SCHUMANN’S MUSIC AND HOFFMANN’S FICTIONS

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Abstract

This thesis interprets four of Schumann’s works in the light of the Hoffmann fictions with which they seem to be associated. Unlike previous studies, it deals with each of the four works, treating them as aesthetic entities enhanced by literary relationships that are not primarily programmatic, nor primarily a matter of formal parallels. Each work emerges both in a new light and as it always was. *Carnaval* (1834-37) appears as a dizzying comedy of theatrical vignettes and character, in the spirit of the German literary understanding of Italian carnival (including in Hoffmann), and *Fantasiestücke* (1837-38) as a humorous sequence of dream images, resonating with literary tales of the artist’s development, not least those in Hoffmann’s *Fantasiestücke*. *Kreisleriana* (1838), a finished masterpiece, suggests improvisations on melodic fragments appearing also in popular tunes used both in trivial variation sets and in Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* – which figure in Hoffmann’s *Kreisleriana* as opposed emblems of the philistine and the profound. *Nachtstücke* (1839-40) creates from plain rondos a paradoxically unsettled set, expressive of profound mental disturbances explored by Hoffmann’s book of that name.

I bring out in each work previously unexamined patterns of melody, tonality, metre, sonority and form, showing how these become threads expressive of drama, emotion or symbolism. Unusually, I do not take Schumann’s approach over the 1830s as static: increasingly powerful musical means gave the music greater independence from supporting words, and what Schumann called ‘poetic’ threads increasingly coincide with core musical processes. Equally unusually, I describe those processes as resonating simultaneously with Schumann’s titles, with his culture including Hoffmann, and with his concerns around the time of composition as documented in his letters, criticism, diaries and *Mottosammlung*.

Unlike previous work the thesis treats its subject consistently at three levels. My approach to the interpretation of the individual works at the first level is consonant with Schumann’s aesthetics as described at the second: there I focus more sharply than previous treatments on his stated view that musical works can ‘express’ ‘remote interests’ including literature, and on how he thought that possible – points that, given sensitivity to contemporary connotations and to context, emerge from his writings. Finally, at a third level, I reflect on the approach in the light of strands of musicological and intellectual thought in Schumann’s day and since.
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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sources are listed in the bibliography, where abbreviations used in the notes to this thesis are explained. I have cited the Henle editions of the Schumann piano works, in default of a version reproducing Schumann’s first editions of all four works along with scholarly apparatus. For citations from the ancient authors, and from Shakespeare and Jean Paul, I have used the editions in the bibliography, but instead of page numbers in those particular editions the footnotes use traditional systems of reference, as they are both precise and indifferent as between editions. I lay weight on the versions of the works of Novalis known to Jean Paul, Hoffmann and Schumann, which differ from modern versions. For convenience, my references are to a modern reproduction of those early versions, but Appendix 1 gives a concordance allowing readers to find the passages in selected early or modern editions.

Appendices 2-10 set some key passages cited in the main text in the context of slightly longer excerpts from the original German. I give German in the text where English translation is particularly difficult, contentious, or inadequate to the connotations of the original. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own, in several cases with invaluable help from Imogen Taylor.

Thomas Synofzik and the staff of the Robert-Schumann-Haus, Zwickau, were most helpful and courteous in finding material; Roger Harmon’s generous help is described in Chapter 6. Jeremy Adler kindly commented on my treatment of the German writers, Lawrence Kramer on a chapter, and Barry Cooper and James Garratt on several drafts. I am most grateful to all of them. My greatest debt is to my supervisor, Laura Tunbridge, for her heroic patience, humorous detachment and above all acute but tactful insight.

The Author
I took a degree in Literae Humaniores at Oxford in the early 1970s, made a career in the Treasury and the National Gallery, and now work for a couple of NGOs including War Child. I have no musical training or qualifications, and have done no formal research before this PhD. I published an article on Brahms’s _49 Deutsche Volkslieder_ in 2007 (_Music and Letters_, 2007, vol. 88 no. 1, Spring 2007).
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1830, Robert Schumann was a 20-year old law student with no formal musical training. The next year, studying piano with Friedrich Wieck (alongside Wieck’s eleven-year old daughter, Clara), he published his opus 1, and his first music review, a prescient acclamation of Chopin’s genius. Ten years later, after a long struggle with her father, he married Clara. In that decade, he had maintained a voracious diet of musical, literary and other reading; he had founded a new music journal, established its reputation and viability, and contributed hundreds of pages of reviews; and he had seen twenty-six of his own piano works published or on the way to publication.

The writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann play a role in several of those works. Many of the individual pieces of *Carnaval*, op. 9, composed in 1834-37, have titles naming figures from contemporary artistic life and from the *commedia dell’arte*, and the combination may be one link to Hoffmann’s carnival tale, *Prinzessin Brambilla*. In three other cases, Schumann’s title echoes that of a book by Hoffmann. His 1837 *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12, recalls Hoffmann’s *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*; his *Kreisleriana*, op. 16, of 1838, borrows the title of Hoffmann’s essays; and his *Nachtstücke*, op. 23, of 1839-40, shares the title of a collection of Hoffmann’s stories.

These four works – which I shall call Schumann’s ‘literary’ works – are my subject: the music, its relationship to literature, and what difference the relationship might make to its understanding. Schumann said of his music:
Everything that goes on in the world affects me – politics, literature, people – and in my own way I think about everything, which then vents itself or seeks an outlet through music. That’s why many of my compositions are so difficult to understand, because they connect with remote interests, often to a significant degree, because I am gripped by everything that’s remarkable at the time and then have to express it musically.

He went on to describe his music as an ‘intellectual poem’, or ‘a product of poetic consciousness’. He later noted the impact on his music of ‘literature, surroundings, inner and outer experiences’, and of ‘his turbulent life’.

Giving full weight to such comments in treating Schumann’s music distinguishes this thesis. Previous studies of the music have tended to adopt one of three broad groups of approaches to its literary relationships. Some assume that all that is at stake is a title echoing a Hoffmann work, or very general similarities of character; others that the music paints scenes from a book, or follows a programme. Recently, however, it has become more fashionable to claim that Schumann adopted formal strategies similar to those in literature, and often specifically in Hoffmann or Jean Paul. Chapters 3-4, however, argue that an alternative, ‘poetic’ interpretation both chimes better with Schumann’s aesthetic views and offers a fruitful approach to interpreting the works.

Several studies of his aesthetics have explored similar points. This thesis, however, sharpens the focus on how Schumann thought music could ‘connect with remote interests’ and ‘express them musically’. To that end, it explores contemporary connotations of his words, altering the understanding of concepts like ‘unendlich’ and ‘Geist’ to offer new translations making greater sense of some key passages. It places Schumann’s views within the tradition of his documented reading (sketched in Chapter 2), distinguishing authors he read in depth from those he apparently did not, and using the version of Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) available then alongside significantly different modern versions. It allows for development in his thought, and unlike some

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1 Briefwechsel, I 146, 13 April 1838.
2 Neue Folge, 157, 14 June 1839, and 227, 5 May 1843.
other work, does not simply assume that the eighteen-year-old speaks for the twenty-eight-year-old. On that basis, it explores how Schumann thought musical features could be seen as expressing ‘remote interests’, and how his views might chime with approaches usable today.

Crucially, this thesis then moves on, in a spirit consonant with but not constrained by my reading of Schumann’s views, to offer interpretations of the four ‘literary’ works that relate them to Hoffmann’s fictions. Other exponents of his aesthetics have rarely taken that step. A couple explore only the atypical cases of *Papillons* or ‘In der Nacht’ from the *Fantasiestücke*, which tend to elicit programmatic interpretations; one sketches Schumann’s view of music as ‘poetic’ or figurative, and goes on to treat two of the *Nachtstücke* accordingly.\(^4\) None gives weight to the connection to Hoffmann.

This thesis, by contrast, puts the works centre-stage: while Chapter 7 sketches relevant developments in Schumann’s style over the period, Chapters 5-6 and 8-9 are devoted to explorations of each work. Each of these chapters begins by bringing out a shape and some main patterns in the music, as a framework within which a selection of musical features is then set. These features are described in ways intended in part to bring out how they contribute to significant musical patterns, or to images to which Schumann draws explicit attention, for instance in titles. But the descriptions are also then used to relate the musical features to literary associations that may emerge from the music. In works Schumann would have called ‘poetic’, ‘content’ is, I believe, best treated as a way of talking about aspects of the music – not as a separate schema, adequately specifiable independently, imposed on the music or shaping it, as talk of ‘programmes’ implies (as indeed may talk of ‘formal parallels’). For music may paradoxically be more richly expressive and associative the more its patterns are its own rather than the servant of something separate. Thus a programmatic understanding of Schumann’s ‘literary’ works can be downplayed in most cases, if perhaps not always.

As part of this process, the chapters on the works offer new juxtapositions between descriptions of the music and ideas and images from Schumann’s culture with which the music may resonate. They focus not just on one author but on many from the German, English and ancient traditions where we know their writings mattered to him. Alongside the titles to his works, I use his documented concerns at the time of

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\(^4\) See note 3: Lippman and Tadday on *Papillons* and ‘In der Nacht’; Watkins on the *Nachtstücke*. Struck and Floros look at none of the four ‘literary’ works.
composition to suggest cultural contexts in which musical features can be understood. This emphasis on historical documentation of Schumann's reading and concerns is not typical of recent work; nor is the use not only of his letters, diaries and critical writings, but also his collections of mottoes, or *Mottosammlung*. But biography is meant to support an argument that the cultural contexts may have mattered to Schumann at the relevant times, not that the music presents autobiography, or that any imputed musical persona should be taken as the historical Schumann.

My analytical approach is eclectic and synoptic, not driven by an over-arching theory. A concluding chapter locates this approach within musicological and intellectual strands of thought from Schumann’s day and since. I aim to operate, unlike previous treatments, consistently at several levels: interpreting the works as each appears to me, making explicit what this implies for the approach to literary connections, and reflecting on that in relation to Schumann’s own aesthetics and to a wider framework.

A new approach is justified in part because the works are difficult, as Schumann often said, and have had relatively little attention. They attracted only sparse critical comment when new: rarely played in public, and unappealing commercially to publishers. Contemporaries sometimes sought verbal elucidation, and Schumann seemed to sympathise. He wrote to a friend, Henriette Voigt, apparently in connection with the *Fantasiestücke*, that some of his music may be 'hard to read ... but once you are on the trail, it's as though it could be no other way'. In a letter to his colleague, Carl Koßmaly, Schumann described ‘difficulties in form and content’ of his works of the 1830s. They were ‘reflections of my turbulent earlier life when man and musician always strove to express themselves simultaneously’. Koßmaly picked up some of these ideas in his 1844 review, commenting that Schumann ‘loaded [his earlier works] with too much that was pithy, compacted and laden with meaning’. In 1846, Eduard Hanslick described Schumann’s works as ‘too interior and too strange,... too deep, too simple, too sharp, and too dry’; in 1861, Adolf Schubring judged that the difficulty of

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Schumann’s work was due less to ‘form’ than to ‘the closed book’ (‘verschlossenes Buch’) of their ‘content’.7

By turning to writing songs in 1840, Schumann in a sense opened the book. But for the piano works of the 1830s, the book remains largely closed even now. The works’ literary and wider cultural connections have not been elucidated so as to provide sufficient context for their understanding; and Schumann’s own guidance as to context normally turned out to be too obscure, especially where critics share little of his literary culture.

In this respect, Carnaval has fared best of the four works. This may be because the overall title suggests a general context in which to interpret the work, the relatively concrete titles to the twenty or so short individual pieces provide frequent re-orientation, and the absence of an overt literary allusion avoids the mystification resulting from a little-understood relationship. Thus there is one full if little-known treatment of its music alongside several partial analyses.8 One extended analysis focuses on various parallels of literary strategy with a range of works by Jean Paul, which does not, I will argue, yield a wholly compelling interpretation of the work.9 An echo of Hoffmann’s Prinzessin Brambilla has been suggested, although not registered in print outside Italy and France, and not argued in detail even there.10 Liszt implausibly attached the connection to Faschingsschwank, op. 26, perhaps misremembering what he had been told about Carnaval (whose title was once to be ‘Fasching.Schwänke’), and probably further confused by haziness about Prinzessin Brambilla (in which he is not alone).11 Attempts to find a programme from Jean Paul’s novel, Flegeljahre, are to my eye unconvincing.12

11 Liszt, ‘Robert Schumann’ (1855), 240.
12 Chailley (Carnaval de Schumann, 1971, and ‘Zum Symbolismus bei Robert Schumann’, 1984), Nattiez, ‘Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?’, 1990, and
Kreisleriana’s title has provoked treatments of the music through the character of the Kreisler of Hoffmann’s fictions: in Schumann’s words, ‘eccentric, wild, inspired’. This opens a field, without sustaining rich accounts. Among recent treatments, one illuminates aesthetic aspects of the music of several pieces. Most, however, develop theses about formal parallels with literature, in my view somewhat at the expense of aesthetic understanding; and a tendency to relate the music more readily to a novel about Kreisler to which the title does not refer than to a set of essays to which it does may not help.

I know of no attempt to interpret the Fantasiestücke that is more than cursory. There is a sensitive musical analysis of ‘Des Abends’, but it does not discuss the other pieces in the set. In the prevailing view, the work is an assemblage of pieces linked by shared style and character, and by paired keys; no thread connects the eight pieces’ titles, which are more or less incidental, and offer images unrelated to one another; nobody has tried to say whether the music relates to Hoffmann’s Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier, or how, or what difference it might make. The literary connection is taken to be either very generally stylistic or insignificant. This may reflect the fact that the overall title is less specific than those of Carnaval and Kreisleriana, providing no obvious context for interpretation, and the titles to the individual pieces less concrete than those of Carnaval. For this work, however, Schumann provided one piece of guidance that was not too obscure so much as too specific. He suggested to Clara Wieck that the story of Hero and Leander seemed to fit Summer, ‘Schumann’s Carnaval’, 1979. Appel, ‘Carnaval’, 2005, 53, leaves the question open. Liszt, ‘Robert Schumann’, 1855, 240, found other specific images. Neue Folge, 148, 15 March 1839. Compare von Seyfried, ‘Schumann, Kreisleriana’, 1840, 113-4; Liszt, ‘Robert Schumann’ (1855), 236; Daverio, Robert Schumann, 1997, 167-9.


'In der Nacht'; and as a result what critical comment there is often resorts to that piece and that programme, neglecting the rest of the work.

For the Nachtstücke too, neither the overall title nor the four individual titles that Schumann considered and rejected have provided a context for detailed interpretation. The one dedicated treatment views the work largely in terms of ‘narrative strategies’ paralleled in Hoffmann’s works in general. A recent interpretation explores motifs (especially rhythms) in two pieces as metaphors of metaphor’s marriage of spirit and body. Otherwise, there are only a few brief references. It has never been clear why the work might have a title related to Hoffmann’s Nachtstücke: critics deny any links of content, seeing only a very general parallel of spirit – described in terms like ‘ghoulish’, ‘sombre, grotesque, threatening, and deathly’, which are most plausible for Schumann’s first piece, or ‘bizarre humour’, whose vagueness embraces the other pieces too. Nobody has considered whether the individual titles Schumann considered bear any relationship to Hoffmann.

Even in modern times, then, none of the four ‘literary’ works has benefited from thorough debate of the sort that has flourished around the Fantasy, op. 17. This thesis aims to be a contribution, or even a stimulus, to such debate.

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18 Briefwechsel, I 154, April 1838.
23 See Hoeckner, Programming the Absolute, 2002, 284 (note 121).
CHAPTER 2

SCHUMANN AS CRITIC AND READER

Schumann had published musical reviews from 1831, but set out in 1834 to establish his own journal, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. In the words of his renewed mission statement of 1839, the journal was to be ‘a sea-wall against mediocrity’.¹ A partly real and partly fictional League of David (‘Davidsbund’) collaborated in the journal in championing ‘poetic’ music against the philistines, through dismissals of the mediocre and encomia of works of genius, not least those of Chopin and Berlioz. Schumann worked on the *Neue Zeitschrift* for ten years as editor and contributor, with prodigious energy and resourcefulness. His criticism at first luxuriated in poetic images, language, rhythms and forms, while also offering technical analyses; but over time the playful and extravagant literary style receded, and so did the ‘Davidsbündler’, including his alter egos ‘Florestan’ and ‘Eusebius’. Professionalisation set in. Schumann widened and deepened his musical reading.² His aesthetic views became more settled and his statements more lapidary, tending to the succinct, magisterial and sometimes academic.

¹  GSK I 383-4.
The journal’s mission was always conceived in a broad cultural sense. The very first issue came out under a motto from Shakespeare. The prospectus of 1834 promised not only theoretical and practical essays, critical reviews of new work and reports from abroad, but also ‘musical material’ from literature; and Schumann singled out literary authors including Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), Jean Paul Richter (Jean Paul, 1763-1825), Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis, 1772-1801) and E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822). Of course, Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Jean Paul’s novels, Novalis’ *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and Hoffmann’s *Kreisleriana* and *Serapions-Brüder* all included discussions of art and music; but Schumann’s interest in these writers was not restricted to aesthetics. Despite wrestling from the early 1830s with the issue of music’s independence from other spheres, he persuaded himself that a composer may learn from and relate to a broad culture. He thought great literature part of the education of a composer and a person, as he said in 1838. He reinforced the point in 1842: ‘anyone who understands Shakespeare and Jean Paul will compose differently from one whose wisdom is drawn only from Marpurg etc.’

Schumann’s reading in that literature was wide and often intense, and it left traces in his literary works, diaries, lively correspondence, critical writings and surviving collection of books. Excerpts he made from his reading provided mottoes for the *Neue Zeitschrift*, but also recorded ideas of interest or thoughts that struck him. From the resulting albums, we can to an extent reconstruct what ideas from the wider culture caught Schumann’s eye, and when, and relate them to his compositions of the

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3 GSK II 272. He added Johann Friedrich Rochlitz, playwright and music critic, and Wilhelm Heinse, whose novel *Ardinghello* (1785) is a guide to the thought of Greece and the art of Rome and the Renaissance, spiced with sun, sex, nudism, some buccaneering and a Utopian end; its wide influence stretched from Hölderlin’s elegiac *Hyperion* to Hoffmann’s comic *Prinzessin Brambilla*.

