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Rhetoric, form, and sovereignty in Schubert's "Prometheus," D. 674

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RHETORIC, FORM, AND SOVEREIGNTY
IN SCHUBERT'S "PROMETHEUS," D. 674

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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in

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by
Erica Brady Angert
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ABSTRACT

Franz Schubert's "Prometheus," D. 674 (1819), sets a free-verse dramatic monologue by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in which Prometheus, the Titan who presented fire and hope to mankind, declares himself independent from Zeus. This song belongs to a small group of Schubert's *Lieder* that resemble scenes from operas more than tonally-closed art songs. The paper discusses some of Schubert's compositional influences in the vocal genre, including Johann Friedrich Reichardt, who composed an earlier setting of the same "Prometheus" text. This paper explores the rhetorical structure of Goethe's text, which follows Quintilian's model for an effective argument, and which Schubert punctuates with changes of musical texture and character.

The paper considers previous Schenkerian models – Krebs's dual tonality and Burstein's auxiliary cadence compositions – to arrive at a tonal plan of an incomplete *Bassbrechung* in C major. Though the keys tonicized in "Prometheus" belong to the C-minor pitch collection, the title character's forceful conclusion is, ironically, in the key of C major. Schubert foreshadows Prometheus's eventual downfall musically by including elements of modal mixture, illustrating the precariousness of a moment that ought to be Prometheus's most decisive, his declaration of sovereignty.

INTRODUCTION

"I am. I think. I will.
My hands... My spirit... My sky... My forest... This earth of mine...
What must I say besides? These are the words. This is the answer."

— Prometheus in *Anthem*, Ayn Rand

In Greek mythology, the defiant character of Prometheus is one of the Titans, the second generation of gods. He is endowed with the gift of foresight by his mother, Themis, the goddess of the laws of nature (the name "Prometheus" in Greek means "foresight"). Zeus, part of the third generation of gods, overthrows and subsequently banishes most of the Titans (including his father, Cronos) after a long battle, and he then declares himself to be the ultimate authority over the gods and over mankind. Prometheus, one of the few allies of Zeus at the time, is lucky enough not to have been banished after the battle. Though Zeus has an inherent dislike of the young human race and has resolved to destroy them, Prometheus has a unique compassion for mankind, whom he has helped to create. He boldly decides to disobey Zeus and aid in humanity's development; the act for which he is best known is the presentation of the gods' fire to the race of men, a symbol of wisdom and enlightenment, but he also endows them with blind hope to prevent their seeing inevitable doom. For these insolent acts, Zeus sentences Prometheus to an existence chained to a rock in the remote Caucasus region, held there by a long spear. Ethon, a giant eagle, continually feasts upon his liver, believed to be the seat of passion.¹ Prometheus remains there for thirty thousand years, until Heracles, the greatest of Zeus's sons, performs the act of rescue which Prometheus has foreseen; Heracles kills Ethon and then shatters the chains that have bound Prometheus to the rock.²

The myth was recorded by many in ancient Greece, though none in such detail as the playwright Aeschylus (525-456 BCE). Aeschylus dramatized the story in his *Prometheus Bound*,

¹ George Thomson, introduction to *The Prometheus Bound*, by Aeschylus (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 19.

² Edward Tripp, *The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology* (New York: New American Library, 1970), 500.

the first play of a Prometheus trilogy, the other parts of which have never been recovered (part 2 was entitled *Prometheus Unbound*; part 3, *Prometheus the Firebearer*).³ In *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus defends his actions thus to the daughters of Oceanus, even while he remains chained to the rock in The Caucasus:

I found them witless and gave them the use of their wits and made them masters of their minds... For men at first had eyes but saw to no purpose; they had ears but did not hear. Like the shapes of dreams they dragged through their long lives and handled all things in bewilderment and confusion... They lived like swarming ants in holes in the ground, in the sunless caves of the earth... It was I who made visible to men's eyes the flaming signs of the sky that were before dim.⁴

Among the many composers who treated some version of the Prometheus story was Beethoven, who received a commission in 1801 to compose *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (*The Creatures of Prometheus*). In this ballet, Prometheus is depicted in the act of bringing to life two clay figures who subsequently learn art, music, passion, and dance from Apollo, Orpheus, Bacchus, and the other gods. Beethoven reworked some of the ballet's themes into his *Eroica Variations* for Piano, op. 35 (1802), and later into the Finale of his *Eroica* Symphony no. 3 in E \flat major (1803). Through the *Eroica*, Beethoven relates Napoleon Bonaparte, to whom he originally dedicated the symphony, to Prometheus, by including music from the ballet; this juxtaposition points to an important connection in Beethoven's mind between a hero of the past and a hero of his present.

In his music for *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* and the *Eroica* Symphony, Beethoven conceives of Prometheus as a towering figure whose greatness is seemingly unparalleled. No clouds of doom hang over this hero's head. The *Eroica* Symphony in particular demonstrates Beethoven's own heroism in creating what is widely accepted as a ground-breaking symphony for its time. Beethoven scholars mark the beginning of his middle period with the composition

³ Thomson, introduction to *The Prometheus Bound*, 2. The precise order of the plays within the trilogy is unknown; this order follows Thomson's careful reconstruction of the missing two plays and his hypothesis of Aeschylus's intentions.

⁴ Aeschylus, "Prometheus Bound," in *The Complete Greek Tragedies: Aeschylus II*, ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, trans. David Grene (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), 156-7.

of the *Eroica*, which led the way to an expansion of the form and scope of the symphony as a genre. Scott Burnham, in *Beethoven Hero*, has asserted that Beethoven himself becomes the hero in his *Eroica* symphony, so that the act of its composition parallels Prometheus's heroic presentation of fire to humanity.⁵ Like Prometheus, Beethoven breaks past the boundaries of a previous generation, and his forethought, like that of Prometheus, allowed those who followed him to participate in a new realm of possibility.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), master poet and playwright of the German Romantic movement, was also taken with the Prometheus myth, and in 1773, he completed two acts of a Prometheus drama that he intended one day to bring to the stage.⁶ In the following year, he wrote a dramatic monologue from Prometheus's perspective to accompany the unfinished play. The manuscript for the play was never completed or published, but he eventually published the "Prometheus" monologue in a collection of his poems. His work with *Prometheus* came during his early twenties, his period of newfound interest in Greek mythology, the same years in which he wrote *Ganymed*, *Grenzen der Menschheit*, and *An Schwager Kronos*, each of which was later set to music by Franz Schubert (1797-1828). The mythology, poetry, and drama of the Ancient Greeks in these stories and others became lifelong pursuits for Goethe as he sought to correct centuries of misinterpretation and tried to emulate the Greeks in his drama.⁷ Thus, this group of dramatic monologues represents an important portion of Goethe's output, and similarly, Schubert's group of Goethe settings belongs to a unique category within his *Lieder*. His vocal settings of these Greek monologues are typified by "Prometheus" (D. 674, 1819), with its alternation of recitative and arioso, its frequent changes of tempo and texture, and its surface lack of tonal unity, all consequences of Schubert's mode of dramatic expression.

⁵ Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), xv.

⁶ For the fragments of Goethe's unfinished play, see Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Prometheus," in *Goethe's Collected Works*, ed. Cyrus Hamlin and Frank Ryder, trans. Robert M. Browning, et al., vol. 7, *Early Verse Drama and Prose Plays* (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers, 1988), 240-50.

⁷ Carl Conway Moman, "A Study of the Musical Settings by Franz Schubert and Hugo Wolf for Goethe's 'Prometheus,' 'Ganymed,' and 'Grenzen der Menschheit'" (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1980), 30-32.

Schubert's compositional style in the vocal genre was naturally influenced by the opera composers in the previous two generations. The rise in popularity of the operatic "scene" in the eighteenth century, springing largely from the concert tradition of the performance of single arias and scenes from whole operas, led composers to write short, stand-alone works—brief scenes that seem to have been plucked straight from operas, such as Mozart's "Als Luise die Briefe," K. 520; Haydn's "The Battle of the Nile," Hob. XXVI b:4; and Beethoven's "Ah! Perfido!" Op. 65. These scenes and others of this genre generally depict well-known stories and characters, and since the focus tends to be on the virtuosity of the performer, a simple passing familiarity with the story is usually enough to allow an audience to appreciate the emotionally charged music. The mid- to late-eighteenth century also saw a rise in popularity of the secular solo cantata by composers such as Johann Gottlieb Naumann, Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach, and Johann Friedrich Reichardt (who himself wrote a setting of "Prometheus" that predates that of Schubert); this genre typically includes changes of tempo, meter, and key in the expression of the particular dramatic subject, just as one would find in an opera or an operatic scene.⁸

The influence of these genres on Franz Schubert is obvious. Though never a successful opera composer, Schubert was steeped in the operatic tradition in Vienna. From a young age, he attended opera performances and was enchanted by them; as he matured, he studied techniques of opera composition with Antonio Salieri, his teacher from 1812 to 1816. He had written roughly nine *Singspiele* before late 1819, when he composed his setting of Goethe's "Prometheus."⁹ "Prometheus" is only one example of Schubert's shorter vocal works that employ elements of opera, a class of songs Marjorie Hirsch terms "dramatic scenes" (in contrast to his strophic *Lieder*, which usually describe static situations or characters). This genre, which includes Schubert's settings of dramatic monologues, tends to feature changes of key, tempo,

⁸ Marjorie Wing Hirsch, *Schubert's Dramatic Lieder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 18-23.

