam-me lo-dert mil-der Schein durch-

"Kessler" sketchbook 6v

Die Flam-me lo-dert mil-der Schein durch-

WoO 126

Die Flam-me lo-dert mil-der Schein durch-

Version of 1822-3

Orch. Die Flam-me lo-dert milder Schein durch-

Op 121 b

Orch. Die Flamme lo-dert milder Schein durch-

FIGURE EIGHT: BEETHOVEN'S SETTINGS OF OPFERLIED

Kafka

-glänzt den düst-ern Ei- chen- hain und Weih-rauch dü- fte wal- len und

Kessler

-glänzt den düstern Ei- chen - hain und weih-rauch-düf-te wal- len und

WoO 126

-glänzt den düstern Ei- chen - hain und Weih-rauch düfte wal- len und

1922-3

NB ≡ 1

-glänzt den düstern Ei- chen- hain, und Weih-rauch- düfte wal- len, und

op 121 b

-glänzt den düstern Ei - chen - hain und Weih-rauch- dü- fte Wal- len, weih-

Kafka

Weih-rauch düfte wal- len. O neig ein gnä- dig

Kessler

Weih-rauch düf-te wal- len. O neig ein gnä- dig, ein

WoO 126

Weihrauch düfte wal- len. O neig- ein gnä- dig, ein

1822-3

Orch

Weihrauch düf-te wal- len. O neig' ein gnä-dig Ohr zu mir, ein

Op 121 b

-rauch düf-te wal- len O neig' ein gnädig Ohr zu mir, ein

Kafka

Ohr zu mir und lass' des Jüng-lings Op fer dir, du Höch- ster

Kessler

gnä dig Ohr zu mir und lass' des Jüng-lings Op-fer dir du Höch- ster

WoO 126

gnä-dig Ohr zu mir und lass' des Jüng lings Op fer dir du Höch- ster

1822-23

gnä dig Ohr zu mir und lass' des Jünglings Op-fer dir du Hoch- ster

Op 121 b

gnä-dig Ohr zu mir und lass' des Jüng-lings Opfer dir du Hoch- ster

Kafka

wohl - ge - fal - len,

Kessler

wohl - ge - fal - len.

WoO 126

wohl - ge fal - len.

1822-23

[Chorus:]

du Höch - ster wohl - ge - fal - len. O neig ein gnädig Ohr zu mir, ein

Op. 121 b

[Chorus:]

Du Höch - ster wohl - ge - fal - len. O neig ein gnädig Ohr zu mir, ein

Kafka

Kessler

und lass' des Jüng-lings Op- fer dir

WoO 126

1822-23

gnä-dig Ohr zu mir, und lass' des Jüng-lings Op-fer dir, du Höch-ster

op 121 b

gnä-dig Ohr zu mir, und lass' des Jüng lings Op-fer dir du Hoch- ster

Kafka

Du Höch - ster wohl - ge - fal - - len.

Kessler

du Höch - ster wohl - ge fal - len.

WoO 126

(accompaniment)

1822-23

1. [Orch.]

du Höch - ster wohl - ge - fal - len.

op 121 b

1.