4 GSK I 127 (‘Das Anlehnen’); I 26 (‘Raffaelschen’), 430 (‘Lese doch’), II 73 (Goethe) and 265. Compare I 422 (Berlioz), 431 (‘noch etwas im Spiele’), 440 (‘Literatur’).

5 ‘Und nun namentlich Künstler suche ich vergebens, d.h. Künstler, die nicht allein eines oder zwei Instrumente passabel spielen, sondern ganze Menschen, die den Shakespeare und Jean Paul verstehen’: letter to Therese Schumann, 18 December 1838, in *Erler*, 188 (in late 1838 Schumann excerpted a similar comment from Nissen’s biography of Mozart at *Mottosammlung* III 51: both may allude to Schiller’s concept of ‘der ganze Mensch’ in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5, 1968, 358).


time. We should not presume that he endorsed or adopted each idea, but can at least more confidently trace threads of influence connecting for instance Shakespeare, Goethe, Jean Paul, Novalis and Hoffmann through to Schumann; and it is time to look briefly at Schumann’s reading of each of these.

Schumann knew Shakespeare’s work at least from 1827. He probably read what we now accept in the canon, as well as other plays since evicted from it. He seems to have used mainly the translations by August Wilhelm Schlegel and Johann Joachim Eschenburg (published in Vienna in 1811-12). The first volume contained *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*, which Schumann studied intently, and which to a Romantic eye were tales of the recognition of the self, its twin, and its love, in a world which, while infested with puritans, thugs and schemers, was also illumined by the creative magic of the imagination. The plays were revered by Jean Paul, Novalis and of course Goethe.

Schumann’s appreciation of Goethe grew gradually through the 1830s. He read his way through the poems, plays, novels and letters. If the young Schumann did not ‘yet understand Goethe’, he found him a wholesome diet. By 1836 Schumann judged that he was ‘always right’. Schumann in his youth called *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1793-6) the ‘non plus ultra of Romanticism’, and he read it three times, he said in 1847. It is a novel of the formation of the self. Its hero is a young man destined for a mercantile career but infatuated by dreams of art, for whom Shakespeare ‘opened a new world’. *Hamlet*, a presence and a symbol in the book, is discussed and enacted. The book’s themes and images, drawn from the Bible and myth as well as Shakespeare, include self-recognition and self-development, doubled identities, madness, mediocrity and philistinism.

*Wilhelm Meister* both awed and repelled Novalis, who called it worldly and anti-poetic. The reaction befitted an ‘early Romantic’, and Novalis was indeed one of that remarkable circle of people born within a few years of 1770 – including the Schlegels.

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8 Published in 1998 as the *Mottosammlung.*
10 *Jugendbriefe*, 17 (17 March 1828); 153 (21 September 1831) and 176 (8 May 1832); *Tagebücher* I 372, 374 and 417; *GSK* I 160.
(Friedrich and August Wilhelm), the Schellings (Friedrich Wilhelm and Dorothea), Friedrich Schleiermacher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Hölderlin, Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder. To these young people, the version of Idealist philosophy propounded by Johann Gottlieb Fichte in his lectures at Jena University between 1793 and 1799 seemed epoch-making, inspiring in them variants of their own. Forms of Idealism, so different from English empiricism and commercialism, dominated German culture for decades thereafter.

Of all these young people, Novalis is the one whose influence on the young Schumann left most traces. Schumann does not seem to have engaged directly with Idealism’s main philosophical texts by Fichte, Schelling or Hegel, and there is no evidence that he attended to the Schlegels’ prose works beyond reading (in 1827) two essays by Friedrich, on old German literature and on ‘Volksbildung’. It is not clear what he thought of Wackenroder, who played a seminal part in the development of early Romanticism, but barely features in Schumann’s writings as published to date. Wackenroder’s friend Tieck was a central figure in cultural life over decades, and Schumann cited his poems in the 1830s, and knew his stories by 1840 as well as some at least of the prose. Hoffmann’s reading of Tieck is better documented, however. He quoted Tieck’s *Phantasus* in his 1813 review of Beethoven’s Mass in C.\(^\text{14}\) He built both on the radical literary techniques of Tieck’s 1790s dramas and on themes from his fictions, including the concern with art and the artist in *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen*, and the engagement with the occult and psychotic in novellas such as *Der Blonde Eckbert* and *Der Pokal*. Moreover, Tieck’s studies and translations helped to promote Shakespeare in Germany; and it was Tieck who with Friedrich Schlegel compiled and published two volumes of Novalis’ work, in a posthumous tribute.\(^\text{15}\)

Volume I of Tieck’s Novalis contained the unfinished short novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which was in part a reaction to or against *Wilhelm Meister*, while Volume II contained a handful of poems, a philosophical colloquy in novelistic form, *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, and some sequences of prose thoughts. (A third volume, issued in 1846, contained some limpid, radical and ambitious statements of the analogous semiological status of mathematics, language and the arts, alongside pungent fragments on Schlegel’s irony, on music’s affinity with combinatorial analysis, and on

\(^{14}\) GSK II 235, Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik*, 155.

\(^{15}\) Tieck’s Novalis was published in Berlin in 1802 and reprinted four times up to 1837 (see Novalis, *Schriften*, V, 1988, 191-95). Schumann’s copy of the 1837 edition (*Schriften*, 1837) is still in Zwickau, with his markings in it. A separate 1827 Heidelberg edition called *Novalis Poesien*, which Schumann may have used in the 1830s, is substantially Tieck’s version (*Mottosammlung*, 196-7).
arabesques as visible music; sadly, we have to assume that neither Hoffmann nor the Schumann of the 1830s had access to them). Tieck’s light editorial touch melded the fragments into something close to continuous prose, almost as coherent and accessible as the fictions. The difficult Kantian concept of the ‘transcendental’ is minimised, but Tieck’s Novalis did not exclude the philosophy altogether. Instead it conveyed philosophical ideas broadly, but compellingly and accessibly, bringing out more clearly than modern versions the similarities of thought between the aphorisms and the images and fables in the philosophical colloquy and unfinished novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Moreover it emphasised analogies of thought as between different fields – music, poetry, aesthetics and metaphysics. It gives a rather different impression from the starkly disjointed, often radical fragments of modern editions, and I use it to re-create what Hoffmann and Schumann found in Novalis.

Schumann’s interest in Novalis emerges in his diaries from 1828 onwards, and in his *Mottosammlung* in 1832-34 and again in 1837; his diaries reflect the impact on his style of Novalis’ rhythms, vocabulary and key concepts. From Tieck’s pocket volumes of Novalis, Schumann could absorb a version of Idealist thinking. We know he read material on mathematics in a section which the 1837 edition called ‘Philosophie und Physik’: there are excerpts both in his 1831-34 *Mottosammlung* and in his later *Dichtergarten*. Moreover, his letters, diaries and 1827 essay on aesthetic judgments suggest that in his teens he had taken in philosophical ideas from conversation and from reading. He would have been able to recognise parodies of Idealist metaphysics and semiotics in Hoffmann’s stories, and versions of Idealist aesthetics in Hoffmann and in Jean Paul.

While there is no evidence that he engaged with the more radical aesthetic ideas of Friedrich Schlegel, he may have picked some up indirectly. Indeed, he lavished attention on Jean Paul’s Idealist assaults on aspects of them. In 1831-34 and again in 1836-38, Schumann read and excerpted Jean Paul’s *Vorschule der Ästhetik* – which had been published in 1804, re-issued in 1813, and distilled in 1825 into a *Nachschule*. Central to it is the question how poetry marries artistic form and

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17 Appendix 2 juxtaposes excerpts from Schumann and Novalis from 1828. Echoes can be heard in later years too: see for instance page 211 below.
extraneous content, and it was a seminal influence on Schumann’s ideas and words. From his teens, Schumann had been infatuated with Jean Paul; he often imitated his words. The great novels, from *Die unsichtbare Loge* (1793) to *Flegeljahre* (1804-05), exploit the scope of a capacious genre to include mystery, sentiment, disquisition, indulgent irony, authorial idiosyncrasy, and sheer digression. Context and narrative may be stretched at points to the borders of implausibility, but never beyond; apparent interventions of the supernatural are rarely wholly incomprehensible. There is a range of voices and perspectives, but a sense of (possibly erratic) authorial control, and some degree of resolution. For the novels concern the formation of the self and its quest for love, maturity and integration. Their heroes, who may be rulers, lovers, scholars or bourgeois in eighteenth-century central Europe, often have personalities that are complementary or dual. Such a plural self was a common expression of Romantic sensibility. In Novalis’ unrealised plan for *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, for instance, personalities were to merge creatively, and Novalis opined that ‘if someone only has a real inner ‘You’, an elevated dialogue of mind and sense can take place. Genius is perhaps just the result of such an inner plurality’. In Hoffmann's stories, however, a plural personality is more likely to be fatally divided.

Hoffmann’s fictions create a different world from those of Jean Paul. At an abstract level their stylistic, formal and narrative approaches may show similar traits (of irony, digressiveness, de-familiarisation, and multiplicity of perspective as well as duality of character). But the two authors use these traits very differently. They apply them to different subjects, so as to create specific worlds, values and aesthetic standpoints that could not be confused one with the other. In Hoffmann, to oversimplify a complex oeuvre, fairy-tale elements and the supernatural intrude into the concrete, contemporary world of nineteenth-century towns like Dresden or Berlin; the intrusion may remain beyond rational explanation, or may represent comic irony. His heroes are likely to be Romantic artists, appearing in many guises, exalted or bathetic; their personalities are often dangerously split, or frightening Doppelgänger. Compared to Jean Paul, the multiplicity of voices can seem less under authorial or other control, and less resolved by a single narrating voice; dissonant genres are more sharply juxtaposed; narrative dislocations are deeper; and the irony may sometimes

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be more biting or agonised, the tone more obsessive, bitter, or dark. The contrast reflects in part a difference between generations more striking than the thirteen-year difference in their ages would suggest. By the time Hoffmann was writing, Napoleon’s long war had left the world harsher.

Equally, while Hoffmann affectionately praised Tieck’s edition of Novalis, which provided iridescent images for some of his fictions, his more disillusioned, perhaps more experienced, turn of mind brought out not so much the astonishing coherence and ambition of the Idealist synthesis as its hazards. The dreams of art or love that enthral some of his protagonists may lead them on to self-awareness and ironic humour, creatively nurturing love, life and growth – or to solipsistic (not to say narcissistic, compulsive, regressive and destructive) infatuations, isolating them from bourgeois society. Of these fictions, *Kreisleriana* (1810-14), *Der goldne Topf* (1814), the *Nachtstücke* (1814-17) and *Prinzessin Brambilla* (1820-21) are of central interest to this thesis. They freely invoke musical styles, genres, works and composers. They also incorporate a kind of music criticism seen as an art-form: for Hoffmann was among Schumann’s greatest predecessors as music critic.

We do not know how many of Hoffmann’s reviews Schumann read. He apparently did not know Hoffmann’s music until he studied *Aurora* in late 1838. We do know that he had read the fictions by 1828, and that from 1831 they struck him with the force of a revelation, or perhaps a nightmare. He recorded then: ‘In the evening read from that damned Hoffmann’; ‘One scarcely dares to breathe when one reads Hoffmann’, ‘Read Hoffmann, ceaselessly. New worlds’. ‘Read the one and only Datura Fluctuosa [sic] by Hoffmann. Lord God! What a mind!’ An 1832 letter to Wieck initially referred to Hoffmann as a ‘lightning-bolt’ on a par with Schubert, Chopin and Paganini, but Schumann crossed his name out. He celebrated ‘Serapion-evenings’ with friends in early 1833, in imitation of Hoffmann’s ‘Serapions-brüder’.

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22 Hoffmann, *Kreisleriana*, II.5, 313; *Fantasiestücke* 136.
25 *Tagebücher* I 111, and 336-7, 349, 354 (5 & 6 June 1831, and 9 & 21 July) (Hoffmann’s tale is ‘Datura Fastuosa’); *Briefedition*, I 2 53, 11 January 1832; *Neue Folge*, 66, 18 January 1836. He re-read him in early 1854 to find material for *Dichtergarten: Tagebücher* III/2 646.
more widely, Heine claimed in 1836, Hoffmann had gone out of fashion).\textsuperscript{27} Otherwise Schumann rarely mentioned Hoffmann’s works, fictional or critical. He excerpted little from them for the *Mottosammlung* or *Dichtergarten*. But their importance to him is clear from their appearances as titles to his musical works, as possible musical projects in the diaries, and as traces left in Schumann’s own words; he was so steeped in Hoffmann’s words that he could recognise stray echoes of them.\textsuperscript{28} More disturbingly (and going beyond the callow imitation of Jean Paul that can be seen in Schumann’s youth, or the biographical parallels between two writers and musicians struggling to make their way in difficult times), motifs from Hoffmann’s stories of mad and suicidal artists seem to have haunted Schumann’s last years.

\textsuperscript{27} Heine, *Die romantische Schule*, 1979, 193.
\textsuperscript{28} Moraal, ‘Life and afterlife’, 1994, 147; *GSK* II 315; *GSK* II 418, note 349.
In the debates about form and content in the arts, Jean Paul, Hoffmann and Schumann, whatever their divergent nuances, all adopted rather similar views, dependent on German Idealist traditions of aesthetics.\(^1\) Jean Paul insisted that ‘poetic’ art is neither pure formal patterning nor the reproduction of external material; instead it takes external material and transmutes it into inner poetic material. Hoffmann applied a kindred view to instrumental music, thereby qualifying his more extreme statements that music has nothing in common with the world of experience. Schumann too seems to have gravitated towards that sort of view. Take for instance his 1835 review of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*.\(^2\) For the purpose of the review, he artificially distinguished

four aspects under which a musical work can be considered: the form (of the whole, of the separate movements, of the periods and of the phrases), the musical composition (harmony, melody, articulation, working, style), the particular idea that the composer wished to present, and the “Geist”, that holds sway over form, material and idea.

For Schumann, the ‘Geist’ or ‘conception’ of the symphony is not the same as ‘the particular idea’. It can scarcely be articulated in words, as it ‘is intrinsic’ to the music [‘inwohnt’], and does not depend on an external programme. Indeed, he said, the programme, where the composer himself had ‘written down what he wanted us to think in hearing his Symphony’, at least initially ‘spoiled all my pleasure, all my freedom to contemplate the music’. For music may relate to an ‘idea’ connected to the wider world (here, Schumann said, ‘some aspects of an artist’s life’), but its import arises not in external material or added words but as an inherently musical process governed by a musical conception or ‘Geist’. Such a view allows oppositions between what is ‘internal’ to music and what ‘external’, between ‘form’ and ‘content’ or ‘programme’, to be transcended through musical expressiveness shaped by a ‘Geist’.

This chapter explores how aesthetic views of this sort are reflected in Jean Paul, Hoffmann and Schumann. My use of Schumann’s criticism as a main source – alongside his other writings – for a discussion of his views raises methodological issues. One concerns the derivation of an overall picture from disparate and eclectic statements of different dates, purposes and contexts, for Schumann never presented a general aesthetic system; but I hope to avoid the temptation to treat each individual statement as a nugget of lapidary truth, by giving weight to the context of each, and to what he said often and in different ways. I deal largely in Schumann’s statements from the period in which his ‘literary’ works were composed – a period over which his views evolved, I will suggest, but with a core consistency shaded by changing nuances. To do justice to the connotations of terms used, I set Schumann’s views in the context of other authors, and especially those he demonstrably read attentively (rather than those he did not, such as Hegel, or Friedrich Schlegel), though I do not offer a general

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3 GSK I 69. Compare Jean Paul’s four aspects of ‘poetic character’ (Vorschule, §57): origin, material, form and technical presentation (‘Entstehung’, ‘Materie’, ‘Form’, and ‘technische Darstellung’). Both sets are intriguingly close to Aristotle’s four kinds of cause (originating idea, matter, form and end-point), presumably reflecting their origin in eighteenth-century aesthetics influenced by analogies with rhetoric: Bonds, Wordless Rhetoric, 1991, 68ff.

4 GSK I 82-85.
historical survey of the relevant ideas. Finally, there is of course a problem of translation. ‘Geist’, for instance, is often untranslatable. A.B. Marx in 1841 included within ‘Geist’ ‘perception, intellect, higher feeling and the conception’, and related it to inspiration.5 ‘Spirit’ may undervalue the intellectual aspect, while ‘mind’ is scarcely applicable to the mental quality in a work; neither captures the sense of a work’s essential, animating and individuating principle. Sometimes I use ‘conception’, often just the German. Again, I will use different English words to bring out different emphases in ‘unendlich’, including connotations of the indefinite alongside the quantitatively infinite that is normally emphasised.6

Jean Paul dwelt on the debate about form and content in art in the opening sections of his *Vorschule*, in passages to which Schumann returned over a number of years in the 1830s, repeatedly making new excerpts.7 Jean Paul describes the widespread eighteenth-century view that art imitates nature, and that visual and plastic arts re-present the concrete, objective and delimited in nature; he opposes to it the doctrine that art is a reflection only of the creative self, or pure formal patterning empty of all representation of the objective world. He even-handedly mocks both schools, the old-fashioned ‘unpoetic materialists’, and the modern ‘poetic nihilists’. Thus he claims that ‘for the materialists, the material has no life, and so the form is lacking’; despite their claims, the import of poetry is not just the representation of the objective world. By contrast, for the ‘nihilists’ – above all, the young, inexperienced Jena Romantics including Friedrich Schlegel – ‘the material is lacking, and thus there is no life in the form’ (‘Dem Nihilisten mangelt der Stoff und daher die belebte Form’).8 For them, in Jean Paul’s 1825 caricature, ‘form is everything, even the true import’; it is as though the vessel is taken as the substance, or ‘a Chinese teacup is also Chinese Caravan Tea’.9

But in true poetry, material taken from the outer world is metamorphosed:

If in poetic re-creation, the image contains more than the original, or even vouchsafes its contrary – as the suffering expressed in a poem gives pleasure – then that occurs because two aspects of a double nature are being re-created at once, outer nature and inner nature, each the mirror-image of the other… Outer

7 *Mottosammlung* I 25-35 and IX 11-17.
nature is transformed in each inner nature, and this transubstantiation into the divine is the mind’s poetic material.