⁹ Elizabeth McKay, "Schubert and the Theatre," in *Goethe and Schubert: Across the Divide, Proceedings of the Conference 'Goethe and Schubert in Perspective and Performance' Held at Trinity College, Dublin, 4-5 April 2003*, ed. Lorraine Byrne and Dan Farrelly (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2003), 112-17.

and texture, often utilizing an alternation of recitative and aria in the dramatic presentation of the text.¹⁰ Schubert's dramatic scenes, she writes, are "rigorously individualistic," and the characteristic recitative and changes of texture mimic speech and sustain the illusion that the protagonist is virtually unaware of his own artistic medium. The vigorous nature of these scenes differs from the more traditional *Lieder* of Schubert and others, which tend to portray a static moment in time and which are therefore more suitable for strophic forms and repetition of musical ideas. Dramatic monologues, on the other hand, depict dynamic changes and the passage of time, and thus lend themselves in musical settings to through-composition and greater thematic and textural contrast.¹¹

A handful of Schubert's Goethe settings dwell in an idiom similar to that of "Prometheus." Among these are "Der Sänger" (1815) and "Ganymed" (1817). "Der Sänger" tells the story of an old minstrel who comes to entertain the king and his knights before they leave for battle, and recitative during the narrator's text flows into lyrical arioso when the minstrel sings for the king and knights. The song ends with a beautifully ornamented expression of gratitude from the humble minstrel to the king for giving him a cup of wine after he sings, and he expresses the hope that the knights be as thankful to God for their victories as he is for the drink. "Der Sänger" is noteworthy for its operatic flow – one could well imagine this scene occurring in an opera centering on the battle, in which the minstrel might have only a small role. The song also features wandering tonality on the surface, similar to "Prometheus," as it begins in D major before the minstrel enters the castle, passes through five key changes, and ends in the remote area of B^b major as he delivers his final good wishes.

"Ganymed," composed two years later, recounts Zeus's kidnapping of Ganymede, the young and beautiful Trojan prince, to live with him as his lover on Mount Olympus. Ganymede is the viewpoint character, describing first the pastoral beauty of the hilltop and then

¹⁰ Hirsch, *Schubert's Dramatic Lieder*, 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 49-52.

his ascension to the heavens to be with his “alliebender Vater” (“all-loving Father”). Schubert’s setting begins in A^b major, modulates through numerous keys (including two key signature changes), and ends in F major. Though there are changes of key and texture in this song, these transitions are more seamless than in “Prometheus” or “Der Sänger,” and the song has no recitative. This smoothness is more appropriate for Ganymede’s circumstance, since his reaction to his kidnapping is one of bright optimism that leads to his peaceful ascent.

Several of these dramatic scenes begin in one key and end in another, and they are therefore problematic for conventional analysis. A central tenet of traditional common-practice music analysis is the operation of a musical work within a tonally closed system; whatever tonicizations and harmonic diversions occur within a work must ultimately be explained in relation to one primary tonic. Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) developed a theory in the early twentieth century to highlight similarities between all masterworks of the period from Bach to Brahms (ca. 1700-1900), and the idea that unifies his late writings is that musical works involve the elaboration of a single fundamental structure, an *Ursatz*, which is derived from the chord of nature (the first five partials of the overtone series) and which exists within a single key.¹²

Later theorists, in an attempt to broaden Schenker’s theories to apply to music that Schenker himself had not specifically included in his analyses, have devised various paradigms that expand his work. Harald Krebs has written on the idea of dual tonality in nineteenth-century music, using songs by Schubert and piano works by Frédéric Chopin to illustrate how two Schenkerian *Ursätze* from third-related keys may operate in a single work, either in two distinct I–V–I progressions, or in two progressions that overlap in some manner.¹³ L. Poundie Burstein has explored Schenker’s idea of the auxiliary cadence to apply to what Burstein calls “auxiliary cadence compositions,” those that contain non-tonic openings with a larger function

¹² See Figure 1 in Heinrich Schenker, *Der freie Satz*, vol. 3, *Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien*, rev. ed. (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1956), 27.

¹³ Harald Krebs, “Alternatives to Monotonicity in Early Nineteenth-Century Music,” *Journal of Music Theory* 25, 1 (1981): 1-16.

in the context of the work as a whole.¹⁴ Each of these theories will be explored as they apply to “Prometheus” in order to help the listener arrive at a clear understanding of the form of this dramatic song, which has perceptible foundations in the tradition of opera. In this paper, I will show that Schubert’s “Prometheus,” despite its surface incongruities and progressions to unexpected key areas, is unified by a single tonal structure.

¹⁴ L. Poundie Burstein, “The Non-Tonic Opening in Classical and Romantic Music” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1988).

LITERARY EXPLORATION

Text and Translation

The complex nature of the musical surface of Schubert's "Prometheus" is highly dependent on its text, which comes from the free-verse dramatic monologue by Goethe. The monologue, a vehicle for Prometheus's derisive criticism of the gods and his declaration of sovereignty, uses a rhetorical structure that follows a classic model for an effective argument. The study of rhetoric was an essential part of German and Austrian education from the sixteenth century through the early part of the nineteenth century; this places Schubert squarely in an educational and cultural tradition that relied heavily on rhetoric.¹⁵ Though the text of "Prometheus" is Goethe's, Schubert remains mindful of the rhetorical divisions of the text and uses these sectional breaks to enhance his musical setting. A translation of the text, slightly modified by Schubert (see Figure 1), will be followed by discussions of the diction and the rhetorical structure.

Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus, mit Wolkendunst,	1
Cover your heavens, Zeus, with cloudy mist,	
Und übe, dem Knaben gleich, der Disteln köpft, an Eichen dich, und Bergeshöh'n;	2
And behead oaks and mountain tops, just as a youth beheads thistles;	
Musst mir meine Erde doch lassen steh'n,	3
But you must leave my earth untouched,	
Und meine Hütte, die du nicht gebaut,	4
And my cabin, which you did not build,	
Und meinen Herd, um dessen Glut du mich beneidest.	5
And my hearth, the glowing fire of which you envy me.	
Ich kenne nichts Ärmeres unter der Sonn', als euch, Götter!	6
I know of nothing beneath the sun poorer than you, gods!	
Ihr nährt, kümmerlich vom Opfersteuern vom Gebetshauch eure Majestät,	7
You nourish Your Majesty wretchedly on mandatory sacrifices and on the breath of prayer;	
Ihr darbtet, wären nicht Kinder und Bettler hoffnungsvolle Toren.	8
You would starve if children and beggars were not hopeful fools.	
Da ich ein Kind war, nicht wusste wo aus noch ein,	9
When I was a child, not knowing which way to go,	
Kehrt'ich mein verirrtes Auge zur Sonne,	10

¹⁵ Elaine Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, Studies in the History of Music, ed. Lewis Lockwood (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 19.

I turned my straying eyes to the sun,	
Als wenn d'rüber wär' ein Ohr, zu hören meine Klage,	11
As if there were an ear above to hear my lament,	
Ein Herz, wie mein's, sich des Bedrängten zu erbarmen.	12
A heart like mine to have compassion on those in distress.	
Wer half mir wider der Titanen Übermut?	13
Who helped me against the insolence of the Titans?	
Wer rettete vom Tode mich, von Sklaverei?	14
Who delivered me from death, from slavery?	
Hast du nicht alles selbst vollendet, heilig glühend Herz?	15
Did you not accomplish everything alone, my sacred, impassioned heart?	
Und glühtest jung und gut, betrogen, Rettungsdank dem Schlafenden da droben?	16
And did you not glow with thanks for deliverance, youthfully and well, mistakenly addressed to the sleeper up there?	
Ich dich ehren? Wofür?	17
I should honor you? For what?	
Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert je des Beladenen?	18
Have you soothed the pains of any of the burdened?	
Ich dich ehren? Wofür?	19
I should honor you? For what?	
Hast du die Tränen gestillet je des Geängsteten?	20
Have you quieted the tears of any of the anguished?	
Hat mich nicht zum Manne geschmiedet die allmächtige Zeit und das ewige Schicksal, meine Herrn und deine?	21
Was I not forged into a man by omnipotent Time and eternal Destiny, my masters and yours?	
Wähtest du etwa, ich sollte das Leben hassen,	22
Did you delude yourself that I ought to hate life,	
In Wüsten fliehen, weil nicht alle Blümenträume reiften?	23
To flee into the deserts, since not all my flowering dreams came into bloom?	
Hier sitz' ich, forme Menschen nach meinem Bilde,	24
Here I sit, forming men after my own image,	
Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei,	25
A race to be equal to me,	
Zu leiden, zu weinen, zu geniessen und zu freuen sich,	26
To suffer, to weep, to live fully and to be joyful,	
Und dein nicht zu achten, wie ich,	27
And to disregard you as I do,	
Dein nicht zu achten, wie ich!	28
To disregard you as I do!	

Figure 1: Text of "Prometheus" and English translation¹⁶

¹⁶ Text from Franz Schubert, "Prometheus," in *Neue Schubert-Ausgabe IV: Lieder*, ed. Walther Dürr, vol. 12 (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1996), 120-25. Translation mine.

Literary Analysis

In the opening line of Goethe's *Prometheus* monologue, the title character addresses Zeus directly with the ironic demand that Zeus cover the heavens with a cloudy mist. Right from the beginning, through this open challenge to a known tyrant, we realize that Prometheus is not afraid of Zeus's power and that he wants desperately to make his newfound independence known. He invites Zeus to behead trees and entire mountains in the same manner that a child might pluck the tops off of flowers, an image that aligns the actions of the god with those of thoughtless youth. Prometheus implies here that Zeus has no more concern for the structures and beings on the earth than a careless child romping through a field might have for a thistle. This is the first of many images in the poem that reveal Prometheus's vision of a deity who cares nothing for those who should be under his protection. Then, in the third line, Prometheus challenges Zeus's power, creating an interesting juxtaposition of Zeus's capacity to destroy with the new prohibition from entering Prometheus's domain, a challenge to Zeus's apparent omnipotence. Prometheus asserts that *his* earth, his cabin, and his hearth are to be left untouched hereafter; thus he is carving out his own space and marking a boundary across which Zeus may no longer venture. One in this list of places now forbidden to Zeus is Prometheus's hearth, and he asserts the idea that Zeus envies its glowing fire. The literal word Goethe uses, "Herd," is very similar to "Herz" (as are their English equivalents, "hearth" and "heart"). Prometheus is referring literally to the hearth in his home but more figuratively to his heart, with its strong will and desire for self-actualization; he believes Zeus to envy the latter more.

After this first declaration of his own strength, Prometheus gloats that he knows of nothing beneath the sun that is poorer than these gods to whom he used to be subservient. They are poor in spirit, but they are also poor because he has taken away something of great value to them: their authority. The use of the phrase "unter der Sonn'" ("beneath the sun") carries the familiar Biblical connotation that the gods, like Prometheus, are part of everything

imaginable (“everything under the sun”), but it also carries the implication of a physically inferior position, in that the gods are subject to the same laws of nature to which Prometheus is subject. This implication contradicts the traditional mythological image of Apollo, Zeus’s son, as synonymous with the sun, and it makes a distinction in Prometheus’s estimation between the all-seeing sun and the gods, who are beneath it. The image of the sun will return later in the poem, and again Prometheus will distinguish the physical sun from the gods’ deflated authority.