du Höch - - ster wohl - ge - fal - len lass des Jünglings op - fer

WoO 126

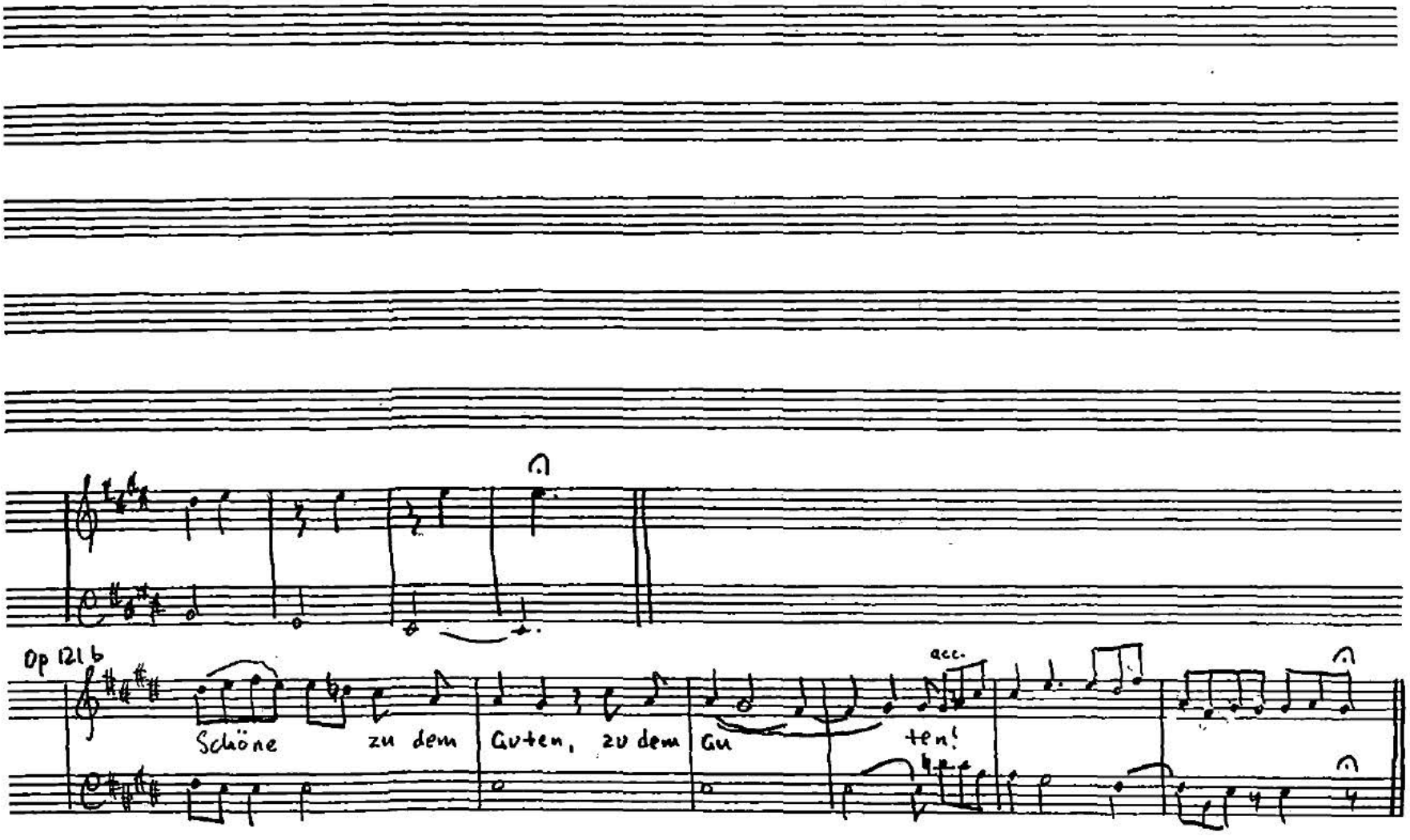
2. acc.

len

op 121b

2.

der wohl-ge- fallen. Gib mir. O gib mir das


Op 121 b
Schöne
zu dem
Guten, zu dem
Gu
ten!
acc.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to Willy Hess' proposed schema, discussed in Chapter Two, the four songs considered here represent the following spectrum:

1. *Revision with no higher aesthetic purpose:* The guitar version of "An die Geliebte" is very awkward at the piano. The adjustments of the melody are so minute as to suggest that Beethoven was not so much reworking the song in front of him as copying it out by memory. Whether or not htis was actually the case, the two versions are conflicting copies of each other; neither is easy to identify as artistically superior.

2. *Revision with a frustrated higher artistic purpose:* The "Sehnsucht" settings had equal status from Beethoven's point of view, although we are free, with Forbes and Schumann, to pick and choose among them. They are similar enough to each other that we cannot avoid comparison, and like "An die Geliebte" it is difficult if not impossible to detect a direction of evolution from one version to another. But unlike WoO 140 these are ontologically different songs, with different melodies and harmonies and subtly varying emotional effects.

3. *Radical revision*, which is testimony to the urge to perfect what must have seemed in retrospect an inadequate attempt: This is more than

the natural process of finding musical solutions by attempted sketches; the text of *An die Hoffnung* stimulated a deep commitment from Beethoven. He could not easily escape the demands its lofty sentiments made on him, and as we have seen, the matters touched upon here overlap in significant ways with Beethoven's revision of *Fidelio*.