Wenn in dieser [der poetischen Nachahmung] das Abbild mehr als das Urbild enthält, ja sogar das Widerspiel gewährt – z.B. ein gedichtetes Leiden Lust –: so entsteht dies, weil eine doppelte Natur zugleich nachgeahmt wird, die äußere und die innere, beide ihre Wechselpiegel... Die äußere Natur wird in jeder innern eine andere, und diese Brotverwandlung ins Göttliche ist die geistige poetische Stoff.  

‘Trans-substantiation’ (‘Brotverwandlung’) of outer material (‘the original’ or the ‘bread’) is not mere reproduction; it both transmutes material into ‘poetic material’, and transfigures its qualities (suffering becoming also pleasure). The true poet does not prosaically ape nature, then, but will marry art and nature in order to give finite, objective matter the limitless suggestiveness of ideas (‘eine begrenzte Natur mit der Unendlichkeit der Idee umgeben’).

Jean Paul takes an interdependence of ‘form’ and ‘content’ as essential. The debate whether ‘poetry needs material, or reigns only through form, is easy to resolve’. ‘There is of course an outer mechanical material of no concern to poetry unless ennobled through form’. 1 That ennobled stuff is the ‘inner material – which is ... intrinsically poetic, around which the form is ... just the container’. ‘The poet creates in the excitement of the moment only the outer form; he carries the ‘Geist’ and the material with him through half a life time’. ‘This material is what marks the originality of genius’, whose ‘trade-mark’ is ‘a novel view of the world or of life’. (He said elsewhere that genius ‘sees nature more richly and more completely’ than talent, and ‘is able to create something new’; for ‘the play of poetry, for it and for us,’ he wrote, ‘is only a means, never an end in itself’). 12

Others expressed similar views about the relationship between instrumental music and objective material. In a short-lived Berlinische Musikalische Zeitung of 1805-6 C.F.Michaelis claimed that the power or sublimity of music arises because it does not reproduce or imitate actual, defined, limited objects, or what words can express, but ‘has a certain self-sufficiency’ (‘eine gewiße Selbständigkeit’) and ‘creates its own invisible, conceptual world’ (‘unsichtbare geistige Welt’), which a listener tries

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10 Jean Paul, Vorschule, §4.
11 Jean Paul, Vorschule, §14.
12 Vorschule, §2 (excerpted by Schumann in Mottosammlung IX 11), and ‘III. Kantate-Vorlesung’: ‘das Spielen der Poesie kann ihr und uns nur Werkzeug, niemals Endzweck sein’.
in vain to capture in words, concepts or images.\textsuperscript{13} Hoffmann and Schumann too, though tempted towards opposite ends of the spectrum between formalism and 'materialism', came to adopt positions akin to Jean Paul's, seeing outer material not as imitated in music but as transmuted into music.

In his most renowned statement, Hoffmann insisted that instrumental music, as 'the most Romantic of all art-forms', is a transport to 'an unknown land that has nothing in common with the external world of the senses' ('dem äußern Sinnenwelt').\textsuperscript{14} Its 'subject is the indefinite' ('das Unendliche'); it can 'spurn the addition of any other art-form'. Pictorial music is 'ridiculous', and 'condemned to justifiable oblivion': a fashionable vice, through which instrumental composers betray 'the true essence of their art... [trying to] represent definite feelings or even events ... and to handle as plastic the art that is the very antithesis of the plastic'. But these comments should not be left to stand alone: in other reviews Hoffmann repeatedly affirmed that music conveys images, emotion and drama.

He defended Haydn's \textit{The Seasons} against criticism of its mimicry: it is a picture 'of the whole of human life' and 'the world's gaudy shapes'. 'The true composer', however, while able to summon 'before the mind's eye ... a particular scene from life', attends to the effect of the whole and ensures that 'melody, instrumentation, harmonic structure ... all work together'. Like Beethoven, Hoffmann thought that 'true musical painting must not make botched copies [nachpfuschen] of individual sounds of nature, but strive to arouse in the listener's mind the feeling that would in reality take hold of it'.\textsuperscript{15}

As for emotion, Hoffmann thought music 'capable of thousands and thousands of nuances'; it 'releases an inexhaustible spring of expressive means precisely where paltry speech dries up'. For instance, he characterizes passages in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony variously as ominous, anxious or ingratiating. Music, however, does not merely string together portraits of emotions, but transmutes them into its own artistic creation. A true master starts from 'the liveliest awareness of a definitely delineated

\textsuperscript{13} Michaelis, 'Vermischte Bemerkungen', 1805, 21-2 (see Appendix 3(b)) and 'Nachtrag', 1805, 137-8. Although it looks as if these contributions might have influenced Hoffmann's \textit{Kreisleriana} and other criticism, I know of no evidence as to whether Hoffmann (or Schumann) read them. On the contemporary debate, see for instance Dahlhaus, \textit{Klassische und Romantische Musikästhetik}, 1988, 144-148 and 375ff, with Tadday's corrective, \textit{Das Schöne Unendliche}, 1999, 122-36.


\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Schriften zur Musik}, 1963, 228, 115, 335.
region’, hearing ‘how love and hate, ecstasy and despair sound’; but then ‘from deep within the artist’s mind, the objective, the rounded takes shape’.16

This is what became Hoffmann’s ‘Serapiontic Principle’, that art requires first the close observation of images from life’s gaudy flux, and then an aesthetic firing of those images by the poet’s ‘Geist’ as if in a crucible (‘auf die Kapelle’), so that artistic shapes (‘Gestalten’) emerge from that chemical process. In opera, music ‘steps into life, dealing with specific things, feelings and actions’ described by the libretto, ‘all of which sink away’ as music opens a Romantic dimension, ‘filling us with ineffable yearning’.17 ‘Each passion – love – hatred – anger – despair and so on … is clothed by music in the purple shimmer of the romantic’, ‘leading us out of life into the realm of the infinite’. In Beethoven’s instrumental music, where there is no libretto to define ‘specific things’ as the subject, music nevertheless starts from emotions such as ‘love, hope, joy’, but ‘the pain of infinite yearning … consumes [them] within itself without destroying them’ (‘in sich verzehrend, aber nicht zerstören’).18

This ‘infinite yearning’, within which particular sentiments are consumed without being destroyed, or seem ‘transfigured [verklärt]’, thus intimates something like ‘the divine’ into which for Jean Paul the bread or ‘outer material’ is ‘trans-substantiated’; it is akin to Wackenroder’s notion of the ‘poeticisation of everyday emotions’ in music that ‘does not know how its feelings connect with the real world’. Ineffable, infinite and indeterminate (‘unendlich’), it is for Hoffmann the essence of Romantic instrumental music, so that Beethoven’s symphonies all ‘speak of that far Romantic land in which we live succumbing to ineffable yearning’.19 Indeed, he finds ‘ineffable yearning’ throughout much of Beethoven and Mozart, for it epitomises a kind of Romantic music which Hoffmann championed, and of which Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony was at the time so striking an emblem. (But it is a vague and weak unifying factor for a particular work, comparatively unsuited to the Fifth Symphony, and certainly not distinctive of it. Thus in Hoffmann’s conclusion that ‘jene unnennbare ahnungsvolle Sehnsucht’ unifies that Symphony in particular, as what a sensitive listener will feel throughout, it is perhaps the qualifier ‘ahnungsvoll’, picking up the

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18 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, I.4, 42-3.
'Ahnung', 'Angst' and 'Drohung' that he finds throughout the work, that carries more weight as a distinguishing factor – as do the technical means he adduces, including instrumentation and thematic affinities.20)

An instrumental work such as a symphony can, in Hoffmann’s view, be its own single ‘drama’.21 Or it can reflect a literary drama, catching its quality, character and mood, and suggesting relevant images. In a review of Beethoven’s Coriolanus overture, Hoffmann shows how the music is specifically suited to grand, tragic events, in which heroes appear and fall. Beethoven’s Egmont music matches states of mind portrayed in the drama: at one point the ‘citizens’ alarmed state’ matches its ‘short, fragmented phrases’. But Hoffmann carefully preserves the autonomy of instrumental music by claiming not that the music evokes the drama of the play but that a playgoer familiar with the music will at particular points recall passages of the music: as though the play were an interpretation of prior music rather than vice versa.22

Schumann too distanced himself from crasser versions of ‘materialism’ without resorting to empty ‘formalism’.23 The young Schumann had described mature creativity in words reminiscent, perhaps, of Hoffmann’s ‘Serapiontic Principle’ as ‘the confluence of “Geist” and form, technique and imagination’.24 He then adopted a more ‘materialist’ view of the place in music of image, feeling and drama, seeming to believe that they could be portrayed in music; but over the course of the 1830s he came to lay less weight on their representation or translation into music, and more on music’s creation of its own poetic content, whose relation to outer material is elusive but essential. I look in turn at images, emotion, and drama.

In his youth Schumann protested against the denigration of pictorial music: ‘after all, in Haydn’s Creation you can hear the grass grow!’ The notion that ‘masters like Beethoven and Schubert could translate any object into the language of tones’, recurs so often in Schumann’s writings in the years before about 1835 that it can be taken as a constant of his aesthetic at that time. (He uses ‘translate’ (‘übersetzen’) and

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22 Hoffmann, Schriften zur Musik, 1963, 98 (Coriolanus), 176, 172-73 (Egmont); compare 238 (‘Der Komponist ... selbst Dichter des Liedes werde’) and Kreisleriana II 2, 292.
23 GSK I 249-50, 269-70.
'transmute' ('verwandeln') almost interchangeably, suggesting that he was not at this stage as sensitive to the drawbacks in the idea of 'translation' as he later became). He asked whether music had not told us of 'Italy, the Alps, the image of the sea, a Spring twilight'; indeed music may suggest almost any object, scene or event. Even when a work only suggests generic types of images, a listener's imagination may supply images of the type in question, whether gothic terrors, or the pleasures of the Rhine. But before 1836, Schumann had noted Novalis' claim that music uses natural sounds but transmutes them into poetry:

It is nowhere more striking than in music that it is only the mind which makes poetry out of objects ... and that the beautiful, which is the object of art, ... does not sit ready-made in what we perceive. All the sounds that Nature produces are raw and inanimate. Only a musical spirit feels that the rustling of the trees, the whistling of the wind, the song of the nightingale, the plashing of the stream are melodious and significant. A musician draws the essence of his art from himself.

Schumann will also have read how Hoffmann echoed Novalis:

Our kingdom is not of this world, say the musicians, for where in nature do we find, as ... plastic artists do, the prototype of our art?... Melody lies only in human hearts.... Only to the musician are the audible sounds of Nature, the sighing of the wind, the burbling of springs ... chords and then melodies.

As the years passed, Schumann came to prefer less literal scene-painting in music. The balance between the purely pictorial element and the evocation of human states was always a factor for him. In 1828 he noted that 'music in itself cannot paint what the emotions had not first painted'; in 1833 he saw music as often both reflecting states of mind ('Seelenzustände') and evoking things or situations ('Lebenszustände'); and in 1834 he said that a composer is often tempted to neglect the quality of either the picture or the music. But the balance shifted over time in favour of painting that was

25 GSK I 19, 112, 125.
26 GSK I 84-85.
27 GSK I 51, 223, 191. This shades into cases where Schumann imputes images as a hermeneutic tool: GSK I 85, 121-2, 179 ('interessanter Bilder'), 202-3, 250 ('durch ein Bild'), 333 (Najaden). There too there can be inter-subjective agreement (I 85), though different people at different times will hear in different ways (I 462) and some descriptions are 'too subjective', ridiculous or philistine (I 112-3). By 1842, he preferred to suggest the character of hermeneutic images rather than give detail (II 108).
28 Novalis, Schriften, V, 1988, 228-9 (228); Mottosammlung IX 185.
29 Kreisleriana II 7, 325-6.
30 Tagebücher I 112 (1828), GSK II 207 (1833), 209 (1834).
poetic or steeped in feeling, so that a musical scene may be as romantic or poetic as a
landscape by Claude Lorraine.\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, the music must be good enough to live, so
that 'the ear need borrow nothing from the eye', images 'match the sense of the
music', and each listener can follow their own imagination.\textsuperscript{32}

Similarly, Schumann started from the view that music is 'the language of the
soul', and copied some of Jean Paul's frequent remarks to that effect.\textsuperscript{33} In his view, a
work of art ought to convey personal states, or states of mind. He rebuked 'musical
puritans: if music had only sounds and no language or signs for states of mind it would
be a paltry art-form'. He saw no reason why music should not convey a memory of
happiness experienced, or indeed any state of mind. But he laid emphasis on the finer
shadings and rarer states that art should convey, such as anger or remorse; in 1839,
describing Chopin as 'the boldest and proudest poetic spirit of the time', he claimed
that his \textit{Preludes}, op. 28, 'contain even the sickly, the feverish and the repellent'.\textsuperscript{34}

The young Schumann had noted Jean Paul's rhapsody on the 'infinite yearning'
expressed in music, and regurgitated it.\textsuperscript{35} He did not, however, highlight what
Hoffmann seems to have meant by 'infinite yearning', unless his description in 1837 of
one passage as 'anxiety softened by pure enjoyment of art' recognises something
similar. He dwelt instead on the specific state of mind conveyed, and perhaps
underestimated, at least in the 1830s, how often listeners might disagree on it –
though he conceded that there might be a question about the clarity with which states
of mind are conveyed in music, or the objectivity with which they can be identified by
the listener. He even imagined tests of this, rather as Hoffmann imagined hearing
Beethoven's \textit{Coriolanus} Overture without the 'playbill'.\textsuperscript{36}

Like Hoffmann, Schumann thought instrumental music could convey dramatic
sequences. These could be the composer's own idea – 'sequences from the life of the
artist', for instance; or the musical drama could chime with a pre-existing literary
work, with mutual gain: 'Shakespeare could conjure a work worthy of himself' from a

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{GSK} I 65, 247, II 265. This view of Claude was shared by Schiller (\textit{Sämtliche
Werke}, vol. 5, 1968, 691), A.W. Schlegel (\textit{Die Gemählde}), and Jean Paul (\textit{Vorschule},
\textsuperscript{522}).

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{GSK} I 235 ('lebt nicht'), 91 ('borrow'), II 243 (Marschner), I 143
('Jugendphantasie'), 146 ('das ihrige'), 333 (Najaden).

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Neue Folge} 110, 8 February 1838, \textit{Jugendbriefe} 189, 9 August 1832.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{GSK} I 22 (puritans and states of mind), 84 (happiness), 27, 112, 125, 179, 343
(rarer states), 418 (Chopin).

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Mottosammlung} V 250, \textit{Tagebücher} I 80. The idea perhaps went back to

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{GSK} I 285 (1837), 65, 98 (clarity); Hoffmann \textit{Schriften zur Musik}, 1963, 98.
composer. Schumann often described the wealth of association that may thus be awakened in the imagination of a listener adequately furnished with images and ideas from the culture; conversely, failure to recognise 'the dramatic thread' may spoil appreciation. He knew that music might track a literary work 'from start to finish' but that it might more probably catch 'the spirit of the whole', or dwell on particular passages. For him, what music echoes from an associated literary work is typically the outline of imagistic scenes, or a configuration of psychological or emotional states or the protagonists’ characters. A listener to Mendelssohn's *Melusine* Overture, based on a work by Tieck, need only be aware of the broad sweep of the story, without detailed knowledge of the work: the music does not follow 'a coarse narrative thread', but sketches the nature of the protagonists and their watery embrace. Moscheles’ overture to Schiller’s *The Maid of Orleans* suggests the humble heroine and the knightly Talbot, and a particular scene; and though each listener’s imagination 'follows its own track', there could be no other subject than Joan of Arc, because the music is so saturated in the 'Geist' of the play. Berlioz’s *Waverley Overture* suggests how 'dreams of love and a lady's charms give place to honour and to arms'. The literary work must of course be susceptible of musical treatment – of being transmuted into music, or into 'poetic' 'inner material' in Jean Paul’s terms. If the literature deals with music, so much the better; but other literary works too ‘contain obviously musical elements’, Schumann said in 1837, in reference to 'the arrogance of the ruler, the oppressed people’, and the conflict, pain and sacrifice described in a poem by Goethe.

But Schumann came increasingly to affirm that images, feelings and drama, once transmuted into music, are less distinguishable from one another and from music, leaving the listener unconstrained by specific external references. Beethoven’s *Pastoral* Symphony, he claimed in 1835, was not about a single day in Springtime, 'but the obscure confluence of lofty songs about humanity,… the whole infinite creation'. He wrote in 1838 that a work might convey a poetic image to one person, but to another only an associated feeling. In 1839, he expressed still greater caution about defining

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37 GSK I 82, 454 (sequences), 84.
38 GSK II 221, I 100.
39 GSK I 143 (Mendelssohn), 145-46 (Moscheles), 422 (Berlioz).
40 GSK I 66 and 268. The latter resembles Goethe’s comment of 1832 to Zelter about another story from Jewish history, which Schumann copied out between 1836 and 1838 (*Mottosammlung*, I 216): 'The old fable: the defeated, oppressed, first suffering, then resisting and after varying fortunes achieving liberation, is a very promising theme, particularly responsive to music'.
what might lie behind a piece of instrumental music, whether a ‘poem, image or experience’; but the next year, discussing a Schubert symphony, he affirmed the belief ‘that the external world … reaches deep down within the poet and composer’, and that there could be ‘more than mere lovely song’, ‘more than simple pain and joy’: ‘there is life in every fibre’, ‘import throughout’ (‘Bedeutung überall’).

In 1838 he had said something very similar of his own works (as I have already noted): ‘everything that goes on in the world affects me – politics, literature, people – and in my own way I think about everything, and then it vents itself or seeks an outlet through music’. In his review of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*, Schumann described how music can be expressive in that way:

> Often an idea is still unconsciously at work alongside the musical imagination, the eye alongside the ear, and within the sounds and notes, the eye, that ever active organ, grasps certain sketchy outlines that can thicken up and grow into distinct shapes as the music rolls on. The more that elements related to music then carry within themselves the thoughts or images produced with the notes, the more the composition will be poetic or plastic in expression – and the sharper or more imaginative the composer’s concept, the more his work will uplift or move us.