In the following section of the poem, Prometheus expounds upon his disgust for the way the gods have kept control over mortal man, using the image of their finding nourishment in the animal sacrifices and prayers directed toward them. Prometheus asserts that the gods survive only because they prey upon the folly of children and beggars, those he obviously feels are too naïve or too desperate to realize what Prometheus sees as Zeus’s impotence. The children described here as praying hopefully to the gods might also be the same careless children who behead thistles in their boredom. Prometheus’s desire to free himself from the control of Zeus represents a coming-of-age struggle (though obviously complicated by the fact that Prometheus was created before Zeus), a struggle underscored further by his separation of his current situation with that of the folly of youth.

In the following section, Prometheus takes a step backward from the immediate confrontation to remember his own childhood. He recalls that when he knew no better, he turned his eyes toward the sun in hopes of finding comfort and compassion in the heavens. We know from the text that came before and the text that follows that he did not find such comfort in the sun and eventually came to rely on his own strength, so he has once again made a distinction between the sun, a physical image of something greater than he, and the gods, who he has decided are without ultimate authority. He recalls that he wished for an ear to hear his lament or a heart capable of compassion, an attempt to ascribe physical, human qualities to the

gods. The negative tone in this passage, though, implies that he found no such qualities, further dehumanizing the gods in a literal and a figurative sense.

The following section of the text begins the list of accusatory rhetorical questions that continues until the final, decisive statement of Prometheus's newfound independence. He asks who was there to help him during the great battle between Zeus and the Titans in which Prometheus was one of the few to side with Zeus, and he asks who delivered him from death and slavery. By asking these rhetorical questions, Prometheus escalates the tension that had seen a momentary pause in the previous reflective passage, tension that leads up to his awareness of his own self-sufficiency. He changes the focus of his narrative by addressing his own heart; he believes that he has only it to thank for his many victories, a departure from his belief system at the time of those victories, when he was still ascribing responsibility for his triumph to the "Schlafenden" ("sleeper") in the sky. The word "Schlafenden" carries the connotation that Zeus is dormant and has ceased to care about the trials of humanity and those who once supported him, if he ever had cared, but it characterizes him in the same manner as in the criticisms Prometheus has already leveled at him. In the first section, he gave a description of Zeus as a reckless child; then in the second section, he accused him of feeding on those who foolishly worshipped him; finally, here he refers to Zeus as one who is sleeping. These characteristics, taken together, are best ascribed to someone or something that cares only for itself, perhaps even to an animal-like figure rather than to a humanized deity. Everything Prometheus has said serves to chip away at the familiar idea of a god with human characteristics and replaces it with an image of a slothful creature with no sense of compassion.

The rhetorical questions continue in the next section as Prometheus's tone becomes even more frenzied. He demands to know why he should honor Zeus when Zeus has done nothing to soothe the pain experienced by Prometheus or mankind, whom he feels are to some degree under his own protection. Schubert's repetition of "Ich dich ehren? Wofür?" ("I should honor you? For what?") raises the tension further. The two "Ich dich ehren" lines are followed by

similar questions with parallel syntax: "Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert je des Beladenen?" and "Hast du die Tränen gestillet je des Geängsteten?" These four lines are the most structured of the entire work and bear the closest resemblance to some sort of poetic form, but it was Schubert's choice, not Goethe's, to repeat the "Ich dich ehren" line.¹⁷

After these outbursts, in which Prometheus can no longer conceal his feelings of abandonment, he pulls back into a more rational argument, that Time and Destiny are his masters and theirs. Time and Destiny forged him "zum Manne" ("into a man") in that they sustained him from youth into adulthood, since the passage of Time has aged him and the hand of Destiny has been responsible for his victories and salvation from death. Zeus had little or nothing to do with Prometheus's development; instead, Prometheus credits another higher power. Throughout the monologue, Prometheus has lessened the gods' authority by drawing attention to their disparity from more powerful, amorphous images: first the sun, then Time and Destiny. By augmenting the supremacy of these other forces, Prometheus brings the gods gradually closer to his own level so that, by the end of his argument, he is able to reject them completely in favor of his own free will.

Prometheus's final question demands mockingly of Zeus whether he foolishly believed that Prometheus would retreat and decide to hate life because of these realizations. The image of the barren "Wüsten" ("deserts"), in contrast to the image of flowering dreams that follows, seems to indicate that Prometheus rejects the dull existence that would necessarily ensue from his continued subservience to the gods. After all, now that he has tasted independence, he cannot return to the naïveté of his youth, and to continue the worship of those he believes to be powerless would mean a de-evolution of his mind and spirit.

¹⁷ Goethe's monologue is written in free verse, without a traditional form or any repetition of lines, and Schubert alters the text only twice: here and at the end of the poem, both of which highlight Prometheus's sense of defiance and which serve Schubert's musical interpretation. The second repeated line will be discussed below.

Prometheus's conclusion begins with the affirmative "Hier sitz' ich," pulling us out of his past struggles and back into his present. He claims to be forming a race of men in his own image, equal to him and not subject to Zeus. Prometheus states that this race, rather than experiencing the delusion of youth, will not be shielded from the gamut of human emotion; they will suffer and weep, but on the other hand, they will experience joy and have the chance to live fully and without restriction. This seems to be a reference to Prometheus's gift of hope to mankind. The final and most important characteristic of this new race is that they will have no regard for Zeus, just as Prometheus has vowed to do. Schubert chooses to repeat this final line, only the second repetition of Goethe's original text, for reasons that will become clear in the musical analysis below.

Rhetorical Structure

A literary model with particular pertinence to the text is that of the rhetorician Quintilian (1st century CE), a model that focuses on the proper structuring of an effective argument. The five-part Quintilian model includes the *exordium* (introduction), the *narratio* (statements of facts), the *confirmatio* (proof), the *refutatio* (refutation of the opponent's arguments), and the *peroratio* (conclusion).¹⁸ Prometheus is in effect, delivering a logical argument to justify his rejection of Zeus's authority, and whether Zeus is present to refute the claims, or absent and voiceless, seems of little consequence to Prometheus or to the listener. Goethe intended this text as a dramatic monologue, with the main character unaware of his own artistic medium or the actual structure of the argument he delivers (just as the characters in a play by Shakespeare, for example, are "unaware" that they are speaking in iambic pentameter). Prometheus does not concern himself with hearing the replies of those he addresses; he simply makes his declaration known. He anticipates the gods' objections to his declaration and refutes them without their having to be present at all, and in doing so, he

¹⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H.E. Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

attempts to make them obsolete and to prepare for an existence in which he is master of his own new race.

The text at the beginning through Prometheus's statement, "Ich kenne nichts Ärmeres unter der Sonn', als euch, Götter!" (I know of nothing beneath the sun poorer than you, Gods!') comprises the *exordium* section, introducing Prometheus's conflict with Zeus's authority and the basis for the argument (lines 1-6 in Figure 1). Next, the *narratio* includes Prometheus's narration of the gods' pathetic existence and a retrospective look at his own childhood, in which, evidently, he wrongly imagined his prayers would reach those who might take pity on him (lines 7-12). The third section, the *confirmatio*, comes not in statements of facts but in rhetorical questions in the "Wer half mir?" passage, questions implying that no one aided Prometheus and that he was forced to rely on himself (lines 13-16). Goethe's rhetorical questions in this monologue are designed to provoke thought, not to elicit specific answers, and such questions may thus substitute for plainer statements that would be more typical of a logical argument. The *refutatio*, the fourth of Quintilian's sections, is contained in the next group of rhetorical questions (lines 17-23), but since the gods have no voice in this poem, the listener must imagine their protestations that lead to Prometheus's refutation of their argument. Prometheus asks why he should honor Zeus, since Zeus seems to care nothing for those under his protection and he therefore does not deserve to be worshipped. Prometheus then poses another rhetorical question with an even more powerful implication; he asks whether he was not forged by Time and Destiny, who he believes to be masters of both himself and the gods. The final rhetorical question would seem to quash any lingering notion of Prometheus's weakness; he asks whether the gods foolishly believed he would be destroyed emotionally by his realization that he would have to shape his own destiny. His *peroratio* comes in the final strophe, when Prometheus fiercely proclaims that he plans to form a race of men in his own image and that he will teach them to disregard the gods as he does (lines 24-28).

Schubert, like centuries of European students before him, would have learned rhetoric as part of his education, so Quintilian's model almost certainly had great significance for his approach to literature.¹⁹ As I will show in my analysis, Schubert creates changes in the musical texture and harmonic language that correspond to these sectional breaks in the text, punctuating Prometheus's argument on a variety of levels.

¹⁹ Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 19.

PREVIOUS MODELS

Heinrich Schenker's method of analysis incorporates the view that all great music is unified by an underlying progression in a single key, an *Ursatz*, which is prolonged and embellished throughout the work. His *Ursatz*, an elaboration of the aforementioned chord of nature, consists of a tonic – dominant – tonic harmonic itinerary, the *Bassbrechung*, that underlies a descending melodic progression beginning on some member of the tonic triad (usually $\hat{3}$ but sometimes $\hat{5}$ or $\hat{8}$).²⁰ It is one of many theories of music that rely on the fundamental idea of rest – tension – rest, where the final resolution of harmonic tension brings the music to a close.²¹

A handful of Schubert's *Lieder*, including "Prometheus" and the other dramatic scenes, begin in one key and end in another, and so they make difficult an analysis using traditional Schenkerian methods. Schubert's "Prometheus" begins with a three-measure phrase in which an arpeggiated B \flat -major triad leads to a plagal cadence in E \flat major. The next phrase, also three measures, contains a similar arpeggiated figure of the E \flat triad, but this phrase reaches a stronger authentic cadence in the key of G minor. The harmonic ambiguity of the opening measures serves as a microcosm for the fleeting nature of the tonal centers throughout the song; the ambiguous B \flat -major/G minor opening is followed by movement through various third-related keys – the song even changes key signatures twice – and it ends with a passage in C major as Prometheus delivers his final pronouncement to the gods. Because of the song's rapid key shifts, both within formal sections and between them, it is difficult to interpret "Prometheus" as having a complete *Ursatz* in any key.