4. *A continual mediation on a text*, refining details but never abandoning the original inspiration: The text resonates in Beethoven at a different level, less personal but every bit as pervading. A root and branch revision of all that had gone before would have violated what was beautiful and good in the early version. The purpose of the *Opferlieder* of the 1820s was not to elevate this text to new levels of complication and manipulation but apparently to hearken back to Beethoven's earlier work as a composer. What mattered here was the social communication of these sentiments, and the best way to do this seemed to be to have the chorus reiterate the soloist's thoughts. This setting represents a retreat from the anti-Goethe position eminently taken by the sophisticated Op. 94. The refinements of Op 121b are subtle rather than dramatic. It was this form of quiet cantabile expression that marks many of the new varied strophic lieder by Schubert, and which accords with Goethe's observation to Zelter on song writing: "To paint tones by tones; to thunder, to crash, to splash, to smack is detestable."[1]

But Goethe made a remark of a different kind to his first musical associate, Kayser. He compared a finished poem to a young student,

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[1]Whitton, *Lieder*, 22.

vulnerable to the effects wrought on it by a new schoolmaster. It is a plea for the sensitive composer not to elaborate the music at the poem's expense.

> The poet of a musical piece must, as he submits it to the composer, regard it as a son or pupil whom he dedicates to the services of a new master. The question is no longer what father or teacher will make out of the boy but rather to what his master -- lucky if he understands the trade better than the first teacher -- will educate him.[2]

Put this way, of course, the composer is faced with an immense responsibility. Difficulties arise inevitably because poetry and music are two different things, notwithstanding Beethoven's apparent attempt to bridge the two by the appropriation of the title *Tondichter.* The written form in which lyrical poetry was disseminated allowed the reader to meditate on the text, allowing for re-reading to fully absorb the sense of the lines alone ore in the context of the total poem. The nature of musical performance is quite different, and a sincere reading of a song text might require musical repetition for emphasis. Beethoven repeates both lines (Opferlied) and entire verses (Opus 94) for emphasis, but this can be seen as his attempt to live up to his responsibility towards these texts that he felt compelled to re-set. Certainly the trouble he went to in the search for an optimal setting of these poems demonstrates the seriousness of his commitment to being a sympathetic reader.

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[2]Quoted in Forbes, "*Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt* ", 60 n.3.