Unbewußt neben der musikalischen Phantasie wirkt oft eine Idee fort, neben dem Ohre das Auge, und das immer tätige Organ, hält dann mitten unter den Klängen und Tönen gewisse Umrisse fest, die sich mit dem vorrückenden Musik zu deutlichen Gestalten verdichten und ausbilden können. Je mehr nun der Musik verwandte Elemente die mit den Tönen erzeugten Gedanken oder Gebilde in sich tragen, von je poetischerem oder plastischerem Ausdruck ist die Komposition – und je phantastischer oder schärfer der Musiker überhaupt auffaßt, um so mehr wird sein Werk erheben oder ergreifen.

Sensitivity to connotations of ‘eye’ and ‘ear’, and ‘poetic’ and ‘plastic’, may allow this dense passage to flower into a fuller meaning, and justify my translation. For Jean Paul, both ‘eye’ and ‘ear’ serve as metaphors for mental functions. Where ‘the eye’ is the organ of clear, definite, objective perception, in the ear, ‘envoy of the world of power and terror’, ‘both extension and intension are inherent’: it perceives both the objective sound and the indefinite, poetic realm of idea, symbol or subjective feeling.

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41 GSK I 66 (*Pastoral*), 333 (1838), 431 (1839), 462 (1840: Appendix 3(d); compare 274-5).
42 *Briefwechsel*, I 146, 13 April 1838.
43 GSK I 84.
44 I have interpreted ‘sounds and tones’ as musical, as did Tadday in Perrey, ed., *Cambridge Companion*, 2007, 43; Bent, in *Music Analysis*, vol. 2, 193, treats them as ambient noises. I take ‘der Musik’ as ‘music’ in preference to ‘the music’, ‘Elemente’ rather than ‘Gedanken’ as subject of ‘tragen’, and understand ‘poetic’ music to convey ‘thoughts’, ‘plastic’ music ‘images’. Each choice is debatable.
This latter realm is the ‘Romantic’, excluded by the sharp outlines of a plastic art like sculpture. Schumann adopted the opposition between ‘plastic’ and ‘Romantic’ (though he preferred the term ‘poetic’); and he softened it, talking apparently approvingly of music as either ‘poetic or plastic’. Similarly, he had already in 1829 echoed the idea that the eye is the organ of objective perception, but added that a ‘poetic eye ... grasps the objective subjectively’. In the Berlioz review he speaks of ‘the eye’ as guided by the ‘programme’, so that ‘the ear’ cannot hear the music independently. ‘The eye’, that is, can sense relatively ‘distinct’ ‘ideas’ or ‘outlines’ (whether thought, image or state of mind), alongside the freer, more fluid, less definite and more subjective element that is the realm of ‘the ear’ or ‘musical imagination’; but in good music, even if it suggests images, ‘the ear need borrow nothing from the eye’.

Given these connotations, I take this passage to mean that music may generate momentary ‘outlines’ of images or thoughts (the realm of ‘the eye’); these can then ‘thicken up’ ‘as the music rolls on’ into ‘distinct shapes’, presumably musical sequences that convey drama, feeling or thought; and the more the ‘outlines’ of thought or image are carried forward in features that are intrinsically musical (the realm of ‘the ear’), the better – the more ‘poetic’ or ‘plastic’ – the work. I will say something about each of these three aspects.

In the first, musical features may sometimes convey to ‘the eye’ an ‘outline’. I take this as a sense of figure, movement, sound, gesture, action, character, personal state or feeling: something angular and awkward, for instance, or with a broad undulating swell, or bird-like, or floating, or anxious, or funereal. Schumann wrote that keys may have connotations of character or state, although there is no fixed translation between them; in the right context a particular chord can summon a

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46 Compare GSK I 249 (see also Floros, ‘Schumanns Musikalische Poetik’, 1981-2, 90-104). Schumann noted Rochlitz’s aphorisms about ‘music extending the delimited to the undelimited’, and ‘spiritualising the material’, in contrast to the plastic arts (Mottosammlung IX 285). Franz Brendel, ‘Robert Schumann’, 1845, 64 (Appendix 4(a)), applied similar concepts to music, using them as the basis for his contrast between the ‘objective’ Mendelssohn and the ‘subjective’ Schumann.

47 Jugendbriefe 71, 31 August 1829; GSK I 84, 91.
compelling image and feeling; and 'deeper penetration into the secrets of harmony enabled the expression of finer shades of feeling' (as Hoffmann said too).\footnote{GSK II 207, I 105-6, 285, 27; Hoffmann, \textit{Kreisleriana}, I 4, 48.} Form can align the music's character with a subject indicated in a title; rhythm and instrumentation too may contribute. In 1837, Schumann criticised a composer’s 'common harmonies, ordinary rhythms and melodies': it was a neglect of the sort of 'material means' through which, in the hands of a composer like Schubert, music can become 'material', or 'more sensual or painterly'.\footnote{GSK I 361 (form), 73 (march; compare Hoffmann on the military connotations of certain rhythms: \textit{Schriften zur Musik}, 1963, 283); 78 ('In der Vision'); 269-70 (material means).}

'As the music rolls on', Schumann continued, sequences of these 'sketchy outlines' 'can thicken up and grow into distinct shapes'. A musical sequence can convey, for instance, 'the memory of happiness experienced', 'the image of the sea, or a Spring twilight', or something of a Shakespeare play, or 'a plastic shape'. Where the music at first appeared an opaque curtain, it may become on repeated hearing a 'veil, behind which ... shapes become perceptible': 'Spiele man die Ouverture mir noch einmal, und der Vorhang wird gewiß zum Schleier, hinter dem das überraschte Auge eine Menge lustiger und trauriger Gestalten ... wahrnehmen wird'.\footnote{GSK II 84 (sequence), II 361 (plastic), I 310 (overture).} A theme can suggest the same persona every time it appears, albeit in different moods or conditions: in the Berlioz Symphony, to think of its main theme is precisely to think of the woman it suggests, 'pale, slender as a lily, veiled, still, almost cold'.\footnote{GSK I 78, 82, II 213. Compare I 432 on 'den Harfenspieler'.} A composer like Schubert may, Schumann wrote, 'have music for any feelings, thoughts, events or scenes: what he sees with his eye ... he transmutes into music' ('verwandelt'). He was equally explicit in 1842: 'Who would deny that our art can express a great deal, and even in its own way trace the development of an event?'\footnote{GSK I 125, II 112 (1842).}
offspring of the gods, which suddenly appear before us, motherless and armed like Minerva', and the 'shapes' which gradually present themselves in it to the 'inner eye'. And in 1856 A.B. Marx likewise differentiated music from other arts: 'Only music appears as that solitary maiden, not of this world', of whom the poet said, "one knew not whence she came".\textsuperscript{53} In particular, Schumann complained in 1844 that it is a bad sign when a young composer 'seeks to use music \textit{merely} as a servant or translator' of something external.\textsuperscript{54} If then Schumann's melodies are, as he said, 'not like birdsong, without content or thought', a thought is produced in them – for both listener and composer – with the notes, and given at the same time as the musical form that holds it.\textsuperscript{55}

His contemporaries wrestled with the question what a musical 'thought', marrying form and content, might be. In the 1780s, Karl Philipp Moritz had agonised about thought without words; in the 1790s, Wackenroder had asked whether 'sceptical rationalists', who wanted music explained in words, had 'never felt without words'.\textsuperscript{56} Tieck pursued the same tack. 'Our inner spirit', he wrote, 'hearkens to' music, and 'seeks to grasp and hold fast to its subtler and purer thoughts through thoughts and words, those coarser instruments – and cannot of course succeed that way.' Elusive, purer 'thoughts', conveyed by music are not the same as 'coarser' verbal thoughts; the latter are, he implies, intimations, or a necessarily inadequate hermeneutic tool to approach the former. He encapsulated the same idea, with the same double sense of 'thought', in a poem that appears twice among Schumann's excerpts, first from about 1836-38, and then again from about 1850: 'Love thinks in sweet music – as thought is too remote – and only in music will she gladly beautify whatever she will'.\textsuperscript{57} Schumann's acquaintance, August Kahlert, wrote in the \textit{Neue Zeitschrift} that to claim that music is pure formal patterning, has no content, and gives nothing to think about, is to destroy its essence, but presenting concepts in music does not yield a work of art;

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} GSK I 44; Jean Paul, \textit{Vorschule}, §77; A.B. Marx, \textit{Musical Form}, 1997, 61.
\item \textsuperscript{54} GSK II 469, note 558.
\item \textsuperscript{55} \textit{Briefwechsel}, I 127 of March 1838; GSK I 84, 106, II 208.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Moritz, \textit{Anton Reiser}, 1981, 216; Wackenroder, 'Wesen der Tonkunst', in \textit{Herzenseriebungen}, 1948, 148.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Tieck, 'Die Töne', 269 and 273 ('Liebe denkt in süßen Tönen / Denn Gedanken stehn zu fern. / Nur in Tönen mag sie gern / Alles, was sie will, verschönen'; \textit{Mottosammlung}, I 109 and XI 39). His \textit{Die Verkehrte Welt} (1798) opens with a 'Symphonie' suggesting that if thinking in music, and making music in words, were impossible, both music and language would be impoverished. Compare Rosen, \textit{Romantic Generation}, 1996, 72-75.
\end{itemize}
an instrumental composer must ‘think purely in music’.

In 1837, Schumann’s friend Keferstein, writing as ‘K. Stein’, said that while some music, like tapestry and unlike painting, may consist only of ‘pure musical form’ or patterns, other music contained ‘artistic thoughts’. In some works ‘one feels caught in acute tension, even though one has fully grasped their musical structure. One dwells on them again and again until eventually one succeeds in finding the right poetic key to their thought.’ These ‘artistic thoughts’ are not verbal propositions, but complex clusters of thoughts and feelings understood by listeners with whatever broad contextual understanding of the relevant culture they can bring to bear. Schumann too sometimes distinguishes musical from other thoughts, but sometimes saw the two as continuous: musical features merge into thoughts, as a musical key into a thought of childhood. In 1842, he published in the *Neue Zeitschrift* articles on Hegel’s philosophy of music – by Eduard Krüger, whom he called the journal’s ‘most respected contributor’ – arguing that music could contain thought not limited to what can be expressed in words. The content of music should not be reduced to a verbal text or to a natural object; it is some higher and more elusive element: ‘what is outside the scope of words is not the meanest part of the mind’.

Indeed, something inherently non-verbal – an intrinsically musical ‘Geist’ or conception – is essential to every good musical work. The ‘Geist’ ‘holds sway’, Schumann said, over the ‘idea that the artist wanted to portray’, the material and the form, which is its ‘vessel’. ‘A genuinely artistic piece of music will have a centre of gravity, towards which everything tends, and from which all its conceptual rays [Geistesradien] emanate’. Some such conception shapes the music even across a multi-movement work, gives the work a poetic unity and coherence deeper than simple regularity or symmetry; it enlivens it as a rounded whole; for ‘in music the coherence, the whole, is everything’. ‘In a masterpiece every note can be accounted for’, Schumann wrote; there is ‘a poetic depth and originality throughout, in the whole and

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58 Kahlert, ‘Die Genrebilder in der Modernen Musik’, 1835, 189 ff. He affirmed that ‘beauty is ... both form and content’: ‘Recensionen’, *Cäcilia*, 1835, 109.
60 GSK I 82, 423, 84, 125 (distinguished), Tagebücher I 112, 1828 (continuous).
62 GSK I 69-70 (vessel), 162 (‘Geistesradien’), 179 (‘Geist’), 52, 7, 17 (‘Ganzes’), 72-3, 224 and II 12 (‘Zusammenhang’); II 8, 9, 10 (‘Rundung’, ‘abgerundetes’).
every detail’. He often used the traditional image of ‘threads’ that link works together, more or less visibly.\(^63\)

Such views were widespread. As Schumann noted, Heinse had written in the 1780s: ‘No-one can wholly understand a part, without first having a grasp of the whole, and vice versa’; and ‘one cannot judge anything of which one has no essential concept’ (‘kein Ideal’). Goethe wrote that ‘in every art-work, large or small, everything down to the smallest detail hangs on the conception’ (‘Konzeption’).\(^64\) Schumann noted Jean Paul’s comment that many appreciate the limbs and their charm, but not the ‘Geist’ and beauty with which only genius can infuse the whole; elsewhere Jean Paul claimed that ‘without an inner necessity, poetry is merely feverish dreams’.\(^65\) Novalis’ aphorisms contain a similar message: Schumann noted statements that ‘every work of art has an ideal essence a priori, and carries within it the necessity of its own existence’ (‘ein Ideal a priori, eine Notwendigkeit bei sich da zu seyn’); and that composers could learn from poetry ‘the poetic self-sufficiency and inner conception [Geist] of every real work of art’.\(^66\) And great composers had indeed learnt the lesson, in the view of Hoffmann: each ‘conceived and brought forth his work as a whole’ (‘in einem Gusse’). Likewise, A.B. Marx in the 1820s saw in Beethoven’s works the primacy of what he there called the ‘Idee’, of which form is the realisation.\(^67\)

Marx’s ‘Idee’, Schumann’s ‘Geist’ and Jean Paul’s ‘inner material’, though far from identical, were kindred notions, sharing an origin in Idealist metaphysics. Fichte had taught that the objective universe only appears through the self-recognition as Other (‘Das Nicht-Ich’) of absolute mind (‘Das Ich’, or what Schelling called the ‘world-soul’). Jean Paul said that the ‘Geist’ that genius brings should animate a work in every limb, as the World-Spirit does nature.\(^68\) Similarly, Marx in 1856 laid bare the Idealist origin of his musical aesthetics:


\(^{64}\) Heinse, Ardinghello, in Mottosammlung X 3 and 4; Goethe, ‘Maximen und Reflexionen’, Werke, vol. 3, 1972, 480 (224)

\(^{65}\) Jean Paul, Vorschule, §9 (Mottosammlung IX 13) and §62.

\(^{66}\) Novalis, Schriften, V, 1988, 229 (230) (Mottosammlung IX 186), I, 1960, 286 (Mottosammlung I 60).


\(^{68}\) Jean Paul, Vorschule, §14.
Impulses of inner life ... were and are to the spirit what cosmic material is to the universe: matter that in and of itself is shapeless and indeterminate, and yet becomes everything when it determines itself. Gaining shape – form – is nothing other than self-determination, a Being-for-itself apart from the Other... The spirit sets its musical content in musical form ... and by so doing comes to itself ... and its consciousness.... Form is not something external to the spirit, or even imposed from without, and is not something arbitrary, but ... the unmediated expression of the spirit that has come to itself and hence of consciousness.69

In such a world-view, content is not simply form. Nor though is a work’s intrinsically musical conception or ‘Geist’ specifiable separately from the music; it is not, for either composer or interpreter, a schema translated into music. Schumann wrote in his Berlioz review of 1835:

Many people fuss too much about the difficult issue as to how far instrumental music may go in conveying thoughts and events. It is certainly a mistake to believe that composers sit down with pen and paper with the pitiful intention of expressing, describing or painting this or that. But ... why should the imagination of a Beethoven not be seized in the midst of his creative work by a thought about immortality? Why should he not be inspired to compose by the remembrance of a great, fallen hero?70

Presumably Schumann supposed that ‘a thought about immortality’ came to Beethoven in the shape of a musical funeral march as it sits in the context of a whole work such as the Eroica. He repeated the message in 1843, expressing irritation with ‘academic types, who of course often have peculiar presumptions about composing, and always cite Mozart, who is supposed not to have had a thought in his head when writing his music’:

The battle of ‘Supposedly not-a-thought-in-his-head-when-composing’ and its opposite is flaring up once again. The philosophers surely exaggerate the evils here; they are certainly wrong when they think that a composer who is working from an idea sits down like a preacher on Saturday afternoon, schematises his topic in the usual three sections and then dutifully writes it up; they are certainly wrong. The creative process of a composer is something quite different, and if some picture, some idea, hovers before him, he won’t be satisfied with his work until it comes towards him in lovely melodies.71

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69 Marx, Musical Form, 1997, 60-62.
70 GSK I 84.
71 GSK II 129-30: Appendix 3(e). Schumann borrowed an image from Jean Paul (Nachschule, §2) in saying, ‘It makes a difference whether it’s Goethe that writes poetry with pre-determined rhyme-words, or someone else’. 
Schumann saw music’s ‘thought’, coming as ‘lovely melodies’, as akin to Jean Paul’s trans-substantiated ‘true poetic material’; he did not see it in terms of a ‘schematised topic’ or ‘schema’, or what today might be called a programme.

I know of no instance in Schumann’s writings, however, of that modern sense of the word ‘programme’. He seems to have used the word to refer to something slightly different – to words provided by the composer to introduce his work, a sense he glossed as ‘text and explanation’. A ‘programme’ in that sense, he thought, led the imagination too crassly, so that a work appears to be merely a dependent ‘translation’ of the words. For instance, he deprecated Berlioz’s detailed ‘programme’: ‘such road signs always have something unworthy, something of the charlatan about them. At any rate the five main headings would have sufficed.’ But as the ‘programme’ receded ever further into the background in following the Symphony, ‘my own imagination began its creative work, and I discovered not only all that was in it but much more too, and a warm living tone almost everywhere’.

In 1843, he expressed the same prejudice against being presented with a programme before the music: ‘first let me hear that you’ve made beautiful music, and then perhaps I’ll take pleasure in your programme too’. The key for Schumann is whether the spirit or conception inheres in music without the added words – whether ‘the ear’ need ‘borrow from the eye’. I suppose, then, though cannot prove, that he would have maintained relatively consistently that poetic music may be expressive of externalities, in a sense that nowadays might be called transitive rather than only intransitive; but it should nevertheless present to a listener as following an inherently musical conception rather than merely translating a schema (literary, narrative, imagistic or other) adequately expressible elsewhere.

For words – and especially those carrying the authority of the composer – can set limits to imaginative appreciation: Schumann loved ‘the Pastoral and Eroica symphonies less, precisely because it was Beethoven himself who so characterised

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72 GSK I 85. His use may have been typical for his time. Jean Paul glossed ‘programme’ as ‘Einladungsschrift’ (Vorschule, Vorrede zur ersten Ausgabe; compare §28); Hoffmann used it in the same sense (Schriften zur Musik, 1963, 351 (1814)), as did Brendel (‘Robert Schumann’, 1845, 92 and 149). Presumably Fischhof said (Briefedition I 2 100, 1837) that Wieck ‘wants to declaim a programme’ to Carnaval because ‘programmes’ are inherently written. Other senses crept in from the 1850s, but even for Niecks, Programme Music, 1907, 4, established usage restricted it to ‘a prefixed verbal programme’.