²⁰ Schenker, *Der freie Satz*, 27.

²¹ See the discussion of Schenker's concept of *Durchgang*, the effect of passing through dissonance, in Robert Snarrenberg, *Schenker's Interpretive Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9-12.

Harald Krebs's 1981 article, "Alternatives to Monotony in Early Nineteenth-Century Music," discusses three Schubert songs and one Chopin ballade that have this multi-tonal property. Krebs asserts that perspectives other than a strict Schenkerian reading are sometimes necessary; in particular, Krebs implies, Schubert's songs may deviate from traditional tonal conventions in order to convey poetic meaning, as is evident in his analysis of the plot twist and subsequent tonal shift of "Der Alpenjäger" (1817).²² Krebs is able to analyze each of his examples by using two *Ursätze* in third-related keys—sometimes as two overlapping structures, sometimes as two distinct I–V–I progressions—to describe the work's tonal plan.

Though Krebs's assertions regarding the coexistence of two *Ursätze* within a single work are convincing in the cases of the songs he analyzes, they do not apply as easily to "Prometheus." In each of his presentations, the two *Ursätze* are related by an interval of a third, and certainly no such structural relationship can be found in "Prometheus." The ending key of C major would need to be preceded by a structurally significant third-related key to fit Krebs's paradigm, leaving the other possibilities as A, A^b, E, or E^b. E^b presents itself as the only viable possibility because of the strong half cadences in E^b at measures 28 and 65, but there is never a close in E^b after measure 65; there is only a deceptive resolution to C^b, which leads to a chromatic sequence in measures 66-77.

On the other hand, if one considers the possibility of an *Ursatz* in G that overlaps a second *Ursatz* in C, more of the song's key areas begin to fall into place, at least initially. The G-minor section that opens the song leads to B^b minor and then D minor at the start of the next two sections (mm. 29 and 42, respectively), forming a large-scale arpeggiation of the G-minor tonic triad. D minor is an important key area in this song—Schubert even marks it visually with a key change—but an extended area in D major would be the best preparation for the tonic return in an *Ursatz* in G. Though the G-major chord in m. 86, which one must take as the final tonic in a hypothetical *Ursatz* in G, is preceded locally by a D⁷ chord in m. 85, the D⁷ harmony is

²² Krebs, "Alternatives to Monotony," 1-16.

brief and contains an underlying G pedal. This chord is, at best, a weak candidate for a structural dominant.

The second *Ursatz* in this scenario, which would include a I–V–I progression in C major, has a tenuous beginning with the C-major chord in mm. 74-77. The G-major chord in m. 87, also the closing tonic of the first *Ursatz*, functions as the structural dominant of C that finds its resolution in m. 88 (see Figure 2 below).

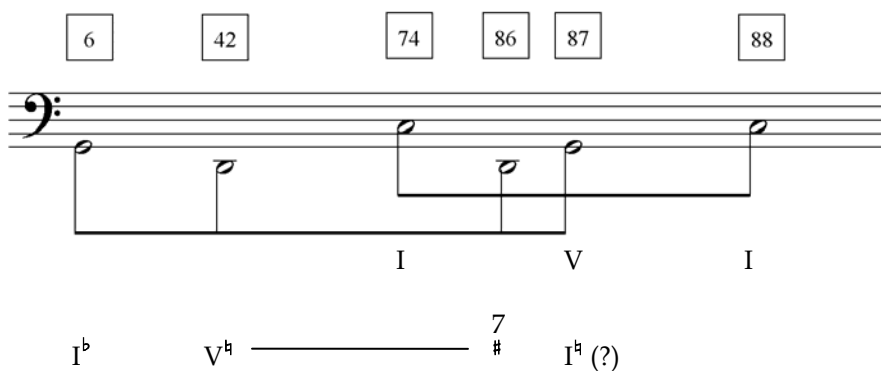


Figure 2: Overlapping *Ursätze* in G and C, following Krebs

This reading of “Prometheus,” however, emphasizes too heavily the C-major triad in m. 74, which does anticipate the final tonic of the song but which is not the structural tonic at its first appearance. In addition, the hypothetical two-*Ursätze* paradigm places the wrong structural emphasis on the G-major triad in m. 87; this G-major triad is the end of a half-cadence that is then answered in the final C-major section, and calling it simultaneously the ending tonic of a progression in G is inappropriate. This reading also places too much structural weight on the D⁷ chord in m. 86, which falls between the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ and the G-major triad on the musical surface.

One can take from the hypothetical Krebs paradigm the idea of G and C as the most important key areas and then fit them into a different framework with more logical implications. In his dissertation, entitled “The Non-Tonic Opening in Classical and Romantic

Music," L. Poundie Burstein describes a variety of instances of non-tonic openings and what he terms auxiliary-cadence compositions in an attempt to understand the form and tonality of works that do not progress from one tonic chord at the beginning to another tonic chord at the end. He uses graphs from Schenker's *Free Composition* that incorporate non-tonic openings or auxiliary cadences, and he tries to find some unifying element in what many have criticized as some of Schenker's more problematic graphs.²³

Burstein breaks non-tonic openings into two categories: those that are "random," which use some diatonic chord to lead eventually into the tonic; and those that are "deceptive," in which the opening harmony is at first mistaken for tonic, later events proving this impression to be incorrect. No matter the nature of the non-tonic beginning, Burstein asserts that the underlying structure of a piece must still be logical and well-integrated into the composition as a whole.²⁴

After a preliminary exploration of Burstein's theories, one might be tempted to think of "Prometheus" as a work in C major because of the importance of that key at the end of the song, and there are certainly points to support that conclusion. In fact, the last two sections of the song, from "Wähntest du etwa" (m. 83) to the end, exhibit an enharmonically respelled $\flat vi - V - I$ progression, with the brief G#-minor phrase strengthening the dominant preparation and, in turn, its resolution in C. Measure 88, coming more than three-fourths of the way through the song, could, in effect, be seen as the structural downbeat.²⁵ It is uncommon but not unheard of in the nineteenth century for a non-tonic opening to last through a significant portion of a composition and for the true key of the song to appear near the end.²⁶ C major, which has been strongly (yet only locally) prepared, is likely asserting itself as the song's true key because it coincides with Prometheus's defiant conclusion.

²³ Burstein, "Non-Tonic Opening," 21.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²⁵ For discussion of "structural downbeat" and "extended upbeat," see Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 22-31.

²⁶ Burstein, "Non-Tonic Opening," 9.

Interpreting this song as simply in C major, though, does not illuminate all of the various tonicizations that occur before the final section. Fewer than half of the keys tonicized have a significant harmonic relationship to C major, a fact that seems to violate Burstein's statement that a non-tonic beginning must still have a structural function in the larger context of the work. B \flat , the first harmony and a recurring key area in "Prometheus," would function as \flat VII, which negates the leading tone of C, as does G minor, the minor dominant of C, which is the tonal center in the first section of the song. E \flat (major and minor) also figures prominently, particularly in the first half of the song, and its identity is also contrary to functional keys in C major. A \flat major is briefly tonicized at the end of the piece (within the declamatory C-major section), and though \flat VI is a common instance in the nineteenth century of mixture from the parallel minor, the presence of A \flat and E \flat within the same song still weakens the notion of C major. D minor, the other key tonicized in the song, could make some sort of auxiliary ii–V–I cadence with the G-major triad in m. 87 and the final C-major area. Despite that, to draw a line between these three moments and label them as the most important would diminish the significance of the aforementioned keys that fall in between.

Hearing the tonality of "Prometheus" as a hybrid between C major and C minor, though, allows one to fit the key areas into a more logical framework under Burstein's idea of an auxiliary-cadence composition. The opening G-minor section can function as a dominant that begins as a minor triad and then gains its proper raised third just before the final C-major section in m. 88 (see Figure 3 below). G minor is the apparent tonic at the beginning, but its structural function within C major is made clear by later harmonic events in the song. The intervening harmonies and other surface events will be explained in relation to this sketch in the analysis section below.

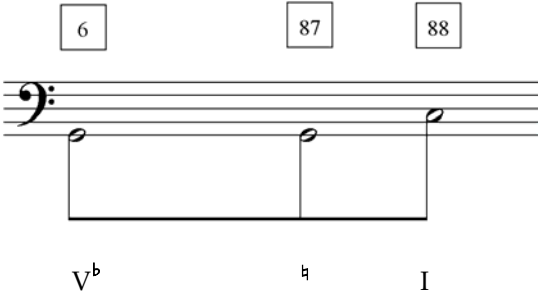


Figure 3: Incomplete *Ursatz* in C major, following Burstein

ANALYSIS

Schubert's setting of the Prometheus myth, as told from the perspective of the protagonist himself, involves surface changes in key and musical texture resembling the harmonic events in an opera scene in order to dramatically depict a defining moment in the life of this mythological figure. The momentary ambiguities and apparent tonal meanderings, however, do not ultimately obscure the underlying progression from G minor, later transformed into G major, to C major toward the end of the song. A step-by-step discussion of the sections of "Prometheus" appears below with an eye on the larger structure of the piece, which will be explained in the following analysis as well.

"Prometheus" opens with a harmonically ambiguous introduction that juxtaposes several of the song's important key areas. A *forte*, registrally-tripled B \flat begins a descending arpeggiation of the B \flat -major triad, likely causing the first-time listener to hear B \flat as the tonic key. In measure 2, however, an A \flat harmony marks an immediate divergence from B \flat as the tonal center, and the A \flat chord moves to an E \flat -major triad in measure 3, giving the effect of a plagal cadence in E \flat major. A motivically similar phrase begins in the next measure, this time with a descending arpeggiation of the previous E \flat -major triad, which leads to a D-major triad and cadences on G minor in measure 6. Measures 4-6 can thus be heard as a \flat VI–V–I progression in G minor, an important harmonic cell that will recur throughout the song. Since G minor remains the tonal center for most of the first section (through m. 28), it is easy to imagine the initial B \flat not as some transitory tonal center but rather as a non-tonic opening with a mediant relation to the first main key. This first measure's ambiguity is a purposeful foreshadowing of the complex tonal interactions Schubert uses throughout the song. These opening six measures, with consecutive phrases in two different keys, seem to highlight a juxtaposition of emotion—a plagal cadence, which is relatively weak, and an authentic cadence, which is comparatively strong. These two phrases might represent Prometheus and Zeus, one

of whom is stronger than the other, though it remains to be seen who is the stronger force. The two phrases also juxtapose the key areas of G minor and E^b major, whose relationship will be developed later in the song.