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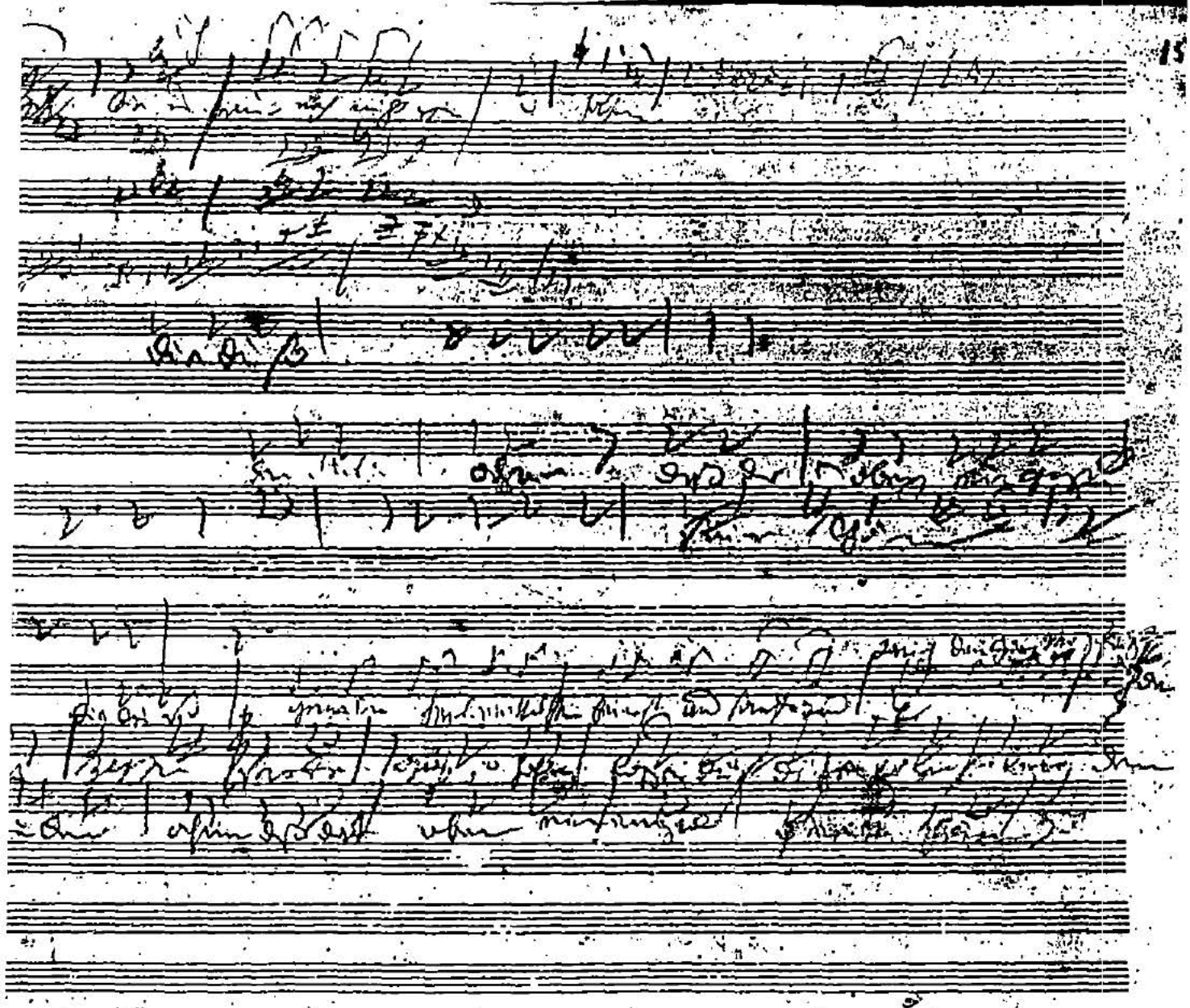
Appendix I: Mendelssohn 15 pp 151-157



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Title of Thesis: Beethoven's Reworking of Lieder

Author [redacted]

Bruce Kirkpatrick Hill

20 Sept 1990

Appendix II: TRANSCRIPTIONS OF SKETCHES FOR OP 32

(work on Leonore)