73 GSK I 235, 82-85.

74 GSK II 129-30 (compare I 65); I 91.
Similarly, Kahlert in 1835 said that Beethoven set a dangerous precedent in activating a demand for consciousness of content, and using words to point the way to a work’s content, which could degenerate into cases where ‘the content of the music is pre-determined’. Ill-chosen, misleading or inexact headings can straitjacket responses, suggest misplaced nuances, or set the wrong tone (Schumann took to heart a criticism of his own works on this score), and cannot redeem bland music. On the other hand, if carefully chosen, subtle, and well-suited to the nature and quality of the music, words can enhance the effect of the music and the listener’s pleasure in understanding it. A verbal hint may, Schumann thought, suggest a voice or movement (a call, the majestic gait of a god), an emotion (anger), or an image, scene or landscape, and thereby clarify the content of an image, for instance, or speed recognition of more arcane states of mind. A title (‘Witches’ Dance’ or ‘Ave Maria’) or other added words might suggest a context within which a work could be understood the more sensitively and fully; or a simple heading may point to a literary work, for instance, so that music imbued with a book’s spirit can stimulate the listener’s imagination to work in its own way with the characters and images. In 1838, Schumann reviewed Moscheles’ Charakteristische Studien, op. 95. He cited the preface, in which the composer hoped that the titles and expressive markings delicately suggested feelings which ‘hovered before’ him, but recognised that using words to explain his deeper feelings more definitely would trespass on the essence of music. Schumann’s review sympathised, saying: ‘If poets seek to wrap the meaning of the whole poem in a title, why should musicians not do it too?’ The inference is that he saw a ‘wrapping’ as something different from but suggestive of ‘the meaning’: headings should not seem to contain ‘the meaning’ of the work.

This chapter has proposed shifting the understanding of ‘Geist’ to include intellectual properties and a work’s individuating, animating conception as well as spirit or character, and of ‘unendlich’ to include the indefinite. For Schumann, then, the role of literature in music need not be purely formal, nor merely a reproduction of definite

75 GSK I 83-4, 28; compare 65, 191 (a composer’s intention should not be too blatant, in the music or otherwise).
77 Neue Folge, 170, 5 September 1839; GSK I 99-100 (‘bezeichnendere’); Liszt’s criticism: Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, VI 16, 1837, 65; II 240; GSK I 360-1, 369 & 406 (Kittl), 390 (‘gutgewählte’), 420-1 (‘Waldnymphe’).
78 GSK I 41, 422-3, II 24, 221.
79 GSK I 389 (‘objektivere’), 146-7, 344 (Faust), 435 (‘Den Grund’), 474 (‘l’Adieu’), II 332.
80 GSK I 361.
external material; it may be a suggestively indefinite expressive dimension arising from a conception that shapes a work in every aspect. What Jean Paul sees as ‘trans-substantiation’, and Hoffmann as firing ‘in the crucible’, creates for Schumann ‘lovely melodies’ embodying ‘thought’ in poetically expressive music. This suggests a mode of understanding his own ‘literary’ works in which the opposition of ‘internal’ and ‘external’, of programmatic and formal, is transcended through a notion like musical expressiveness; and that is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING SCHUMANN’S ‘LITERARY’ WORKS

Schumann’s criticism suggests that he would have seen the titles of his works as significant. If they imply a literary relationship, that relationship is likely – whatever programmatic elements may be found, or parallels of abstract formal strategy – to revolve around poetically expressive musical features combining in suggestively resonant complexes. This chapter considers these alternatives as ways to understand Schumann’s ‘literary’ works as aesthetic entities.

Before the 1850s, understanding of Schumann’s works had tended to the poetic rather than the programmatic. Thus von Seyfried in 1840 called Schumann’s *Kreisleriana* ‘a genuinely poetic conception’.¹ He asked ‘Who does not know the Capellmeister Johannes Kreisler?’ and he went on to draw out accordingly the import of each piece, including the ambivalent disappearance in the last; but he felt no need to track Hoffmann’s events or sequence. In 1839 Brendel cited Julius Becker’s view that ‘In der Nacht’ does not paint or imitate night, and ‘works not indirectly through the image but directly through the inherently musical idea’; and in 1845 he suggested that Schumann’s works developed the musical tradition where Beethoven had left off, each based on a content that shapes form.² The early works are ‘narratives or cycles of inter-connected lyrical poems’. They may seem to contain sequences of images suggestive of ‘narratives’, but do not, he said, normally ‘paint events’: occasionally

externalities are signified, but ‘overall the subjective and objective swim indistinguishably as one, in a creatively imaginative way’. ‘The poetic idea is predominant, and the parts are linked ... by poetic threads’. In such ‘poetic’ interpretations, programmes (in either Schumann’s or the modern sense) were not at issue. In 1839 Brendel denied that ‘In der Nacht’ ‘follows a schema’; in 1845, he claimed that Schumann’s titles ‘often serve to give final definition to a piece’, not a ‘pre-existent schema after which the composition was modelled’.

The understanding of Schumann’s music altered as the meaning of ‘programme’ evolved and ideology moved on. In 1837, Liszt had taken a ‘poetic’ line on Schumann, saying that ‘the objective is turned, so to speak, into the subjective’ as something ‘intimately associated with the music’ (terms which may recall Jean Paul’s aesthetics). It would sometimes have helped, he said, if ‘the poetic drift had been intimated through some words’ – which he seems a few lines later to term a ‘programme’, implying Schumann’s, not the modern, sense of the term. In 1855, however, Liszt said that Schumann ‘often gave a work a programme in the form of a title’, which might be ‘borrowed from literature only if the music was saturated in the conception [‘Geist’] of the literary work’; ‘no-one before Schumann had issued a series of works whose content aligned so perfectly with their programme’. This was not wholly wrong; but its new terminology tendentiously co-opted Schumann under the banner of ‘programme music’, where he had previously not belonged. Thereafter, Liszt and others seized territory in the name of ‘programme music’; Johannes Brahms, Eduard Hanslick and others counter-attacked; and a polarisation between ‘programme’ and ‘absolute music’ developed. Schumann’s ‘poetic’ music soon became stranded in a no-man’s land between battle-lines, or dragooned into either the ‘absolute’ or the programme camp.

Still today the temptation – even for those sensitive to the historical context of Schumann’s aesthetics – is to understand the ‘literary’ works as programmatic. Floros, for instance, argues that Schumann saw ‘poetic music’ as suggestive of symbols and thought, without starting from a fixed programme, but concludes that many of the works may be ‘esoteric programme music’. Tadday seems to deny both that

Schumann’s ‘romanticism’ is programmatic, and that it is ‘programme-free’; and the interpretation of ‘In der Nacht’ that he uses to exemplify his approach appears to be programmatic.\textsuperscript{6} In saying this, I take a ‘programme’ as a sequence or ‘schema’ that a listener is encouraged to trace in the music. The schema may be literary, imagistic, autobiographical, narrative or other, and is typically captured in words; the encouragement might arise from a prefixed ‘programme’ in Schumann’s sense, or a belief that the composer followed that schema in composing, or found the schema’s presence in the work, or even from an influential critic’s case for its significance.

Schumann’s own comments on ‘In der Nacht’ and \emph{Papillons} have then been responsible for encouraging programmatic interpretations; but we need not be persuaded to follow far down that path. ‘In der Nacht’ is discussed further in Chapter 6; \emph{Papillons} deserves a word here. It is a poetic sequence of dances. But Schumann listed characters and narrative moments from the last scenes of Jean Paul’s novel, \emph{Flegeljahre}, that are in some sense in the music:


It looks like the imposition of a schema on music partly composed earlier.\textsuperscript{8} Moreover, Schumann marked relevant passages in his copy of the novel, apparently some time around the time of composition, and these markings seem to refer to the numbers of the pieces of \emph{Papillons}, possibly in some sequence close to if not identical with the published order. But Schumann did not wholly succeed in fitting Jean Paul’s narrative to pre-existing pieces. It is not always clear which passages in the novel are linked to which pieces, or how. The giant boot Schumann attributed to No. 3 clumps clearly enough in the music; the end of the ball and the disappearance of Vult surely figure in No. 12. But if No. 6 represents Vult’s description of Walt’s dancing (though Schumann seems to have written, ‘Vult’s dancing’), is the opening ‘vertical’ and a sequel ‘horizontal’, or vice versa?\textsuperscript{9} I find it hard to see the delicate touch of a lover’s hand,

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Jugendbriefe}, 166-7 and 167-8 (17 and 19 April 1832); \textit{Neue Folge}, 36 (28 April 1832), 46 (11 January 1834) & 54 (22 August 1834).
\textsuperscript{8} Synofzik, ‘Schumanns kompositorische Anfänge’, 2006.
\textsuperscript{9} Chailley, ‘Zum Symbolismus’, 1984, 63, contrasts his own view with Boetticher’s (with whom Beaufils, \emph{La Musique}, 1951, 50, agrees).
despite Schumann’s marking, in the ‘straightforward dance’ of No. 8.\textsuperscript{10} How is a listener to pick up an exchange of masks in Nos. 7 and 9, if indeed it is in those pieces? Most critics have not tried to locate the ‘anger’ and ‘revelations’ that Schumann mentioned: the critic Rellstab objected, Schumann gathered, that it was not clear ‘where and what Vult curses’.\textsuperscript{11} In any case, as Rellstab pointed out:

If incidental, subjective aspects [rather than ‘objective, necessary truths’] remain concealed, they leave a cipher to which the key is missing; once disclosed, they may be grasped or understood, but only externally... A work of art should not make itself understood through anything extraneous; it should make itself understood through itself, wholly and quite alone; its spirit must dwell within it, not outside it; otherwise it is no more than a corpse on a bier.

Zufällige, subjective, lassen, wenn sie verhüllt bleiben, eine Chifferschrift übrig, zu der der Schlüssel fehlt; werden sie enthüllt, so begreift man, versteht man, aber nur äußerlich... Das Kunstwerk darf nicht durch ein fremdes Etwas, es muß ganz allein, voll, durch sich selbst verständlich seyn; die Seele muß in ihm, nicht außer ihm wohnen, sonst ist es nicht mehr als der Leichnam auf der Bahre.\textsuperscript{12}

On the one hand, an ‘extraneous’ narrative can – unhelpfully – dictate expectations of what the music will do (Rellstab, Schumann noted, looked in vain for Jean Paul’s character, Jakobine); on the other, both the musical features that produce an image, and the image itself, must work within the music as well as through an ‘incidental’ association with a book.

In response, one might seek a more abstract sequence than Schumann implied, boldly amending his list of items so that they can be understood in terms of \textit{Flegeljahre}, but need not be, and are matched to each piece including the \textit{Introduzione}:


But in that as, I think, in any account, the logic of the sequence remains too obscure, especially in Nos. 6-9, and too complex in 10-11, to be self-explanatory in and as

\footnote{Jensen’s phrase, ‘Explicating Jean Paul’, 1998, 141; he and Chailley, 64, nevertheless take Schumann’s marking here as definitive.}

\footnote{\textit{Tagebücher} I 401. Mayeda, ‘Papillons’, 2005, 14, denies the presence of anger; Lippman, ‘Theory and Practice’, 1964, 317, finds it in No. 11; I would point to bars 40-41.}

\footnote{Schumann’s transcription (\textit{Tagebücher}, I 425) of Rellstab’s review of 25 May 1832.}
music.\textsuperscript{13} It is not clear that the final sequence makes psychological sense unless two male rivals can be distinguished in the music; but it does not help musical appreciation to worry about identities. Though Schumann hoped that \textit{Papillons} worked as music in itself, the hope was vain, if academic commentaries are representative: critics have focused less on the work as a musically-shaped whole than on how the programme fits.\textsuperscript{14} The music only sustains an interpretation of the sort Schumann incautiously encouraged on terms vulnerable to Rellstab’s critique.

Schumann eventually gave heed: ‘Rellstab was right about Jakobine’. In a subsequent exchange, however, while Rellstab insisted that the soul of a musical work must dwell within it, Schumann asked, ‘what would ever be created, if the genius of an artist were not (consciously or unconsciously) an objective one?’\textsuperscript{15} In effect, he pondered the nature of ‘poetic’ music; and over time, his criticism achieved a balance, as we have seen in Chapter 3. At the same time, his own compositions came back time and again to themes of human concern, and continued to find a role for literature, without either requiring music alone to create esoteric discriminations between identities, or creating a programme. At its best his music follows not an external ‘schema’ but a musical trajectory of its own. He also learnt, with rare lapses, the wisdom of not lending his authority as composer to detailed interpretations of his works, for fear of turning them into programmes.

Nevertheless, programmes, images, scenes or narratives continue to be imputed to Schumann’s ‘literary’ works. Whatever their value for each individual, as shared between listeners these imputations too often appear to be based on insufficient evidence, or too little rooted in the music, involving constructs which could scarcely arise from musical process – like the complex combinations of identity or causation queried by Rellstab, or the hams on bayonets (in a Schubert march) mocked by Schumann himself.\textsuperscript{16}

This may have driven critics in recent decades to emphasise supposedly more objective parallels of formal strategy with literature. Form is of course of crucial

\textsuperscript{13} Brendel, significantly, drops the thread after No. 5 and does not pick it up again till 10 (‘Robert Schumann’, 1845, 83). Knorr (GSK, II 456) skipped lightly over Nos. 6-8.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Neue Folge}, 54. See the modern commentaries noted above, and Daverio, \textit{Robert Schumann}, 1997, 79-90. Chernaik, ‘Schumann’s “Papillons”’, 2012, is an exception.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Tagebücher}, I 401; \textit{Jugendbriefe}, 195, 7 December 1832.

\textsuperscript{16} GSK I 113. This seems to me to apply to attempts to see \textit{Carnaval} in terms of the narrative of \textit{Flegeljahre}, or \textit{Kinderszenen} in terms of Hoffmann’s ‘Das Fremde Kind’ (Fabre, ‘“L'Enfant Étranger” d'Hoffmann’, 2004).
importance, and Schumann discussed it often; but he saw it not as an arbitrary or autonomous feature, so much as one shaped, alongside other features, by a work’s conception.\(^{17}\) He stipulated in 1850 that ‘only when the form is completely clear to you will the “Geist” be clear too’; eleven years earlier, he declared to Clara Wieck that ‘there are ancient and eternal states and moods that govern us. But it is not figures and forms that make up the Romantic, though it will show up in them of its own accord if only the composer is a poet’.\(^{18}\) If form is one expression of a conception, then kindred conceptions in musical and literary works may yield analogous forms; and formal parallels with literature may be a symptom of that deeper, ‘poetic’ connection. *Carnaval* is carnivalesque in form (as in content), and because some literary works were so too, aspects of both may show parallel formal strategies.

But in recent decades formal parallels have often been treated differently. Parallels at an abstract level have been described between Schumann and authors such as Jean Paul and Hoffmann; the approach has indeed been so fashionable recently as to be almost a default position. Appel in 1980-81 set a version within a broad context.\(^{19}\) He described how theories of the sublime and of humour developed in largely literary fields in the eighteenth century were applied in the early Romantic era to instrumental music, in an evolution contemporary with the reception of Beethoven. Broad aesthetic parallels had been seen between writers like Sterne or Jean Paul and composers like Haydn or C.P.E. Bach; and there was a small early nineteenth-century industry asserting or denying a likeness between Beethoven and Jean Paul, not least for some abstract formal strategies such as their abrupt transitions. Schumann knew of such comparisons, and knew that he himself was seen as Beethoven’s successor and compared to Jean Paul (though he testily rejected the notion).\(^{20}\) Seen thus, literary aesthetics, inextricably entangled with the influence of Beethoven and with musical aesthetics and criticism, may have played a role in the development of Schumann’s style, and in his own and others’ understanding of it.

But in subsequent work on formal parallels, this broader context has sometimes tended to disappear from view. In place of a complex story of a decades-long evolution interweaving literary and musical aesthetics, practice and criticism, we are left with putative parallels of abstract formal strategy between particular novels and particular musical works, as though such parallels in isolation illuminated particular works, or the

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\(^{17}\) GSK I 69-70, 72-3, 106, II 208.
\(^{18}\) GSK II 170, 1850; *Briefwechsel*, II 368, 26 January 1839.
\(^{19}\) Appel, ‘Schumanns Humoreske’, 1980-81, 87-103, 201-06.
\(^{20}\) *Briefwechsel*, II 368, 26 January 1839.
development or nature of Schumann’s use of form as an aspect of his style. Attention to formal parallels could in theory help with the latter; in practice, in this more simplistic version, several questions arise in starker form.

One is whether the abstract formal strategies invoked plausibly occur in the book or the musical work, and whether they are persuasively described as parallel. It is unclear what counts as an instance of a form (what in music counts as ‘re-focalisation’, for example, or ‘de-familiarisation’, and what in literature), what makes either a marked feature, rather than part of the ordinary language of the art-form, and what constitutes a significant parallel. It is not obvious, for example, that cases of de-familiarisation in literature should be equated with use of tonal variety in musical works. Similarly, if irony in literature is a strategy that distances the reader from what is being told, or creates an unresolved juxtaposition of finite and infinite, there may be only a remote parallel with musical techniques such as interruption, digression, and playing with the apparent function of an event.

Moreover, parallels described at that level appear in so many works that they no more compellingly connect Schumann to Hoffmann or Jean Paul than they do several other composers to a host of writers. Eighteenth-century fantasias could seem disrupted, subjective, open-ended, disconcertingly fragmented, digressive, and open to multiple readings and an ironic critique, with (in C.P.E. Bach’s music, for instance) ‘quick-changing effects’, ‘sudden changes of texture’, an effect of ‘requiring active listening’, and the evasion of ‘clear harmonic trajectories, period structure and formal design’, and of regular metre or bar-line. Some Haydn works share such features, and similar strategies were identified in Beethoven. They have been found in all of Schumann’s Opp. 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 23, and from there traced apparently interchangeably to both Hoffmann and Jean Paul. But they crop up also in Shakespeare and Cervantes, for instance, as well as Gozzi, Sterne, and Tieck; two thousand years ago, Ovid’s Metamorphoses (I 302-03) de-familiarised dolphins by

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picturing them swimming up against the high branches of oaks. No compelling case has yet been made that Schumann’s compositional style was influenced along these lines by any particular literary writer rather than by composers.