The passage beginning with Prometheus’s initial challenge to Zeus and ending with the first PAC in G minor (mm. 6-17) contains a fairly regular tonal structure and unfolds a small-scale *Ursatz* with a 3-line in that key. G minor is prolonged through the start of measure 11, where prolongation of predominant harmony begins that lasts until the PAC in G minor, a cadence with its own descending $\hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$ line in the voice in measures 15-17 (see Figure 4).

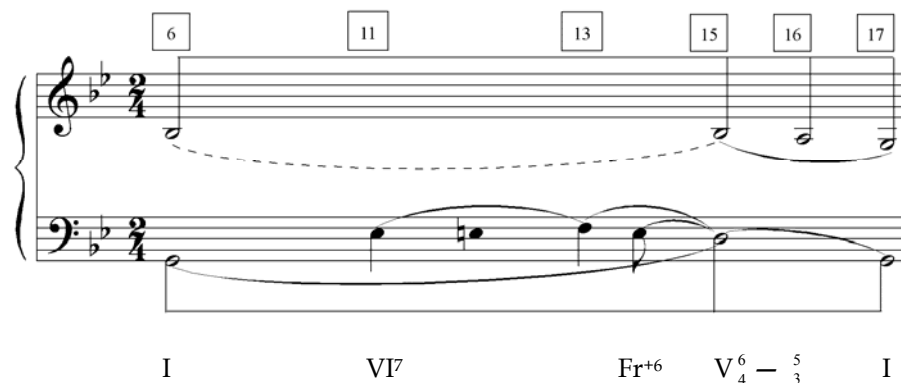


Figure 4: Middleground graph of measures 6-17 in Schubert’s “Prometheus,” *Ursatz* in G minor

Prometheus is in the middle of a line of text at this PAC—he has just ironically told Zeus to summon all his fury and destructive power, but his exclamation does not end there—so the music does not rest on G minor for an extended period of time. With a rhythmic pattern similar to measures 1, 4, 10, and 13, the arpeggiated G-minor triad in measure 17 drives the music forward to a sequence in ascending seconds. It is noteworthy that in the first module of this sequence, Prometheus has told Zeus that Zeus must leave the earth to him, and the second module of the sequence occurs a step higher as Prometheus elaborates on the demand and adds his cabin to the growing list of things that are now forbidden.

The bass line, with the driving dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm familiar from the opening phrase, seems to continue the sequence up to the octave Fs in measure 22 and beyond. The vocal line, though, takes a step down to A^b as Prometheus mentions the fire of his hearth, for an apparent decrease in the tension that had been building with its rising line. By now, the motivic figure from measure 1 has become a signal of impending harmonic movement, so when it reappears at the arrival on A^b major in measure 25, it is not at all surprising that this motive signals the sudden move to E^b minor. Interestingly, the motive, with its driving rhythm, has been altered somewhat in terms of metric and scale degree placement in measures 17, 19, and 21, but its appearance at measure 25 matches the strong downbeat and scale degree content of that motive's first appearances (see Figure 5).



Figure 5: Opening motive in various iterations, measures 1-25 in Schubert's "Prometheus"

Measure 25 is compelling also because the vocal line finally ascends to C4, the pitch to which the sequence seemed to be heading before it broke off. A^b serves as a temporary detour, as it does not remain centric in this section; rather, it leads to the preparation of a dramatic half cadence in E^b minor for a fierce outburst by Prometheus that he knows of nothing poorer beneath the sun than the gods.

From there, however, Prometheus turns in a slightly different direction, both in Goethe's monologue and in Schubert's setting of it. Prometheus restrains his ferocity as he moves into the *narratio* section of the rhetorical structure and begins to describe the pathetic way the gods treat their subjects; here he begins to spin out his argument that he has no obligation of subservience to Zeus and is prepared to be his own master. Whereas the first section could be characterized as an emotional outburst, this second section contains a more reserved, yet still

mordant, expression of disdain. To accompany this change in mood, the music undergoes a change in texture here as well. The militant recitative of the first section gives way to a more lyrical, aria-like passage with an indication of *Etwas langsamer*, and the *sforzando* chords and energetic dotted rhythms leading up to m. 28 are replaced with winding chromatic passages and contrapuntal chords that do not end in a cadence until measure 40. The previous cadence at m. 28 was a half cadence in E^b, which must be heard retrospectively as a back-relating dominant, since the B^b-major sonority at m. 28 transforms into a B^b-minor chord at m. 29 to begin the next phrase. This unexpected harmonic motion frustrates expectations by moving contrapuntally to the crawling harmonies that follow, and the entire section is tonally unstable because of this beginning and because of the long passage that does not reach a cadence until twelve measures later.

Tonal clarity begins to return in measure 36 as the key of D minor emerges from the chromatic voice leading. The bass line begins a stepwise descent through the D-minor scale, the second half of which is repeated as a rhetorical device to underscore the words “Kinder” and “Bettler” (“children” and “beggars”), the two groups of ignorant subjects who worship the gods in foolish hope. The vocal line, which had seemed to avoid a tonal center in mm. 29-35, contains an arpeggiation of the D-minor triad and its leading tone, C[#], to clarify D minor melodically.

Figure 6: Measures 39-41 in Schubert’s “Prometheus”

The section ends with a half cadence in D minor (cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ to V) on “Toren” (“fools”) at m. 40, echoed in the accompaniment with a similar group of appoggiaturas decorating the dominant in m. 41 (see Figure 6 above).

The first double bar and change in key signature (to one flat) follow this half cadence, while the music remains convincingly in D minor. Prometheus retreats further from his confrontational beginning as he begins to remember his own childhood, juxtaposing his own youth with the ignorant children mentioned in the previous section. To match this introspection, the vocal line retains the softer, lyrical quality of the *Etwas langsamer* passage immediately preceding it and a lilting, dactylic rhythm. The texture of the accompaniment here is almost lighthearted; beats 1 and 3 in each measure feature a left-hand note or chord, while beats 2 and 4 have chords in the right hand, subtly calling to mind some sort of a simple children’s tune (see Figure 7, mm. 47ff). The harmonies, however, are less simple than the texture, as a C major triad, seeming to function as a dominant in mm. 44-45 (with a $\frac{6}{4} - \frac{5}{3}$ over the bass), is interrupted by a one-measure tonicization of G minor. The harmonies in m. 47, though, lead to a passage in F major, which resolves the previous C-major moment. Immediately following, there is another brief tonicization of G minor in mm. 50-51 leading to an ambiguous cadence in mm. 52-53 (see Figure 7).

Harmonically, vii^{o7}/F moves to an F-major chord in root position, which ought to suggest a cadence in F major. The material in the vocal line challenges this interpretation, because it recalls m. 39, a similar descending passage that led to a half cadence in D minor (see example 3). The cadence here at m. 53 could be heard as a half cadence in B \flat major/minor, but there are no further contextual clues to determine in which key the cadence functions, such as a reinforcement of either harmony in the measures that follow. The music goes neither to B \flat nor to F in the next section, and we find instead another sequence at the return of Prometheus’s forceful recitative.

47

als wenn d'rü - ber wär' - ein Ohr, zu hö - ren mei - ne Kla - ge, ein

50

Herz, wie mein's - sich des Be - dräng - ten zu er - bar - men. - -

Figure 7: Measures 47-53 in Schubert's "Prometheus"

Prometheus's narrative of his past, in which he realized the gods' lack of care for those under their protection, ends here, and he then moves into the *confirmatio* section of the argument. The raw emotional power of the beginning returns as Prometheus begins his string of rhetorical questions designed to tear down the gods' authority. He asks boldly in recitative style, "Wer half mir wider der Titanen Übermut?" ("Who helped me against the insolence of the Titans?") Schubert's use here of a rising sequence with diminished-seventh chords escalates the tension in the accompaniment as the vocal line returns to the insistent repeated notes and dotted rhythms of the opening recitative.

The entire *confirmatio* section, mm. 54 to 65 in the music, is made cohesive by a long-range chromatic arc; an ascent in the bass from G to E^b at the climactic m. 60, and then upward further to F in m. 61, is then answered by a chromatic descent to B^b in m. 64. The section begins with a fully-diminished seventh chord that moves to V⁶₅ of A, which resolves to an A-major

triad during Prometheus’s first question (mm. 54-55). For the second question, “Wer rettete vom Tode mich, von Sklaverei?” (“Who delivered me from death, from slavery?”), Schubert repeats this musical idea a whole-step higher on B minor (mm. 56-57: see Figure 8).

54

Wer half mir wi - der der Ti - ta - nen Ü - ber-muth?

56

Wer ret - te - te vom To - de mich, von Sla - ve - rei?

Figure 8: Measures 54-57 in Schubert’s “Prometheus”

A third module of this sequence seems to be imminent in the next measure, but instead of using the chord in m. 58 as the basis for another module leading to C#, Schubert moves through other key areas en route to the structurally important arrival on E^b. In measure 59, he places an F⁶₄ chord with C in the bass. He then accelerates the harmonic rhythm and places a fully-diminished seventh chord of D, which moves to a G⁶₄ (with D in the bass, just as in the previous frustrated resolution). The singer has the descending third B^b – G over this G⁶₄, suggesting its role as a cadential ⁶₄ in G minor and reminding the listener briefly of the first main key area of the song. Instead of taking the ⁶₄ chord to its logical next step, a D-major triad

or D^7 chord, Schubert moves deceptively to local bVI , suddenly inserting a cadential progression in E^b major at measure 60 ($I-IV-vii^{o7}-I$ over an E^b pedal; see Figure 9). The rhetorical question in this particular passage begins, “Hast du nicht alles selbst vollendet” (“Did you not accomplish everything alone,”), but at the end of this musical phrase, the listener does not know to whom Prometheus is addressing this question. To this point, he has been addressing the gods, but the listener may speculate based on context that Prometheus will not give credit to the gods for anything positive that has happened in his life. At the moment he reveals who has achieved everything—his own heart—what had seemed to be the preparation for a cadence in G minor instead leads to a cadence in E^b .