O Hoff nung

die du so

den Dulder ahnen, daß dort oben ein Engel

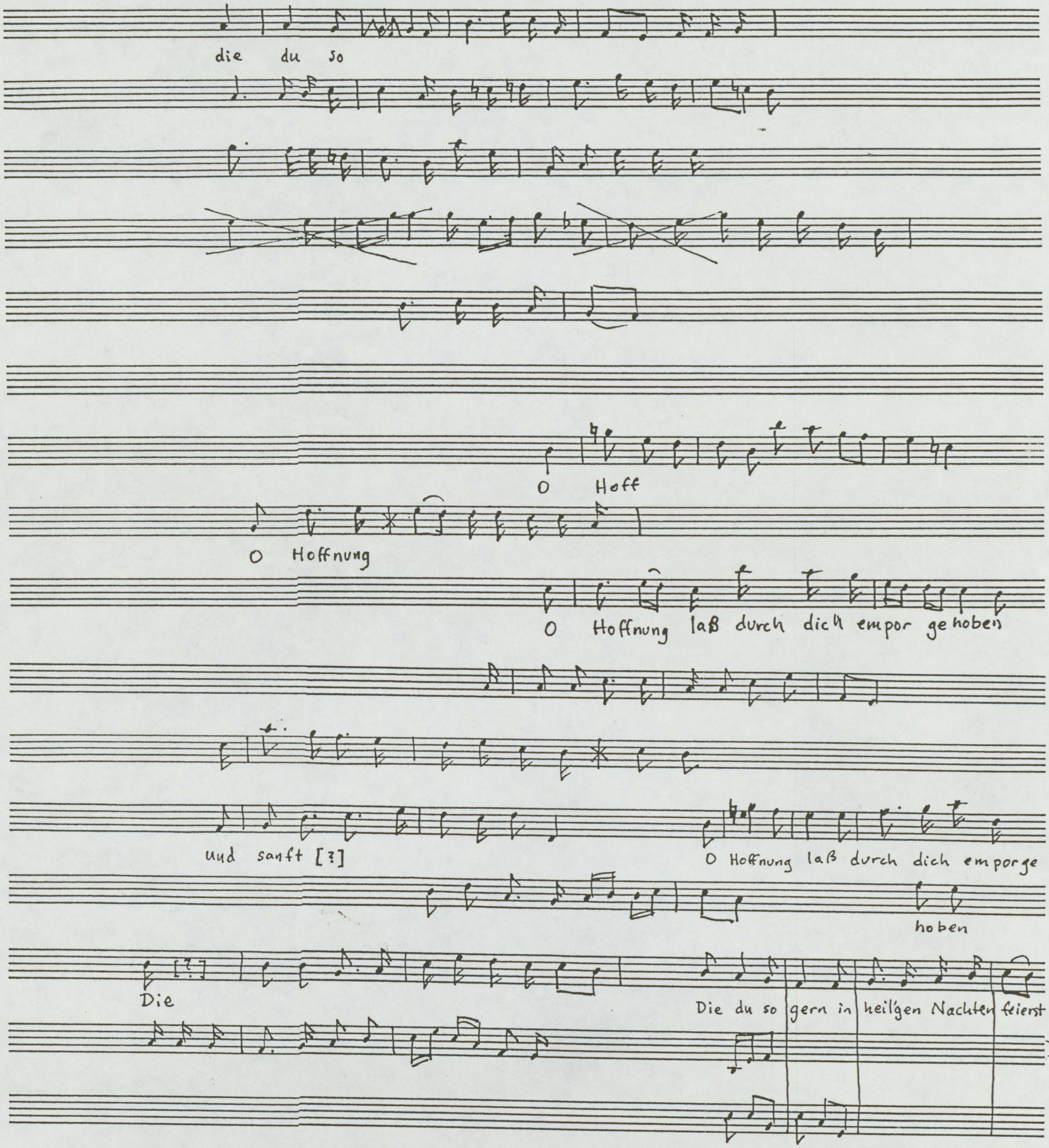
seine Thränen

weich den Gram verschleierst der

Die du so gern in heilgen Nächten feierst und sanft und

eine zarte Seele quält, O Hoffnung lass durch dich empor ge hoben den

Dulder ahnen, daß dort oben ein Engel seine Thränen zählt



Die du so gern in heilgen Nächten feierst und

die du so gern in heilgen Nächten

Die du so gern in heilgen Nächten feierst und sanft und weich den Gram verschleierst

der eine zarte Seele quält O

[?]

Hoffnung laß durch dich empor gehoben den

dulder ahnen daß dort oben ein Engel seine

Thränen zählt O Hoffnung laß durch dich empor ge

hoben den Dulder ahnen daß dort oben ein Engel seine Thränen zählt

[?]

den Dulder ahnen daß dort oben ein

[?]

die du so gern in heilgen Nächten

und sanft und weich den Gram verschleierst der eine zarte Seele quält

und sanft und weich den Gram verschleierst der eine zarte Seele quält

ein Engel seine Thränen zählt

Die

Engel seine Thränen zählt

[?]

[?]

Engel seine Thränen

156

[Work on ? Leonore]

Die du so gern in heil'gen Nächten feierst und sanft und
weich den Gram verschleierst der eine zarte Seele quält
O Hoffnung lass durch dich empor ge
hoben den Dulder ahnen daß dort oben ein
Engel seine Thränen zählt [?] O Hoffnung laß durch dich empor ge
[?]
hoben den Dulder ahnen daß dort
oben ein Engel seine Thränen [?] zählt

[?]

98

[work on Leonore]

Die

weich den Gram verschleierst deine

Die du so gern in heil'gen Nächten feierst und sanft und

zarte Seele quält O Hoffnung laß durch dich empor gehoben den

Dulder ahnen daß dort oben [?] ein Engel seine Thränen [?]

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Die du so gern in heilgen Nächten feierst und sanft und weich den Gram verschleierst der eine

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durch dich empor gehoben[?]

den Dulder ahnen daß dort

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[?]