Emphasis on such abstract parallels leaves one work looking much like another, individuality bleached away, and in that state, many of Schumann’s works could exchange names without making any difference – or all could indifferently be called *Metamorphoses*. Indeed, some of the formal strategies described in recent musicology were associated in Schumann’s day with both the sublime and the comic, as analysed by Michaelis in 1805-6 and Keferstein in 1833 respectively; and as Schütze pointed out at the time, the formal means thus abstracted do not suffice to account for the individual nature of a work’s music.\(^{27}\) For form and style function differently in the different ecologies of different media, genres and artists – in Ovid, Jean Paul and Hoffmann, for instance, or in C.P.E. Bach, late Beethoven quartets, or Schumann – and in the different landscapes of different works with their varying aesthetic and expressive qualities.

In the right context, a formal feature can contribute, of course, to appreciation of a work as an aesthetic entity; but it is not clear whether or how a parallel with a literary form might do likewise – unless through a pleasure like that of discovering a likeness between two friends. In his youth, Schumann compared Schubert to Jean Paul perhaps in that spirit (and later mentioning the former’s ‘logical leaps’).\(^{28}\) His claim that painting, poetry and music share an aesthetic, though their material diverges, show his engagement with the broad discussions of literary and musical aesthetics.\(^{29}\) None of this supports a treatment of formal parallels with literature as a principal or self-sufficient element in appreciation of specific works, and I know of no other evidence from Schumann himself pointing that way. Chapter 3, by contrast, offered evidence that he frequently treated the subject matter of fictions as implicated in music with literary connections. He did not use abstract formal terms like ‘Fragment’ or ‘Half-torn pages’ as titles to the four ‘literary’ works (as he did for his very different opp. 99 and 124), but emblems of the individual expressive conception of each piece or work. Writing to an admirer about his *Kreisleriana*, Schumann talked about an


\(^{28}\) *Jugendbriehe* 82-3, 6 November 1829.

\(^{29}\) *GSK I 26*, 1834.
‘eccentric, wild, inspired Kapellmeister’; he did not explain that Hoffmann’s fictions were based on a formal principle of ‘interleaving’.30

He went on in that letter to claim to have learnt more counterpoint from Jean Paul than from his music teacher, but that is not an interpretation of any particular work and its literary connection, let alone of one connected by its title not to Jean Paul but to Hoffmann. And though there can be no certainty what Schumann had in mind in making the claim, and many different ideas have been mooted, I am tempted to think as follows. Schumann noted in 1828 what music might learn from the ‘combination of the bar with a varying and lyrically supple bar-length’ in Jean Paul’s ‘polymeters’.31

These are prose-poems with a single extendable flow and multiple metres, without line-breaks or rhyme. Jean Paul gave an example in Flegeljahre, having first shown the reader its metrical patterns:

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˘ˉˉˉ˘˘˘˘ˉ˘˘ˉ    ˉ˘ˉ˘ˉ˘˘    ˉ˘ˉ˘ˉ˘˘ˉ˘˘ˉ˘˘˘˘ˉ˘˘ˉ
˘ˉˉ˘˘    ˉ˘ˉ˘ˉ˘˘    ˉ˘ˉ˘ˉ˘˘˘˘ˉ˘˘ˉ
˘ˉ˘˘    ˉ˘ˉ˘ˉ˘˘    ˉ˘ˉ˘ˉ˘˘˘˘ˉ˘˘ˉ
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Gemein und dunkel wird oft die Seele verhüllt, die so rein und offen ist; so deckt graue Rinde das Eis, das zerchlagen innen licht und hell und blau wie Äther erscheint. Bleib’ euch stets die Hülle fremd, bleib’ es euch nur der Verhüllte nicht.

He commented ironically that ‘the unforgivingness of this verse (for instance the proceleusmatic: kel˘ wird˘ oft˘ die˘ – the second paean: die˘ Hül˘ le˘ fremd˘ – and the molossus: bleib˘ euch˘ stets˘) will hardly elude a refined provincial ear, but might not the concision of the poet’s ideas permit some metrical harshness?’32

I am tempted to see features of ‘polymeters’ such as this as reminiscent of counterpoint. They are analysable in terms of feet (‘bars’), phrases consisting of something like subject or counter-subject, and entries marked by loose metrical similarity. Here, for instance, each entry combines molossus and faster feet in the subject with a preponderance of trochees in the counter-subject. Variations in the metrical phrase structure generate a sense of opening, development and closure. Schumann copied this and other polymeters out, and imitated them in words.33 We

30 Neue Folge, 148, 15 March 1839.
31 Tagebücher I 113.
32 Jean Paul, Flegeljahre §8; §15.
33 Tagebücher I 37, 40-1 (nos. 4, 5 and 8), 90-1, and perhaps 69, 77 and 81 (compare 55 and 82), and Jugendbriefe, 95ff (11 November 1829). Schumann’s prose was clearly indebted to Jean Paul: see also for instance Tagebücher I 68, 74 and 78.
know that he saw prosody as inherent in primal forms of speech as in music, noted analogies between speech and fugal structures in music, and excerpted Novalis’ comment that ‘music and poetry may probably be more or less the same’. (Others before him, including Beethoven, may have used poetic prosody in music). I would then compare some of Schumann’s musical rhythms with those of polymeters, and understand in that light his claim to have learnt counterpoint from Jean Paul – drawing out in the fourth of the Intermezzi, op. 4, for instance, the asymmetrical rhythmic patterns, uneven but not random phrase lengths (1+4+1+5+4+1+3), ternary structure, and avoidance of expected closures.

Whatever formal parallels with literature Schumann’s ‘literary’ works may show, or programmatic tendencies, their primary relationship with literature can be seen as an aspect of a work’s ‘poetic’ nature. In ‘poetic’ music, expressive musical features participate in an aesthetic entity which can be understood – in the ‘literary’ works – as generating a kind of symbolism resonant with the literature of Schumann’s culture.

I use ‘expressiveness’, as applied to music (as to a voice or face), to point broadly to an enactment or embodiment of a state, usually of sensibility (though sometimes of a sound or process, for instance). Although claiming that something is expressive invites the question, ‘Of what?’, it allows a response, ‘I cannot quite say, but something like…’. And in these cases what is expressed is not inscribed in or read from the discrete, rule-bound and arbitrary signifiers of semantics and syntax. Instead it is implicated in complex and often fluid configurations; and it can be appreciated despite a difficulty in isolating and freezing the contributory configurations, and in defining how they contribute.

In the ‘literary’ works, expressiveness may reside in for instance aspects of harmony, metre, melody, sonority, form, character, style, or genre (and even visual and tactile aspects, the more plausibly for Schumann in that his normal musical mode of musical appreciation was either playing himself or standing by the piano as someone

\[34\] GSK I 74 (1835, on Berlioz’ phrase structure) and II 261 (‘fugenartig’); Novalis, Schriften, I, 1960, 211 (Mottosammlung I 78); Solomon, Late Beethoven, 2003, 102-34. Compare Watkins, Metaphors of Depth, 2011, 96.

\[35\] Neue Folge, 149 (15 March 1839: the influence of Jean Paul on his Intermezzi may have been in Schumann’s mind because of his recent work on his comparable op. 32). Appel, Schumann und die Dichter, 1991, 13, thinks polymeters may have influenced Schumann’s style, adducing their rhythmic mystification, asymmetrical syntax, and resistance to the tyranny of the bar-line, but (like Otto, Robert Schumann als Jean Paul Leser, 1984, 10) understating their metrical patterning.
else played, with score and hands in sight).\textsuperscript{36} Those aspects are often readily described through metaphors, which are at the same time one way to intimate how musical features can embody for instance patterns of speech, movement or gesture, character or states, or types of process. Moreover, features may interact with one another across a work. Their affinity, development, variation or contrast, for instance, may suggest musical patterns or threads; and these threads, under a metaphoric description, embody what Schumann called ‘a more poetic relationship’ (‘poetischeren Beziehung’), symbolic of dramatic, emotional or psychological states or trajectories, or even of imagery.\textsuperscript{37}

Several thinkers in Schumann’s culture saw symbolism as suggestive or poetic in that sense. For Schiller, for instance, landscape art and instrumental music express ideas not by arbitrary association but through ‘the laws of the symbolising power of imagination’ (‘Gesetzen der symbolisierenden Einbildungskraft’). According to Michaelis in 1805-6, instrumental music can create ideas in a listener’s imagination through ‘symbols and intimations of possible objects, and in particular states of mind’. For Hoffmann, just as in an old-fashioned aria ‘the words are a symbolic indication of inner feeling, so now [in a Lied] the music is the symbol of all the varied emotional implications that the poet’s Lied contains’.\textsuperscript{38} Goethe too remarked in a letter to Zelter of 6 March 1810, which Schumann excerpted in 1838, on a symbolic relation between a piece of music and the text that it sets:

It is a kind of aural symbolism [eine Art Symbolik fürs Ohr] in which the object ... is neither imitated nor portrayed, but is conjured up for the imagination in a quite peculiar and incomprehensible way, in that the signified seems to bear almost no relationship to the signifier.\textsuperscript{39}

Music, that is, does not present objects through systems of signs, but conjures them up such that no codifiable procedure could recover an ‘object’ from the music, or a ‘signified’ from a ‘signifier’. Indeed, the vocabulary of ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’

misrepresents such music. Elsewhere, however, Goethe formulated (alongside his contemporaries) a concept of symbolism suited in that respect to what he saw as the poetic. In that concept – very different from that of Peircean semiotics or Lacanian psychology – an object is transmuted in alchemical ways into something that eludes determinate formulation:

Symbolism transforms the perceptible into an idea, and the idea into an image, in such a way that the idea within the image always remains infinitely [unendlich] active and unattainable, and, even expressed in all languages, it would still remain inexpressible.

A symbol is not merely a disposable sign for the denotation of something perceptible, but its embodiment or transmutation into a new symbolic or expressive entity. What is symbolised remains limitlessly active in the symbol, beyond grasping through verbal formulations. Goethe elsewhere calls such symbolism ‘the nature of poetry’. He juxtaposes to his description of symbolism one of allegory:

Allegory transforms the perceptible into a concept, and the concept into an image, but in such a way that the concept always remains confined within the image, completely attainable and contained, and expressible through that image.

Similarly, in a passage which Schumann will have read, Jean Paul discusses symbolism’s linguistic cousin, metaphor. He draws on a long tradition (still living then, if less familiar now), and rests on assumptions akin to those underlying Goethe’s. In this imperfect world, he says, sign and signified, thing and meaning, nature and mind, are sundered, and we reach out intuitively in search of their reintegration:

Just as there is no absolute sign – for every sign is also a thing – so in the finite world there is no absolute thing; rather each thing signifies and has meaning, man’s image in nature as God’s in man. Man dwells here on an isle of spirits; nothing is lifeless or without meaning; voices without form and forms that are silent may belong together, and we can only accept intimations; for everything points out across the spirit isle, out into an unknown sea.

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Such intimations are a divine ‘arm of love which joins spirit to nature like an unborn child to his mother’, and to it we are indebted for ‘that little poetic flower’, the metaphor. Jean Paul’s own floral metaphor then blooms in both a restatement and an exemplification of his point: ‘how lovely that metaphors ... are thought to resemble the flowers that so sweetly decorate body and spirit, like colours of the mind, or minds that blossom’. Mixing his metaphors, and echoing his claim that art ‘trans-substantiates’ extraneous material into the poetic, he also calls metaphor ‘the mind’s trans-substantiations’ (‘Brotverwandlungen’). Metaphor, like symbolism, does not so much use a sign to signify something else, but by transmutation creates something new, at once sign and thing. Like Goethe again, Jean Paul contrasts his view of ‘metaphor’ with allegory, a ‘degenerate’ and ‘arbitrary’ form. One might say, to relate their point to Schumann, that poetically expressive music is suggestive, like symbolism, while pure formalism may discount symbolic values, and programmatic understanding specifies an allegory.

In Schumann’s ‘literary’ works, I will accordingly draw out previously unexplored musical threads (for instance in the thematic organisation of Carnaval, patterns of sonorities in Fantasiestücke, a pervasive motivic germ in Kreisleriana, and peculiar rondo forms in Nachtstücke), interpret them as expressive or symbolic, and suggest juxtapositions with literary ideas and images. These juxtapositions imply not that the music refers to something external to itself, but that it exploits something more like a resonance with the literature: resonances emphasise (or ‘amplify’) expressive musical features and enrich them, drawing out their implicit musical relationships. (The ‘resonance’ simile is explored further in Chapter 10). The music and titles suggest aspects of literature; those in turn highlight or make sense of particular musical features under particular descriptions, and of threads of continuity between them that might otherwise be under-appreciated. Occasionally these may include formal features paralleled in a particular book; more often a book may suggest clusters of images and ideas from the culture in whose light inherently musical features across a work can be understood. Liberated from the urge to track a programme from the particular book, a listener can interpret the music as following its own musical logic.

Chapters 5-6 and 8-9 treat each work in that sense, in a spirit consonant with my reading of Schumann’s aesthetics, but not by reference to it. Their choices of analytical and metaphorical descriptions for musical features and of literary juxtapositions are guided by a sense of each work as a whole, sparked by the

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43 Jean Paul, Vorschule §51.
imagination, and tested against historical evidence; but no interpretation or analysis, even where convincing, can be demonstrable or incontestable; none is complete or final. I take the works in order of composition, so as to bring out developments in Schumann’s style, some of which are sketched more abstractly in an intervening Chapter 7, to adumbrate something of a turning-point between the Fantasiestücke and Kreisleriana. But I begin with Carnaval, even though it offers no hint of a relationship to a book and so remains an outlier in this thesis.
Schumann’s *Carnaval* – conceived in 1834, and published in summer 1837 – is steeped in the Italian carnival. The work evokes carnival settings, including theatre, street and masked dances; its titles name carnival characters including clowns and artists; its vestigial plot and vivid images, like the dizzyingly humorous spirit that pervades its musical style, are at home in a carnival. The result, Schumann’s own distinctive confection, takes its place in a German tradition of the Italian carnival alongside Gozzi, Goethe, Tieck and Hoffmann’s story, *Prinzessin Brambilla* (henceforward abbreviated to *Brambilla*). Schumann makes no overt reference to that tale, but its relevance – mooted in French and Italian publications, as noted in Chapter 1, but never to my knowledge registered in print in German, American or British work – is worth exploring. *Carnaval* develops its own characters, trajectory, images, ideas, spirit and forms; but these make richer sense to me against the background of the Italian carnival (such as *Brambilla* presents) than of a social ball or a dance sequence.

*The literary carnival*
Goethe described the carnival he saw in Rome in 1788, and much of his description re-emerged in *Brambilla* and in *Carnaval*: promenades, dances and theatre; the *commedia dell’arte*; suspended social norms, cross-dressing (‘alluring hermaphroditic shapes’) and flirting; and a cast including masked lovers, magicians, a strutting Capitano, and German artists.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Goethe, *Werke*, vol. 6, 1973, 500-4, 511-12. Excerpts are at Appendix 5.
Most of these features are prominent too in the plays of the Venetian Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806). His drama was aristocratic but popular, conservative in philosophy but cavalier in mixing genres. Aesthetic criticism sits alongside dramatic metamorphoses; there are love stories and dances; city streets jostle courts and fairyland, mixing kings, nobles, celebrities, clowns, wizards and a charlatan (figure 1, page 90). The plays revel in stock motifs, including confusion of identity and ultimate recognition, and adopt a traditional theatrical plot structure, with trials and quarrels resolved in a triumphant concluding assembly or dance. Gozzi’s plays became popular in Germany, admired by Mozart, Schiller, Jean Paul and Hoffmann; though there is no evidence that Schumann knew them, he must have known they were admired.  

Tieck’s early plays were a channel by which the spirit of Gozzi entered German literature. His *Die verkehrte Welt* (1796-97), true to its title, shows a world turned upside down in carnivalesque fashion. Like Gozzi, Tieck re-affirmed the tradition of the *commedia dell’arte*, with its improvised comedy, which earnest spirits in the eighteenth century had sought to banish. His plays were also spectacular examples of aspects of early Romantic aesthetics, such as irony, alienation, self-reflexiveness, and defamiliarisation.

Two decades later, Hoffmann’s *Brambilla* echoes Gozzi in myriad ways, and acknowledges his significance in a ‘Preface’, itself modelled on Gozzi; but it also leans on Goethe and on Idealist thought. Carnival shapes its narrative, characters, images and ideas, its lacunae and failures of logic, and its bewildering dislocations of narrative level, form and genre. The book makes the reader question how far it integrates its disparate genres, and if there is an answer, it lies in indulgent, humorous self-recognition, irony and love, which laugh off dislocations, aesthetic and personal. It frequently calls itself ‘a Capriccio’, and its capricious nature prompted Heine to remark that if it ‘does not make your head spin, you have no head’.

**Schumann’s Carnaval**

Schumann’s Carnaval is equally capricious. What gives the music energy and (loose) shape, paradoxically and aptly, is the humorously centrifugal spirit of carnival: a world

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2 Schiller translated Gozzi’s *Turandot*; Jean Paul, *Vorschule*, §§25, 32, 36, 39; Hoffmann, *Fantasiestücke* 135 and 698-704. Schumann’s 1840 review of an opera (*GSK* I 487-9) gives no clue that the libretto’s source was a play by Gozzi, even though he must have read Hoffmann’s summary of it (‘Der Dichter und der Komponist’, *Serapions-Brüder*, 1963, 84-87).

in which everything is also something else. Its structure is bewildering, and its titles and thematic patterns a wilful mystification. It is a kaleidoscope of genre and style – the fantastical, the witty, the humorous, the sentimental, the mock-portentous and the incongruous. And it plays on confused identities, divergent images and love-tangles, moving through recognition towards a triumphantly unbalanced conclusion in a soufflé of love and art, magic and humour.

**Structure and key**

Schumann’s diaries describing its early period of composition in 1834-35 juxtapose strands of love and art, and feature Ernestine von Fricken, Clara Wieck and Chopin:

Ernestine and Clara … September – union with Ernestine … Increasing depression – exchanged letters with Ernestine.