58

Hast du nicht al-les selbst voll-en-det, hei-lig glü-hend Herz?

F₄ G₄ Eb: I (IV) (vii^{o7}) I

Figure 9: Measures 58-60 in Schubert’s “Prometheus”

This seemingly abrupt modulation parallels the opening section (mm. 6-28), which features a modulation from G minor to E^b major as Prometheus gains confidence and strength through the intensity of his own emotions and willpower. Additionally, the first six measures of the song (discussed above) present a short phrase in E^b major followed immediately by a parallel phrase in G minor. Perhaps G minor is the key of Prometheus’s former subservience to the gods, and E^b is the key of what he believes will be his promising new future. The contrast

of G minor and E^b major represents a subtle use of associative tonality in this song, right at home in a song so rife with other operatic devices.²⁷

This cadential passage in E^b major, though seemingly only a momentary digression from G minor, leads to a subsequent phrase in the parallel minor, which ends in a half cadence in E^b minor at m. 64. A series of descending chords leads to an augmented-sixth harmony on C^b, which resolves down by half step to the B^b-major triad (dominant of E^b) in m. 64. A stepwise line in the voice descends from E^b to A^b, then has a C^b – B^b motion in mm. 63-64 to parallel the bass line. As at the half cadence in mm. 40-41, the common Ger⁺⁶ – V harmonic cell in E^b is then echoed and slightly embellished in the accompaniment in mm. 64-65 (see Figure 10).

Text: "Und glühstest jung und gut..." [Piano echo]

Eb: vii^o7/ii ii V⁶ V₂⁴/IV IV⁶ Ger⁺⁶ V Ger⁺⁶ V

Figure 10: Harmonic activity in measures 61-65 in Schubert's "Prometheus"

The next section of music begins with the text "Ich dich ehren? Wofür?" ("I am to honor you? What for?"), where the rhetorical argument enters the *refutatio* section. Prometheus is

²⁷ For more on associative tonality in the operas of Wagner, see Robert Bailey, "The Structure of the *Ring* and Its Evolution," *19th Century Music* 1 (July 1977): 48-61; and Patrick McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried: Its Drama, Its History, and Its Music*, vol. 59, *Studies in Musicology* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1982). For associative tonality in Verdi's *La Traviata*, see David B. Easley, "Tonality and Drama in Verdi's *La Traviata*" (M.M. thesis, Louisiana State University, 2005).

refuting Zeus's implicit objections to his insubordination by posing another string of rhetorical questions to highlight Zeus's obvious neglect for those in inferior positions. The music is marked *Geschwinder* to evoke Prometheus's increasing frenzy, and a rising sequence brings the tonality to C major for the first time. The B \flat -major chord from the previous half cadence becomes an unstable B \flat dominant-ninth chord in m. 66, and this chord resolves in measure 69, not to E \flat minor but deceptively to C \flat major. This C \flat chord functions as local \flat VI, but Schubert then respells it in m. 71 as a B-major chord, then adds a ninth to make the harmony into V 9 of E \flat minor. In keeping with the sequence, this dominant chord resolves deceptively as well, in m. 74, to a C-major triad (see Figure 11). Schubert chooses to repeat Goethe's line "Ich dich ehren? Wofür?" because, without this structure, the text would be asymmetrical and would not allow for parallel statements in a harmonic sequence.



Figure 11: Harmonic sketch of measures 66-77 in Schubert's "Prometheus"

As this sequence does, all of the sequential phrases in "Prometheus" occur under lines of similar length, rhythm, and subject matter. The first sequence sets Prometheus's list of areas that are his and his alone: "musst mir meine Erde doch lassen steh'n / und meine Hütte, die du nicht gebaut" (mm. 18-21). The second sequence occurs with the lines "Wer half mir wider der Titanen Übermut? / Wer rettete vom Tode mich, von Slaverei?" (mm. 54-57). The sequence employed in mm. 66-77 is most effective using two lines of similar length, as in the previous sequences, so Schubert's choice to repeat the "Ich dich ehren? Wofür?" line before "Hast du die Tränen..." allows for a repetition of the entire musical phrase a half step higher. At the end of this sequence, the goal, C major, is reinforced as a local tonic, but with only upper neighbors

from the parallel minor (F and A^b) and melodic centrality on C in the vocal line. This brief C-major section foreshadows the dramatic ending of the song, but when the key first appears here in measure 74, as the second module of a chromatic sequence, it arrives rather inconspicuously, and it is not a structural tonic. It is, of course, not an accident that Schubert drives the sequence toward C major, because he is preparing the final section of the song (mm. 88-109), which remains in C for all but two measures. Nevertheless, this weak first appearance of C major in the song, along with the moments of mixture in the use of the repeated A^b upper neighbor, undercuts Prometheus's eventual declaration of power.

Another rising chromatic sequence follows this pause on C major, this time independent of textual symmetry and with a quicker harmonic rhythm. Prometheus's feverish rage seems to be regaining hold of him as he delivers a telling suggestion of the gods' lack of authority: his, as well as their, ultimate subservience to Time and Destiny. The melodic contour of each module of the sequence is descending, but the sequence itself rises, tonicizing B^b, B[♮], C, and then C[♯], which brings the tonal center even higher, on the word "Schicksal" ("Destiny"), than the C achieved by the previous chromatic sequence (compare the harmonic goals of Figures 11 and 12).

g^6 V/b b V/c c V/c^\sharp c^\sharp It^+6 V

Figure 12: Outer-voice reduction of measures 78-82 in Schubert's "Prometheus"

The accompaniment completes the last module of the sequence, a descending C# – B – A – G# line, but the harmonic rhythm here is slowed by the tied A, which becomes the bass of an augmented sixth chord that resolves to the G# in the next measure. This half cadence in the key of C# minor is another instance of a dangling dominant that dissolves in the following section. Schubert uses half cadences in the same manner in which Goethe uses questions in his monologue; rhetorical questions do not demand answers, nor do Schubert’s half cadences demand to be answered with authentic cadences in the same keys.

The vocal line overshoots the sequence and finds its climax with an E \flat 4 in measure 81 over this A, and then it continues to descend on “meine Herrn” (“my masters”). If Prometheus had simply told the gods that he was subservient only to Time and Destiny, it still would have made his separation from them obvious, but he adds a wry twist by saying that the gods themselves are also under the control of these forces. It is not enough for him to separate himself; he feels he must also destroy their notion of superiority in order to make himself truly independent. The setting of these last two words, “und deine” (“and yours”), is surprising in that Schubert does not place them on climactic pitches. Because they are set against F \times 3 and G#3, lower pitches than those that were just reached by the rising line, the words “und Deine” seem to have been tossed as an offhand remark (see Figure 13). Prometheus’s implication of

The image shows a musical score for measures 81-82. The top staff is the vocal line in bass clef, with a box containing the number '81' above the first measure. The lyrics are 'Schick - sal, mei - ne Herrn und dei - ne?'. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The bass clef staff shows a descending line of chords, with a tied note in the second measure. The treble clef staff shows a more active line of chords, with some notes marked with an 'x'.

Figure 13: Measures 81-82 in Schubert’s “Prometheus”

Zeus's inferiority is even more powerful because of his scornful deliverance of these critical words.

Most of the cadences thus far have been half cadences, especially those that fall on a question in the text, so in consideration of that information alone, this cadence does not seem any less forceful than those that preceded it. Given the meaning of the text at this point, though, the half cadence on C# minor and its mid-register vocal line seem to undercut Prometheus's authority by using less than his full arsenal, so to speak. What should be one of the most definitive moments in the song is downplayed. Perhaps Schubert sets this phrase in this manner in order to highlight the subversive nature of Prometheus's question, and one could imagine a performer using a wry smile and a raised eyebrow to convey the character's delight at his own imagined superiority.

Rhetorically, Prometheus has just placed himself on the level of the gods by reminding them that they are subservient to a higher power, just as he is, and this leveling of the field puts him in a position to break away from their authority, as he will do in the final section. Before that section arrives, however, there is a second brief *Etwas langsam* passage and another key signature change, this time to no flats or sharps, the official preparation of C major (as opposed to the weaker arrival of C major at m. 74). The harmonic link from measure 82 to measure 83 is parallel to that which leads into the first *Etwas langsamer* passage at measure 29, though the two links occur in different keys. The G#-major triad from m. 82 frustrates listener expectations by becoming a G#-minor triad, which then leads into harmonically unstable territory. The third of the chord, B \natural , is found in the upper voice of the piano, and its stepwise descent to G over the next two measures provides an element of melodic unity that stands in contrast to the disjunct harmonic motion below it (see Figure 14). Underneath the fluid melodic descent, the bass line leaps through contrapuntal harmonies that facilitate the final modulation from C# minor to C major. A half cadence at m. 87 solidly prepares the return of C major, though the chromatic

slide in these few measures from C# as tonic down to C \flat has given an impression of Prometheus's instability.

83

g# d# V⁷/e e C: V₄⁶ (V⁷/V) V₃⁵

Figure 14: Harmonic reduction of measures 83-87 in Schubert's "Prometheus"

Finally, after this half cadence in C major comes Prometheus's declaration of sovereignty, the *peroratio*. The music is marked *Kräftig* ("robustly"), and the final stanza of text is preceded by its own four-measure introduction that reinforces C major, the structural tonic arrival. The texture here changes dramatically from the lyricism of the "Wähntest du etwa" passage before it; dotted rhythms and chordal skips in the accompaniment seem to herald a new state of mind for the protagonist. Not since the six-measure introduction to the song has the listener heard such an extended stretch of piano alone, setting this section apart from the others in time as well as in musical character. After proposing his argument, revealing his emotionally charged past, and placing himself on a similar level of power to the gods, Prometheus returns to his present with the affirmative "Hier sitz ich" ("Here I sit," m. 92) and proceeds to describe the new race of men he is creating. Except for brief embellishing tones, the vocal line in this entire last section features only chordal skips of the harmonies in the piano, concentrating especially on the tonic. The near fusion of harmony and melody in the final section marks a distinct change from the figuration in the vocal line up to this point, and it reinforces Prometheus's desire to project strength in his declaration. He is endeavoring to seem powerful in this last section, almost to the point of exaggeration. The prolongation of C major

from mm. 88 to 109 stands in contrast with the rest of the song as well, since all of the previous sections began and ended in different keys with multiple tonicizations between.