1835 … continued working on *Carnaval* … Release from Ernestine in summer and autumn – oh! – With Clara every day…

Chopin – Clara’s eyes and her love … The first kiss in November – broke with Ernestine.4

These themes and characters, some lightly disguised, are among those suggested in *Carnaval*. Its pieces’ titles evoke, in a mystifying confection of fact and fiction, a cast from the *commedia dell’arte* and from Schumann’s circle of artists (‘Florestan’, ‘Eusebius’, ‘Chiarina’, ‘Chopin’, ‘Estrella’), along with a magician of the violin (‘Paganini’), disparate images (Sphinxes, butterflies, dancing letters), dances, and some vestigially suggested events (‘Réplique’, ‘Reconnaissance’, ‘Aveu’, ‘Promenade’). This makes up a dizzying succession of fleeting scenes, too many to convey a clear shape or structure; it was noted at the time, in otherwise opposed reviews of 1837, that ‘some dances break through, then all is once again swirling confusion’, in what seems ‘a pot-pourri’:5

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4 *Tagebücher*, I 420-1.
Table 5.1: Carnaval’s titles and keys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piece</th>
<th>Main key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subdominant ← Tonic → dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and related minor keys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Préambule’</td>
<td>A♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Pierrot’</td>
<td>E♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Arlequin’</td>
<td>B♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Valse Noble’</td>
<td>B♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Eusebius’</td>
<td>E♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Florestan’</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Coquette’</td>
<td>B♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Réplique’</td>
<td>G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Sphinxes’</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Papillons’</td>
<td>B♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Lettres Dansantes’</td>
<td>E♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Chiarina’</td>
<td>C minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Chopin’</td>
<td>A♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Estrella’</td>
<td>F minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Reconnaissance’</td>
<td>A♭ major/C♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Pantalon et Colombine’</td>
<td>F minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Valse Allemande’</td>
<td>A♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Paganini’</td>
<td>F minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Aveu’</td>
<td>F minor/A♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Promenade’</td>
<td>D♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Pause’</td>
<td>A♭ major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Marche des Davidsbündler’</td>
<td>A♭ major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tonal pattern, moving from A♭ major to dominant regions and back, is too bland to shape the work significantly, its only distinctive feature a move to C♭ major in ‘Reconnaissance’. The move is supported by related harmonies in the opening and closing pieces, which create a well-marked frame.

**Thematic patterns**

Those pieces also introduce and recapitulate the main thematic material – which forms, however, only a loose web of patterns in the intervening pieces. I pick out some strands from that web, tracing their origins in ‘Préambule’.⁶

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The first strand stems from a repeated anacrusis, stepping up from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{6}$, that opens ‘Préambule’ like a fanfare:

Example 5.1: Schumann, Carnaval, ‘Préambule’, bars 1-6

\begin{align*}
\text{Anacrusis} & \quad \text{Descent from } \hat{5} \text{ (gapped)}(\text{bass}) \\
\text{Quasi maestoso} & \quad \text{Préambule} \\
\end{align*}

The anacrusis recurs in the key of C$\flat$ major (bars 10-13) and in the home major again (14-17); but first a contrasting version in the minor (bars 7-10) – from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{6}\flat$ – borrows from Schubert’s ‘Sehnsuchtswalzer’:

Example 5.2: Schumann, Carnaval, ‘Préambule’, bars 7-17

\begin{align*}
\text{Anacrusis} & \quad \text{Stepwise descent from } \hat{6}\flat \\
\text{Closing step} & \\
\end{align*}

The contrast between $\hat{6}$ and $\hat{6}\flat$, highlighting dissonance or incompletion in the latter, looms large in the first half of the work. As the $\hat{6}\flat$ leads towards A$\flat$ minor, and then C$\flat$ major, it is implicated in both a central thematic contrast and what turns out to be the
tonal crux of the work in ‘Reconnaissance’. A variant characterises ‘Pierrot’, with \( \hat{6} \) and then \( \hat{5} \) in the tenor, *piano*, followed in the next bar by the major version, *forte* (bars 2-4 etc.). In ‘Valse Noble’, the bass opens by hitting the dissonant \( \hat{6} \), and waits a bar before resolving on \( \hat{5} \). The contrasting step from \( \hat{6} \) to \( \hat{5} \) is withheld in the melody in bars 4-5, and only granted at the very end (38-9: example 5.7). A similar contrast marks ‘Florestan’, is replayed in ‘Coquette’ in a different spirit, and develops further in ‘Réplique’.\(^7\) The contrast between \( \hat{6} \) and \( \hat{5} \) seems to suggest continuities of personality or state of mind in the characters of the first half; it disappears in the sequence from ‘Chiarina’ to ‘Promenade’.

Steps up – the anacruses – opened both major and minor strains at the start of ‘Préambule’, but are missing from the concluding ‘Marche’. A similar step up opens the second strain in ‘Pierrot’ (bars 8-9 etc.), and ‘Réplique’; steps up close ‘Estrella’, ‘Pantalon et Colombine’ and ‘Promenade’, with varied gestural implications. Meanwhile a *sforzando* step down ends the minor strain of the opening of ‘Préambule’ (bar 10: example 5.2), while the equivalent step down in the major (23-4) ends the first section of the piece (compare ‘Coquette’ bars 5, 9, etc.). Similar steps down mark closes particularly in the second half of the work – for instance in ‘Lettres Dansantes’ (bars 12 and 16), ‘Chiarina’ (end), ‘Estrella’ (4, 12), etc., ‘Valse Allemande’ (end) and ‘Aveu’ (end); all except the last are emphasised or *forte*. This shift of weight from opening steps to closing may help to shape the work.

Fourfold repeated octaves open the *Più Moto* section of ‘Préambule’ (bars 24-26), and these recur repeatedly (35-6, 41-2, 55-55) to set its episodes in motion, along with variants (39, 45, 59-60). They are repeated in ‘Marche’, where a dotted variant with a descending sixth forms a contrasting gesture that shuts off the sequence (bars 102, 106, 108, 198, 202, 204-224; compare ‘Estrella’ 3, 7, 11, 31, 35).

Another strand involves ascents and descents, again generally from \( \hat{5} \), \( \hat{6} \) or \( \hat{5} \). Beneath the rising opening theme of ‘Préambule’ lies a gapped descent (bars 3-7), and a scalar descent runs from F\( \flat \) to C\( \flat \) in the minor (9-10) (examples 5.1-2). Later, an ascending quaver figure tries to get off the ground:

\(^7\) In ‘Florestan’ \( \hat{6} \), G, in B\( \flat \) major falls to \( \hat{5} \) in bars 8 and 18, while in bars 2, 4, 12, 14, 56 etc. (in G minor), G falls to F\( \flat \). In ‘Coquette’, see bars 5, 13 and 15. In ‘Réplique’, the opening minor anacrusis contrasts with major steps in 1 etc.. ‘Lettres Dansantes’ brings back the pitch of the contrasted opening anacruses of ‘Préambule’, but reversed and in different tonal contexts (bars 11-12 and 15-16).
Example 5.3: Schumann, Carnaval, ‘Préambule’, bars 56-62

Stepwise ascents

\[\begin{array}{c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Semitone descents (bass)} \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

Only in the presto conclusion (bars 114ff) does such an ascent achieve lift-off, echoing the opening fanfare’s move from \(\frac{5}{2}\) to \(\frac{6}{2}\) (E\(\flat\) to F), and turbo-charged by metrical dislocation (example 5.5). Meanwhile, the ascents of bars 56-62 have an answering scalar descent in a conflicting metre (62-67), and this seems a source of a flowing scalar ascent and descent in ‘Florestan’ (8-10 and 18-22), setting major against minor with different metres. Other stepwise ascents or more often descents from \(\frac{5}{2}\) (sometimes \(\frac{6}{2}\) or \(\frac{\flat 6}{2}\)) are salient in many pieces, for instance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First half</th>
<th>Second half</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Arlequin’ 7-8 etc.</td>
<td>‘Chiarina’ 1-6, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Valse Noble’ 1-7 etc. (bass : ex. 5.7), (9-14 etc.)</td>
<td>‘Chopin’ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Eusebius’ 3-4, 7-8</td>
<td>‘Reconnaissance’ 12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Florestan’ 30-36</td>
<td>‘Pantalon et Colombine’ 5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Réplique’ 9-14</td>
<td>‘Valse Allemande’ 5-8, 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Compare ‘Aveu’ 5-8]  

Meanwhile, ‘Préambule’ introduces descents and ascents by semitones. The former is accented in the bass in bars 55-62 (example 5.3); the latter occurs in 87-90 (bass) and in 71-78:
Example 5.4: Schumann, Carnaval, ‘Préambule’, bars 71-76

Semitone ascent (treble and bass)

These recur in ‘Marche’ (bars 81-89, 103-4, 178-87, 195-96) and throughout the work, for instance in:

- ‘Eusebius’ 1-3, 9-13, 17-21 (bass)
- ‘Arlequin’ 25-28 (tenor)
- ‘Florestan’ 31 etc.
- ‘Papillons’ 17-20, 25-26
- ‘Estrella’ 5-11, 13-16
- ‘Valse Allemande’ 13-16
- ‘Aveu’ 2-3
- ‘Chiarina’
- ‘Pause’ 1-4

This strand, like the others, is ordinary enough to remain largely below the level of consciousness. But sometimes a passage seems coloured by the semitone ascent (‘Papillons’ bars 17-20, or the middle of ‘Estrella’), or a stepwise descent (‘Chiarina’); and something like a dialectic emerges between ascent and descent – between pieces, as in ‘Chiarina’ and ‘Estrella’, or within a piece, as in ‘Eusebius’ (bars 1-3 versus 3-4), the middle of ‘Valse allemande’ (10, 12 & 14 versus 13-16), or ‘Aveu’ (5-8, upper versus lower voices). This dialectic finds fulfilment and resolution in the conclusion of ‘Promenade’, which, as the first extended conclusion in the work, has special prominence, reconciling conflicting metres and modes.

It is characteristic that Schumann lays weight on a metrical strand. Thus ‘Préambule’, in \( \frac{3}{4} \), hints at \( \frac{3}{2} \) in bars 29ff and 49ff, and more strongly in 62-6 and 114-135.\(^8\) There, the left hand suggests \( \frac{2}{3} \) and the right \( \frac{3}{2} \), one beat out of sync. Three bars contain four beats each (101, 120 & 128); and in 120 and 128, the extra beat is what brings the metre back into brief \( \frac{3}{4} \) consonance before it flies apart once more:

\(^8\) Compare Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces*, 87.
'Arlequin' may echo this metrical imbalance, as may 'Florestan'. Its change of pace in bars 18-22 appears more or less to double the length of each bar (with a thematic pattern related to that of the end of 'Préambule'); it too has in its last four bars the wrong number of beats for the time signature. 'Promenade', having systematically set $\frac{3}{2}$ in bars 1-4 against $\frac{3}{4}$ in 5-8 etc., then resolves their opposition in its extended conclusion (example 5.9). 'Marche', however, though opening in a $\frac{3}{4}$ that sounds like a march, ends by recharging the metrical centrifuge of 'Préambule'.

The various motivic patterns are of a sort which in Mozart, for instance, would have been mere opening gestures or the simple thematic fare of closing sections. But here, in a carnivalesque inversion of convention, they acquire greater significance. They are the material of 'Préambule', enrich the individual character of groups of
pieces, and though fugitive rather than salient, they give the work a dilute, subliminal sense of continuity and loose shape.

Sphinxes as masks
The patterns are not unconnected with the more famous Sphinxes, with their more blatant thread. Sometimes a Sphinx introduces a motivic pattern; sometimes there is a contrapuntal relationship;\(^9\) the patterns emphasise \(\flat \ Oscar\), and in the first piece to start with a Sphinx, the E\(\flat\) major ’Pierrot’, the Sphinx’s ‘H’ is \(\flat 1\) .

Each of the three ‘Sphinxes’ is a sequence of notes (E\(\flat\), C, B, A; A\(\flat\), C, B; and A, E\(\flat\), C, B), appearing mysteriously in archaic notation halfway through the score.\(^10\) They may portend personal and musical profundities, but are in truth masks, mock-runes and mystification. In German notation the first contains the musical letters of Schumann’s own name, S-C-H-A. A great composer might use the notes B-A-C-H to name himself, as Bach did in the *Art of Fugue*; for a young unknown to promise a composition around the letters of his own name has chutzpah. In the event, the threatened hubris remains insubstantial, as this Sphinx initiates none of the pieces in the set. But it is not quite inaudible: it can be heard in the ‘Marche’, in the bass in the first beats of bars 108-110 and – after a rest – of 111:

*Example 5.6: Schumann, Carnaval, ‘Marche’, bars 107-112*

Perhaps the Sphinx, appearing evasively here, but nowhere openly (not even in a piece called ‘A.S.C.H. – S.C.H.A.’), shows Schumann casting himself as akin to Hoffmann’s

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\(^10\) They are discussed by most commentators on the work, for instance in Rosen, *Romantic Generation*, 1996, 221-22. It is in the spirit of the work that it is in fact composed on five notes, though the title page declares ‘four’, as noted by Giani, ‘L’Italia di Robert Schumann’, 2001, 29, note 67.
Celionati. For Celionati is presented both as a character in the tale and as the master puppeteer who invisibly controls its action: its author, Hoffmann, in another guise. As Jean Paul wrote, ‘the humorist is his own quartet from the commedia dell’arte, and the director as well’. In an ironic self-image for an artist, Celionati is often called a charlatan (‘Scharlatan’, which Schumann’s S-C-H-A might conceivably also suggest).

The second and third Sphinxes are spelled in German As-C-H and A-Es-C-H respectively. Since Asch was Ernestine’s birthplace, Schumann seems to invite us to see them as keys to an autobiographical love element in the work. But either the second or third Sphinx occurs in almost every piece, whatever the character presented in the title – in ‘Florestan’ and in ‘Chiarina’ as much as in ‘Estrella’. So these two Sphinxes are not exclusively associated with ‘Estrella’, let alone with Ernestine. *Carnaval* is more a work of art with suggestions of autobiography than a work that encodes a detailed personal history. (Might the Sphinxes even have begun life in late summer 1834 suggesting other characters too? Schumann spoke then of ‘three names’, meaning Henriette, Ernestine and Ludwig Schunke, as ‘musical names, which I will call “Scenes”, and referred to Henriette Voigt as an ’A♭ major soul’ (‘As dur Seele’): As could then represent ‘Aspasia’, H Henriette (both Henriette), S-C-H Ludwig Schunke, C perhaps Clara and Chopin.

The Sphinxes also occur in the words ‘Fasching’ and ‘Schwänke’.

Nor are the Sphinxes musically profound. They support rather than generate *Carnaval*’s (rather bland) overall tonal trajectory. The notes of the third Sphinx, A, E♭ and C, all fit a harmony of V in B♭ major, and A and C fit that of V in G minor; and so it appears in most of the pieces of the first half, ‘Pierrot’ to ‘Papillons’. In the second Sphinx, A♭ and C are part of I in A♭ major and F minor, and of V of D♭ major. Thus this Sphinx appears, its first two notes harmonised accordingly, in ‘Préambule’ in A♭ major (in the bass at bars 92-4 and 96-98), and in most of the pieces of the second half, which from ‘Chopin’ onwards are largely in A♭ major and its relative minor, F minor, or in one case in D♭ major. But the Sphinxes do not drive this tonal trajectory or the main shifts of tonality. The first piece that the third Sphinx opens, ‘Pierrot’, is in E♭ major.

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11 One might conceivably hear the Sphinx in ‘Florestan’ (bars 49-50, and again in 53-4), taking the alto A with the soprano H, or in ‘Eusebius’ (1-2), finding the final A in the bass. Daverio, *Robert Schumann*, 1997, 140 aptly describes Schumann as ‘an unseen presence, a master puppeteer regulating the motions of his creations from behind the scenes’.


13 *Neue Folge* 54 of 22 August (‘Aspasia’) and 56 of 4 September.
which can scarcely be generated by that Sphinx, because it contains the A♭ of B♭ major, not the A♭ of E♭ major. The second Sphinx does not restore A♭ major with its arrival in ‘Lettres Dansantes’, which is instead in E♭ major again, and the only piece whose tonality is related to its ‘H’ or B is ‘Chiarina’, in C minor; but there the accompaniment introduces the B (bar 1) before the Sphinx does. The Sphinxes do no more than support an emphasis on C♭ major dramatized in ‘Préambule’ long before any Sphinx appears.

Moreover, they show no progressive thematic transformation or development; they do not reveal deeper unity in surface diversity. Instead they sit on varied themes, parading a static surface unity on top of the themes’ underlying diversity in harmonic function, pitch shape, rhythmic shape, and accents.¹⁴ Musically, it is a carnivalesque inversion of the procedures of thematic development traditional in the decades before Schumann; poetically, it suggests stereotyped static masks, beneath which lie individual, mobile faces – as in Brambilla fixed and recognisable pantomime masks sit upon the labile identities of the main characters.¹⁵

Schumann talked in 23 August 1837 of ‘deciphering’ the work; a letter of 3 July 1836 used the same concept of the Sphinxes.¹⁶ The latter implies only two Sphinxes at that stage (presumably omitting the first), and with one printed in each of two volumes the enigma would be all too easy. Indeed his mock-portentous Sphinxes are almost always audible and visible, appearing in most pieces in the first few notes of the melody, and in only a few later or not at all – assuming, as I do, that the notes of a Sphinx normally appear sequentially (with other notes intervening only in ‘Eusebius’), in the given order (out of order only in ‘Valse Noble’), and in one voice. (Admittedly, no two critics agree exactly where a Sphinx appears, or what constitutes an appearance, though since this is Schumann, and carnival, one should not insist on rules.) If Schumann’s Sphinxes are a cipher-script, the key is on the surface; like Oedipus’ perhaps, they are not the locus of the true enigma, the nature of the musical process; instead they operate as a conjuror’s sleight of hand to distract us from the other motivic patterns that recur through the work and contribute more to its shape.

Genre
As befits carnival, Brambilla confounds lyrical love-story, fairy-tale, comedy, parody, aesthetic treatise and philosophical spoof. Carnaval too is a confusion of genres. It is in

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¹⁵ Brambilla, 298.
¹⁶ Neue Folge, 92, and 419.
part a 'Maskentanz', a dance of masks, as 'Valse Noble' and 'Valse Allemande' suggest and as Schumann described it.\textsuperscript{17} For Goethe, dance was central to carnival, 'generally expressing something characteristic of pantomime' (figure 2, page 91). \textit{Brambilla} too features carnival dances; and the prints with which it is interspersed – made after the etchings of the seventeenth-century artist Jacques Callot, which it calls 'capriccios' – show carnival scenes, often dances (some are at figures 3-6, page 92).