Despite Prometheus's apparent triumph, however, some doubt remains about his future. His conclusion is not as strong as it could be because of the other sonorities that cloud C major in the last several measures, just as the A^b upper neighbors clouded the song's first arrival on C major in mm. 75-76. The first "cloud" in this final section is A^b in the vocal line on "leiden" ("to suffer") in m. 97, the top note of vii^{o7} from C minor. This same phrase then features a tonicization of A^b major (^bVI of C) in measures 99-100. Though the manifold tonicizations earlier in the song, including several of A^b and of other local ^bVI keys, do prepare the listener aurally for this progression, the change in texture and character of the music and the declamatory text in this final section would seem to have precluded any further tonicizations. Even here at the end, in his supposed display of self-actualization, Prometheus is ironically unable to establish an unequivocal grip on C major.

Beyond the tonicization of A^b major, there is further darkening of the C-major tonality by the insistent presence of E^b, the lowered third scale-degree, on "achten" ("regard" or "respect") of "dein nicht zu achten, wie ich!" ("To disregard you as I do!") and in the subsequent cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ (mm. 101-102). E^b stands in conflict with C major, but its presence in the final section has precedent in the rest of the song, just as A^b has. In the first half of the song, E^b4 as a vocal pitch has represented the height to which Prometheus aspires (see Figure 15). The Ds from the opening G-minor section lead upward to the high E^b on the exclamation of "euch" in measure 27, which is a local tonic just before the half cadence. E^b4 occurs again in measures 45-46 on "verirrtes Auge" ("misguided eyes"), and then another ascent a few measures later from D^b to D⁴ to E^b on "ein Herz" ("a heart") reinforces the importance of this climactic note. The next time Prometheus refers to a heart, it is his own heart, again on E^b4 with a grace-note appoggiatura F4, at measure 60. F4 is the highest note in the song, and it occurs

only once, on the word “Herz,” as Prometheus reveals that his own heart was responsible for his victories. The textual significance of this single melodic high point is striking.

The F and E^b have been prepared by another ascent from the local climaxes of C[#] (m. 55) and D (m. 57) during the frustrated dominant-seventh progressions discussed above, and then E^b major emerges from the chaos at measure 60 (to become E^b minor only a few measures later). E^b₄ recurs a few moments later in the next section, again prepared by a D₄. Because of the chromatic sequence discussed earlier, the D – E^b melodic motion in mm. 68-69 becomes D[#] – E[♮] in mm. 73-74, ushering in the new key of C major and nearly approaching the F₄ of the previous section.

Having established that E₄ is possible, Prometheus reaches it again on the “meine” of “meine Herrn und deine” (m. 81), and E[♮] or F would be the reasonable climax for the last section in C major. E₄ does appear, though in the structurally weak measure 98, just before the move to A^b major. Mixture from C minor in the form of a deceptive resolution of the Ger⁺⁶ in m. 102 allows E^b₄ to reemerge as a focal point on “achten” (“regard”), which should be Prometheus’s strongest statement in the whole song. A cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ in C at m. 102 prepares the final cadence of the song, but it contains a $\hat{b} \hat{3}$ left from the E^b chord before it. On the word “ich” in m. 104, the vocal line countermands this E^b by descending from G₃ to the lower E[♮]. Though the E[♮] reinforces C major, it is registrally less prominent than the high E^b, and its role as $\hat{3}$ makes it unsuitable for the final vocal pitch because of Prometheus’s desire to project confidence and authority (which would be best achieved with a melodic close on the tonic).

Prometheus seems to realize that this ending is weaker than what he requires, because he repeats the material in mm. 101-104, stating again that he will teach his new race of men to disregard the gods as he does. Despite this attempt at a more complete cadence, but the same E^b moments from mm. 101-102 creep into mm. 105-106; Prometheus hits the same high E^b, and the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ is again from C minor. He is trying valiantly to project the air that he has been successful, but because we know he is capable of high E[♮], the lack of it in the final measures,

considered with the many elements from C minor, elicit doubt from the listener. These “clouds” all represent subtle hints of Prometheus’s eventual downfall, when Zeus will sentence him to be chained to a rock in the Caucasus for his insolence.



Figure 15: Local climaxes in “Prometheus”

The interaction of E^b and E^{\natural} in these final measures, which ought to be in a decisive C major, is another musical illustration of Prometheus’s lack of capability to be master of this new race of men. In the repetition of the last line, the word “ich” features a descent from G to C, a melodic device Prometheus needs to make his declaration authoritative. The E^{\natural} of the chord, necessary to terminate the notion of C minor, is relegated to an inner voice of the accompaniment, although the final C-major triad is revoiced in m. 109 for a brief echo after the singer’s part ends, with E^{\natural} shifted up to the soprano. The regal connotations of the rhythms and chordal skips in this final section imply that Prometheus wants to project an air of total authority and self-sufficiency, but he seems not to be as prepared for the task ahead as he ought to be. The final section in C major is darkened by elements from the parallel minor key, perhaps because the song has been establishing a path toward C minor. As discussed above, the keys tonicized in “Prometheus” belong to a C-minor scale; thus, the conclusion represents an ironically optimistic declaration from a protagonist who, because of his gift of foresight, understands on some level the fate that awaits him. His concluding in C major despite the song’s inclination toward C minor parallels the blind hope with which he has gifted the human

race, except that Prometheus is aware of his fate and will not be able to dwell for long in the realm of fantasy.

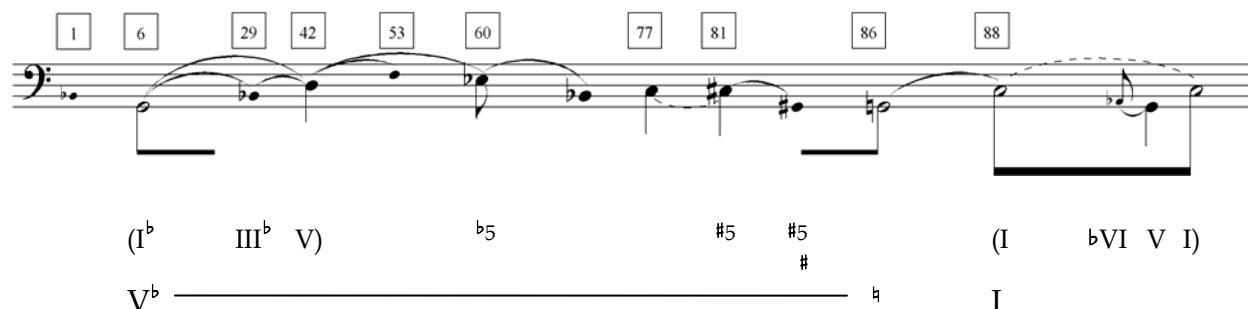


Figure 16: Middleground graph of Schubert's "Prometheus"

The middleground graph of Schubert's "Prometheus" illustrates an incomplete *Bassbrechung* in C, beginning not with the tonic key, but with a version of the dominant (see Figure 16 above). The G shown at measure 6, though locally a minor tonic, is the parallel minor of the song's dominant, G major, which is regained structurally at measure 86. The B \flat that begins the "Ihr nährt" section at m. 29 is an upper third to G, and it has been foreshadowed as an important key area by the ambiguous first measure of the song. Similar to this first rising-third figure is the next group of key areas, D minor at the "Da ich ein Kind war" section in m. 42 followed by its upper third, the F in m. 53. The G–B \flat –D motion shown in the graph represents a composing-out of the G-minor triad from the song's first main section.

The section of the graph between measures 60 and 86 shows the path Schubert takes to work his way back to G, which returns as G major, the structural dominant. The E \flat cadence at m. 60 comes after the rising sequence in the "Wer half mir" passage and is followed by its own dominant in mm. 64ff. The sequence beginning with "Ich dich ehren" attains C major in m. 77; this C-major passage, though not a structural tonic itself, is a purposeful foreshadowing of the eventual tonic, which will arrive at m. 88. The C \sharp minor reached in m. 81, enharmonic to the

minor Neapolitan (D^b minor), is an important precursor to the structural dominant, G major. The Neapolitan key may often serve as a predominant, but its own dominant, in this case the $G\sharp$ -major triad at m. 82, is also an enharmonically-respelled bVI of C that leads to the structural dominant in the “Wähntest du etwa” section. This $bVI-V$ progression, significantly, anticipates the reiteration of this same figure in the closing C-major section, with the tonicization of A^b major before the final cadence.

The progression from A^b to G has precedent in the song’s introduction as well, which is evident if one considers part of the first six measures as an unfolding (see Figure 17). The musical surface contains a harmonic progression from B^b to A^b to E^b , followed by a progression



Figure 17: Reduction of measures 1-6 in Schubert’s “Prometheus”

from E^b to D to G, the song’s first authentic cadence. If the register of the E^b -major triad is overlooked, a purposeful descent from B^b to A^b to G becomes apparent. This reading of the first six measures smooths out the irregularity of the song’s only plagal cadence by illustrating the analogous relationship of E^b and A^b to D and G. This unfolding allows one to perceive the stepwise descent from B^b to G as an adumbration of the same descent on a larger scale later in the song, with an enharmonically respelled bVI to prepare the structural dominant at m. 87 (see Figure 18; compare to Figure 17).

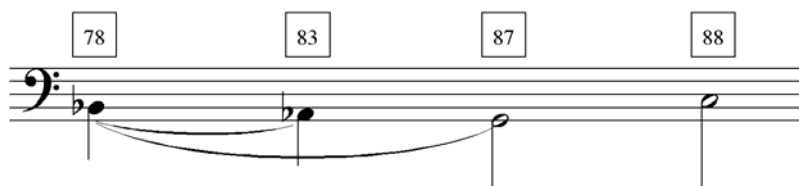


Figure 18: Reduction of measures 78-88 in Schubert’s “Prometheus”

Despite Schubert's foreshadowing of the dark future of Prometheus, he has depicted a vibrant character with noble aims to bring humanity out from under the tyranny of the gods. The entrance of C major after such a strong presence of minor keys and apparent harmonic instability seems to herald Prometheus's triumphant break from Zeus's authority. The ominous elements in the final C-major section, though, as well as the irony of the arrival in C major itself, reveal Schubert's concept of a hero who is not simply humanity's benefactor: he must face the wrath of Zeus, who in turn is able to summon the forces to banish Prometheus. As I have shown in my analysis, the hero is not as great as Beethoven's towering figure: this Prometheus is flawed because of his pride, as he is in the mythological story, and Schubert best expresses his subsequent downfall by clouding the moments that Prometheus wishes to believe are his most triumphant.

IMPLICATIONS OF SCHUBERT'S SETTING

"Perhaps myths live on because we have, as yet, never learned to live by the truths they tell us."²⁸

Edward T. Cone, in *The Composer's Voice*, posits the idea that a composer who sets a poem is necessarily setting only one particular reading of a poem. He cannot communicate everything the poem has to offer, so he chooses to express those images and characteristics that seem to be the most important, with the result that the viewpoint character created in the song may differ significantly from the character in the poem's text. Cone points out that Schubert in particular tends to create a protagonist who is a different entity from the one the poet originally envisioned.²⁹ Schubert's reading seems to reach beyond the text for a unique interpretation of Prometheus as something less than the ultimate hero of the traditional myth. His deeds and motivation are great, but his will, as shown in the preceding analysis, seems too weak to complete his task with the decisive authority that would be necessary to overthrow Zeus. This Prometheus mostly succeeds in making Zeus appear impotent, but Schubert knew, as we know, that Zeus was to exercise his authority once more over Prometheus after these insolent acts by sentencing him to a torturous existence chained to a remote rock. That darkening of Prometheus's future is evident in Schubert's setting.

Johann Friedrich Reichardt, a composer mainly of vocal and choral works, composed a setting of "Prometheus" in 1809 that seems to have been an influence on Schubert's.³⁰ Reichardt's approach to text setting was generally to remain within the *Volkston* idiom, which

²⁸ Joan M. Erickson, *Legacies: Prometheus, Orpheus, Socrates* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 38.

²⁹ Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 19-39.

³⁰ Moman, "Musical Settings of Franz Schubert," 52. Moman asserts that Schubert would have been familiar with Reichardt's setting because of its availability and because of the widely-regarded friendship between Goethe and Reichardt.

emphasized *Sangbarkeit* (singability) and simplicity of texture.³¹ His setting of “Prometheus,” however, follows a different path than these traditional *Lieder*.³²

Reichardt’s setting, like that of Schubert, transforms Goethe’s free-verse monologue into the musical equivalent: a through-composed work, with no reprise of musical material. He begins the song with a recitative section over sustained chords, marked *Kräftig deklamiert* with a common-time signature. This first section (mm. 1-21) begins squarely in B^b major, progresses to F major (V), and ends in m. 21 with a strong cadence in C major. Whereas Schubert’s first significant sectional break comes at the line “Ihr nähret kümmerlich” (his first *arioso* section), Reichardt connects that line of text with the previous section and places his first break at “Da ich ein Kind war” (m. 22).

This second section begins with a change to *Arioso*, triple meter, a different key and texture, and a simpler harmonic vocabulary. Complex, speech-like rhythms from the opening section give way to a lilting, *sangbar* style as Prometheus remembers the foolish innocence of his youth, similar to the change that takes place in Schubert’s setting at m. 42 (discussed above). The section begins in F minor, the minor dominant of the beginning and ending key of B^b major; this unusual use of the minor dominant in a major-key composition may have influenced Schubert to juxtapose his opening key of G minor with the closing key of C major. Reichardt illustrates the simplicity of the narrator’s youth with a *sangbar* melody, harmonized with simple tonic, predominant, and dominant chords, which then modulates unobtrusively to A^b major, closing with an authentic cadence in A^b at m. 36.

Reichardt returns to common-time meter and a declamatory style at “Wer half mir...” and uses chromatic chords to increase the tension that had been eased in the previous section. He changes the key signature to no flats or sharps, and a sense of harmonic instability

³¹ Walter Frisch, “Schubert’s *Nähe des Geliebten* (D. 162): Transformation of the *Volkston*,” in *Schubert: Critical and Analytical Studies*, ed. Walter Frisch (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 175.

³² In my analysis, I refer to Johann Friedrich Reichardt, “Prometheus,” in *31 Lieder, Oden, Balladen und Romanzen*, ed. Hermann Wetzell (Huntsville, TX: Recital Publications, 2000), 32-35.

commences, which will last until the final declamatory section's return to B \flat major. In the midst of shifting tonalities, though, Reichardt writes a tonal melodic sequence in D \flat major on "allmächtige Zeit und das ewige Schicksal," one of several lines of text on which Schubert also chooses to write ascending sequences (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Measures 56-59 in Reichardt's "Prometheus"

The end of this phrase, as in Schubert's setting, also features a local melodic climax on the word "Herrn," with a half cadence and lower "fi-sol" melodic content on "und deine?" (see Figure 20; compare to Figure 13 above from Schubert's setting).

Figure 20: Measures 60-61 in Reichardt's "Prometheus"

Finally, at “Hier sitz ich,” Reichardt returns to the smoother triple-meter arioso style and ends the song in the key in which it started: B \flat major. The major tonality, however, is undermined by modal mixture, just as in Schubert’s setting. In particular, Reichardt uses the lowered sixth scale degree in inverted \flat VI–V progressions with corresponding G \flat –F chromatic motion in the vocal line on “gleich sei,” “leiden,” and “weinen” (see mm. 71-73 in Figure 21 below). He also gives prominence in the final measures to the lowered third scale degree. A secondary dominant, vii $^{\circ 7}$ /V, prepares the final cadence in the song, and the D \flat belonging to that chord is articulated five consecutive times by the singer on the last line of text, “und dein nicht zu achten, wie ich!” This implication of B \flat minor does not dissipate until after the vocal part has ended, when the piano part resolves the hanging fifth scale degree of the vocal line with a hammerstroke V 7 –I cadence in B \flat major (see Figure 21).

71

das mir gleich sei, zu lei - den, zu wei - nen, zu ge -

74

nies - sen und zu freu - en sich, und dein nicht zu ach - ten, wie ich!

Figure 21: Measures 71-78 in Reichardt’s “Prometheus”

These instances of modal mixture in the final declamatory section, along with many of Reichardt's other interpretive decisions discussed above, bear striking similarities to Schubert's setting. The changes in texture, meter, key, and tempo at the sectional breaks also correspond to Schubert's changes of texture and key (except for Schubert's first arioso section, which begins at "Ihr nährt, kümmerlich").

Reichardt and Schubert each use an appropriate blend of recitative and arioso in their settings of Goethe's free-verse text. Texture and key changes punctuate the logical breaks in the text, and each song ends with a forceful conclusion to express Prometheus's newfound sovereignty. But the songs differ in several ways, one of which is the fact that Reichardt's setting begins and ends in the same key, while Schubert's does not. Schubert's protagonist, by ending in a different key, undergoes a more drastic change throughout the course of the song. Reichardt's final section, though of a noticeably different texture, meter, and character, still returns to B \flat major, the key of its opening, bringing Prometheus back to the same realm in which his proclamation began. Admittedly, Reichardt uses mixture to cloud the notion of the major tonic in his final section, just as Schubert does, but Schubert's "Prometheus" uses an off-tonic beginning and a tonal plan throughout that would seem to suggest C minor. His ending in C major, therefore, is ironic, in contrast to Reichardt's ending, which is tonally more conventional. Despite an apparently uncertain tonal foundation displayed at the beginning of the song, Schubert's protagonist is attempting to make a much more convincing demonstration of strength to Zeus than his counterpart in Reichardt's setting, making those moments of modal mixture and his necessary second attempt at a strong cadence all the more noteworthy. As Cone asserted, a composer may set only one reading of a text, but Schubert finds brilliant ways of expressing this complex character by conveying musical meaning with every moment of his song.

CONCLUSION

"Prometheus," to be sure, is a departure from the more well-known of Schubert's *Lieder*. Richard Capell, in *Schubert's Songs*, describes the situation thus: "The Schubert of "Prometheus" and of such companion pieces as "An schwager Kronos" and "Grenzen der Menschheit" is a composer unsuspected by those who know only a few of the Müller songs, and "Hark, hark, the lark," "Die Forelle," and the like. He had a fist." Goethe's powerful monologue inspired Schubert to create a multi-dimensional protagonist, well-intentioned in his desire to aid humankind but still incapable of overpowering Zeus completely.

Unlike in many of Schubert's songs, which are tonally closed and lyrical throughout, the tonal structure of "Prometheus" may not be readily comprehensible to the first-time listener, especially one who is expecting to hear the Schubert of *Winterreise* or *Die schöne Müllerin*. In this song, Schubert's rapid shifts in character and tempo, his textural contrast from one section of the song to the next, and his unconventional use of surface tonality all spring from his reading of Goethe's monologue. His compelling desire to craft a dramatic piece of music around Goethe's text led him to the creation of a unique tonal concept, and we see through examination of his setting that he would not have written it in any other way. Lorraine Byrne writes the following apt description of "Prometheus:"

As Prometheus' fierce denial of the gods' power and his confident assertion of autonomy are naturally at odds with any external strictures on the mode of expression, Schubert's through-composed form and deliquescent expression serve as a musical embodiment of the creative freedom toward which he strives, and his majestic autonomy is expressed in the tonal freedom with which the song develops.³³

The extent to which a careful study of the text and form enhances our appreciation of Schubert's genius makes clear the necessity of such an analysis. Though the conventional theoretical models often illuminate the music of the common practice era, they must be expanded somewhat to explain the organization of a work like "Prometheus," which tends to elicit difficult questions when placed under the microscope of traditional tonal analysis. Schubert's lifelong interest in opera composition, along with his handful of tonally evasive songs like "Der Sänger," "Grenzen der Menschheit," and "Ganymed," help to place "Prometheus" in an artistic idiom in which expression of the character outweighs adherence to the stricter rules of composition that governed the previous generations. Yet, as Schubert has demonstrated, a great composer may craft a work that appears on the surface to defy organization but which nevertheless embodies a deeper sense of formal coherence.

³³ Lorraine Byrne, *Schubert's Goethe Settings* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 86.

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