\textit{Carnaval} is like a dance sequence, but also conveys narrative. It was described in the \textit{Leipziger Tageblatt} of 29 March 1840 – probably by the composer himself – as a 'humorous novel of masks', with characters appearing in 'fleeting musical sketches, between which an escapade seems to unfold' ('sich ein Abenteuer zu entwickeln scheint'). The novel which Schumann had projected in 1831, featuring among others Florestan, Paganini, and Clara, was never written.\textsuperscript{18} If some of its motifs re-emerged instead in \textit{Carnaval}, they have in the process jettisoned well-defined events and causal sequences – and unlike in \textit{Papillons}, the resulting uncertainties are, I think, essential to the conception with its mesmerising instabilities of meaning.

\textit{Carnaval} has elements too of a critical manifesto, pitting a new poetic age against mere sentimentality and mechanical virtuosity, turning classical norms upside down, and raising 'trivial' genres to higher levels through subtlety, parody and wit. Like \textit{Brambilla}, it adopts the self-reflexiveness dear to the Idealist tradition – as though it embodied in music the view of Schumann’s successor at the \textit{Neue Zeitschrift für Musik}, Franz Brendel, that in modern times reflection on music had separated itself from musical practice, splitting the subjective from the objective mind, and so required and made possible a new kind of music in which music and music criticism were re-unified.\textsuperscript{19}

The sense of the work as masked dances, novel and critical manifesto all in one is reinforced by an essay Schumann released on 19 May 1837.\textsuperscript{20} It is a review of recent music, and its post-script exclaims that, 'as I had foreseen', a review of \textit{Carnaval} had said that 'composers should not imagine that by hanging a little tail on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Neue Folge}, 92, 23 August 1837. Compare Reiman, \textit{Schumann's Piano Cycles}, 2004, 77.
\item \textsuperscript{18} GSK II 436, note 440; \textit{Tagebücher} I 339, 342, 379, 381-2.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Whether or not Schumann by 1835 had heard Brendel or others articulate such a view, it was a view characteristic of the age: Dahlhaus, \textit{Klassische und Romantische Musikästhetik}, 1988, 264-267.
\item \textsuperscript{20} GSK I 256-61.
\end{itemize}
thought worth 0 they can turn it into a 9’. Presumably the ‘tail’ is an ironically derogatory term for verbal elements attached to a work – including this essay, which by implication is relevant to Carnaval, whose opus number was to be ‘9’. The pretence that the essay responded to a fictional review of Carnaval, which had not yet appeared, may have been Schumann appropriating the device, famously used by Tieck in Der Gestiefelte Kater, of fictional criticism of a work that has not yet appeared – incidentally thus attaching Carnaval to the tradition of the German revival of Gozzi.

In the essay Florestan reports on ‘the latest art-historical ball at the house of the critic’, attended by the Davidsbündler, at which he falls in love with one of the host’s two daughters, Beda. But she is in love with the absent Chopin, whose portrait she shows Florestan. Florestan comments: ‘Chopin, you beautiful robber of hearts, if I had never been jealous of you, I was in that moment’. Beda mistakes Eusebius for Florestan; Florestan does not accept a proposal of marriage to Beda’s prosaic sister; and there is a stand-off with the officious de Knapp, whose musicianship is denigrated by contrast with that of Paganini. In one postscript, de Knapp is routed; in another B-E-D-A is transcribed into musical notes. The essay thus flags the possibility that Carnaval intermingles dance, music criticism and a rectangle of love, throwing in jealousy of Chopin, confusion of identity, the rout of pompous philistines by true artists, and musical rebuses.

Finally, Carnaval is a sequence of comic vignettes, gestures and characters. Its subtitle, ‘scènes mignonnes’, might suggest a magic lantern show of the sort Schumann described in an essay of 1836 as a detailed retrospective poetic mise-en-scène for Schubert’s German Dances – featuring carnival and masked ball encounters. Or the ‘scènes’ could be imagined as tableaux vivants, or the phantasmagoria operated in towns all over Europe (including Hoffmann’s Berlin). And into this mix come theatrical overtones. For theatre was a carnival tradition, for which ‘the Romans’ passion’, Goethe said, ‘was once even greater at carnival time as that was the only time in which it could be satisfied’. Theatre is central to Brambilla, which begins in a setting like a theatrical dressing room; there follows the equivalent of the opening of a comic opera: at the start of the carnival a crowd fills the Corso, accompanied by cymbals, pipes and drums. The plot features the conflict in Rome’s

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21 Schumann borrowed the image from Abrantes: Mottosammlung, IX 66, of 1831-34.
22 GSK I 203.
23 Hoffmann, Fantasiestücke, 263; Warner, Phantasmagoria, 2006, 147-56.
theatres between the *commedia dell’arte* and the earnest theatre of alexandrines (which Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* also pits against one another).\(^{25}\) Moreover, in a refraction of its own story, *Brambilla* summarises a theatrical pantomime of Colombina and Arlecchino – the initial helplessness of the lovers, their avowal of love, the routing of Pantalon, the magical transformation of the scene and the final triumphal procession.\(^{26}\) Like carnival and *Brambilla*, *Carnaval* too has theatrical aspects. With its *Maestoso* opening fanfares, dance rhythms and ‘low’ musical style, ‘Préambule’ gives many signs of a theatrical opening ensemble or overture; the theatrical frame is rounded off with the two final pieces; and into that theatrical frame step the work’s masks, dances and divergent images in a series of sketches. In April 1836, Schumann had in mind ‘a dozen Faschingsschwänke’, and advertised the work as ‘Fasching. Schwänke’.\(^{27}\) ‘Schwänke’, often translated in English as ‘pranks’ or ‘jests’, has connotations rather of comic theatrical sketches featuring stock characters and motifs. There above all, and in a wealth of comic gestures, lies *Carnaval*’s character.

Confused identities
The fanfare of bars 1-6 of ‘Préambule’, with its rising melody, and harmonic ascent from IV through I to V, is an opening call for attention, like a rising curtain in a theatre. But it is immediately repeated, as though ignored the first time, and countermanded by a depressive closing down in bars 7-10: it has to be reasserted even more emphatically in 10-24, as though in a comic altercation, like that in Tieck’s *Der gestiefelte Kater*, as to whether the show is ready to start. The succession of short musical episodes in bars 25-109 is wound up and set in motion by the repeated octave gesture. It offers a wealth of gestural comedy. A busy motif’s repetitions and imitations (bars 25-35) whirl and jostle ineffectively, like acts crowding the wings and treading on each other’s toes; the following sections, which show features of transitions, can be heard as those acts each crossing the stage and hurried off by a successor. After a precipitate *vivo* with the second Sphinx, a *presto* conclusion arouses expectations of theatrical action to come.

But what appears first on the stage after the *tour de force* of ‘Préambule’ is the solitary figure of ‘Pierrot’, a clown from the *commedia dell’arte*. The *piano* opening phrase, which introduces the third Sphinx in the tenor, with \(\flat6\) in bar 2, can be heard as depressive. (Schumann described that Sphinx, in one manifestation, as ‘very

\(^{26}\) *Brambilla* 212, 237-8.
\(^{27}\) *Neue Folge* 419 (13 April 1836), and 537, note 505.
pained’, ‘sehr schmerzvoll’).  A contrasting forte motif (possibly echoing ‘Préambule’ bars 119-20 etc.) reinstates ♯ in place of ♭, but disrupts the metre with a clownish stumble; it closes ‘Marche’ (bars 255-61) equally assertively. ‘Arlequin’, another clown from the commedia dell’arte, opens with dominant 7th harmonies suggesting an arrival on stage in mid-act. His two-bar routine is repeated in four different positions in bars 1-8; the staccato octaves in 7-8 seem more mechanical each time they too are repeated. But bars 1-24 evoke an agile, not to say double-jointed, creature. Do they begin with the upbeat to twelve bars of \( \frac{3}{4} \), or to alternate bars of \( \frac{1}{4} \) and \( \frac{2}{4} \), or to twenty-four bars of \( \frac{3}{4} \) as marked, but displaced by a beat? Both ‘Pierrot’ and ‘Arlequin’ – with their limited repertoire, thematically and harmonically, and mechanical repetitions – are artificial by contrast with the ‘real’ characters that follow. But in each there is also a superfluous passage when an actor appears from behind the mask: in bars 40-9 of ‘Pierrot’, the melancholy act gives way to gestures suggesting applause, its acknowledgement, and a bow; in bars 25-29 of ‘Arlequin’, the act softens into more intimate uncertainty as the metre relaxes into \( \frac{3}{4} \).

‘Valse Noble’ mediates between these stock theatrical clowns and the ‘real’ characters, ‘Eusebius’ and ‘Florestan’. Its middle section shifts into a new world, that of the social ball, to suggest something inward and sensitive, expressed in the molto teneramente marking, G minor orientation, poignant disords, aspiring rise in the main melody, and a tenor voice brought out by staccato marks. Clara once wrote of Schumann’s waltzing: ‘How beautifully you danced, so calmly, so nobly – exactly as you are’. When the opening section returns, its original jolts are softened: the second-beat accent that upset bar 8 is missing in 32, and the sudden silence in the treble on the first beat of bar 5 (and indeed 29) is filled in by the continuous melody of 37-39:

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28 Neue Folge 57 of September 1834.
31 Briefwechsel, I 107 of 2 March 1838.
So some mediation between worlds occurs. The next piece, ‘Eusebius’, is more personal than the clowns preceding the ‘Valse’.\(^{32}\) There is a delicate and irregular interplay between the voices, with intricate metrical super-positions.\(^{33}\) Soft lower notes fall through the tracery of the treble. The absence of pedal and sotto voce marking make for a reserved tone. By contrast, bars 17-24 introduce warmer resonances: the pedal is held down and sonorous chords in the bass – in 17-20 mainly resonant tenths – are spread. ‘Florestan’ on the other hand is thematically fragmented, metrically disrupted, and conflicted between a *passionato* G minor that is never firmly established and the *leggiero* B♭ major of bars 8-10 and 18-20. Those major passages develop a motif which on its second appearance is marked ‘(Papillon?)’, as though Florestan stumbled upon a memory of love from a distant past (represented here by Schumann’s earlier *Papillons*, op. 2). Its unification of the ascending and descending scalar patterns remains only a fragmentary memory, however, until fulfilment in ‘Promenade’. From bar 30 an upper voice descends from \(\text{schenker}\), highlighting by its rests the pitches E♭, D, C and B♭ that echo the *forte* motif from ‘Pierrot’, as though the clown were contained within a figure from ‘real’ life.\(^{34}\)

Just from the point where there is a suggestion of the first Sphinx, the piece hurtes towards melodic and harmonic disintegration, and breaks off, out of metre,

\(^{32}\) ‘Florestan’ and ‘Eusebius’ are ‘knightly’ names (compare ‘Ritter’ in *Zeitung für die Elegante Welt*, Nr. 185, 22 September 1837, 740, reproduced in *Tagebücher*, II 464, note 92), and may be introduced by a ‘Valse Noble’ in part because they succeed the clowns as nobles and clowns alternate on Gozzi’s stage.

\(^{33}\) 7 on 2 (bars 1-3, 5-7 and 13-15); 4 on 2 (bars 4, 8 and 16); 5 on 1, plus 3 on 1 (bars 9-10); 5 plus 3 on a triplet (bar 11); 5 plus 2 (with a grace note) on a triplet (bar 12).

\(^{34}\) As pointed out by Kaminsky, *Principles of Formal Structure*, 213 and 216.
with resolution in neither harmony nor melody. Closure is only provided by the opening three bars of ‘Coquette’, which bring back a consonant $\frac{3}{4}$ metre, and a satisfactory B♭ major cadence (bars 2-3).³⁵ That opening is in turn repeated at the close of the piece, and develops into the opening of ‘Réplique’. But there the cadence is progressively weakened, with more extended, expressive and indefinite cadential phrases. Lower and upper voices engage in a tonally unsettled dialogue, moving from B♭ major with strong G minor colouring to D minor with E♭ major colour, touching on C minor, and finally wavering before ending on G minor, a key which is not home. The soprano accompanies the lower voice, alternating sympathy with the laughing motif of ‘Coquette’. It can be seen as a courteous but fruitless exchange between the ‘Coquette’ and a mask, presumably ‘Florestan’. Its absence of tonal closure and slowing pace leaves the first half of Carnaval incomplete, with no delivery on the expectations aroused in ‘Préambule’.

Though the titles in that first half suggest five different characters, none has a firm identity. The first two clowns allow their masks to slip to reveal a human face beneath; ‘Eusebius’ and ‘Florestan’ are familiar as alter egos of Schumann, and as Doppelgänger; and the latter has something in common with the clowns, and is flagrantly incomplete, closing only in the piece that follows. The Idealist carnival tradition helps us to see, behind these four male characters, the suggestion of a single thread of psychological development, and in the sequence from ‘Eusebius’ to ‘Réplique’ a vestigial story of confused identity and loneliness that could give rise to that development. In Brambilla, for instance, the protagonist Giglio is an overblown tragic actor, in love with the poor seamstress Giacinta. He is depressed, unstable and incomplete without his love; he suffers from a split personality (‘chronic dualism’), having adopted, or had foisted on him, the ‘noble’ character of the (presumably fictive) Assyrian Prince Cornelio Chiapperi. The Prince, in search of the (equally fictive?) Princess Brambilla, adopts the pantomime disguise of the strutting Captain Pantalon to join the carnival – unless it is Pulcinella behind Pantalon’s mask, or even Giglio himself.³⁷ Giglio sometimes believes himself the Prince’s rival for Brambilla’s love; and

³⁵ Its fluttering waltz motif (especially 17ff), suggestive perhaps of theatrical dancers, may recall those of ‘Préambule’ (bars 26-52, 80-85, 102-09) and ‘Florestan’ 5-6 etc..

³⁶ Compare Wadsworth, ‘Directional Tonality’, 2012. (Chailley, Carnaval, 1971, 16-22, recalls how Giglio searched for Brambilla along the Corso, ‘checking every female mask, paying no attention to coquetry’).

³⁷ Pulcinella’s standard prop, adopted by Giglio to woo Brambilla and fight rivals was a wooden dagger (Brambilla 227, 246, 259, 262, 293, 298-9, 317; see figure 3).
whether the Princess and Giacinta are jealous rivals in love or alter egos remains long in doubt. Giglio also intuits an affinity or even identity between himself and the pantomime clown Arlecchino; both the Princess and Giacinta are confused with Arlecchino’s girl, Colombina. These three pairs of identities – the ‘real’, ‘noble’ and pantomime lovers – intertwine in mutually-tangled stories. In the light of Hoffmann’s constellation of Pulcinella (who is also sometimes Pantalon), Arlecchino, Prince Chiapperi and Giglio, Schumann’s ‘Pierrot’, ‘Arlequin’, ‘Eusebius’ and ‘Florestan’ can be seen as varied characters sharing an underlying bond of identity; but the music only works if its characters are seen not as Hoffmann’s but as Schumann’s.38

Divergent images
The pieces that follow, from ‘Sphinxes’ to ‘Lettres Dansantes’, appear to be one non-sequitur after another. ‘Sphinxes’ marks a break. Its title has nothing in common with anything that has come before; nothing settles whether it is to be played. It is an intrusion in the score, as archaic, portentous and mysterious as a rune. The title of the following piece, ‘Papillons’, is another non-sequitur (unless ‘Sphinxes’ punningly suggests night-moths before the daytime butterflies of ‘Papillons’). Worse, it opens with a repeated horn call in the left hand marked *Quasi Corni*, as though to summon an audience back after an interval. What have horn calls to do with butterflies? But the phrases gradually lengthen, from two bars in 1-8, to four in 9-24, and then eight in 25-32;39 the melody, encased in an inner part in 1-8, begins from bar 17 to climb; and in 25-6, the third Sphinx escapes into the upper register as a fluttering melody, in fleeting independence from the metre of the bass, like a butterfly into the light.

The butterfly had varied associations, deriving from a rich tradition in mythology, the visual and literary arts, and science – including love, or the soul, or art, emerging from the grub and flying vulnerably into the light.40 In 1833, after *Papillons* but before *Carnaval*, Schumann copied into his *Mottosammlung* a scientific description

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38 On 15 July 1835 (Robert-Schumann-Haus Zwickau, 280A-2), Schumann congratulated his brother’s widow Emilie on her engagement, teasingly picturing himself as her ‘oldest bridegroom’, with his ‘Italian jealousy’ and a ‘wooden dagger’: traces, conceivably, of Schumann’s reading of *Brambilla*.

39 Brion, *Schumann*, 1954, 170-77, relates *Brambilla*’s themes of identity, duality, masks and love to *Carnaval*. ‘Arlequin’ may sound like a mechanical puppet, as Giglio sometimes was (*Brambilla* 225, 235-6 and 307).


41 See for instance Jean Paul, *Die Unsichtbare Loge*, 7th, 37th, 38th, 48th, 49th, and 52nd Sektors; compare *Fiegeljahre* N∞ 36, 47, 63.
of butterflies as the highest insects, living in light and air, only for love.\textsuperscript{41} In \textit{Brambilla} the image expresses exactly that sort of metamorphosis for Giacinta dreaming of love:

‘When ... the Prince kisses me on both shoulders, you’ll see of course how the loveliest, brightest, most lustrous butterfly wings will sprout in a moment and how I’ll float up high – high in the sky. Ah! That is real joy, to sail through the azure sky with the Prince’.\textsuperscript{42}

At the art-historical ball, Florestan dreams likewise of soaring through the blue sky with Beda. The fragile iridescence of butterflies could also be an emblem of artistic self-fulfilment in a final stage of exuberant beauty. Schumann wrote that ‘a tranquil Psyche with wings folded together has only half her beauty; she must soar into the sky!’; he had described himself as a cocooned artist not yet ready to burst out.\textsuperscript{43} It is in part the sense of a fleeting and fragile beauty, careless of itself, that gives some of Schumann’s early works, including \textit{Papillons} and ‘Papillons’, their youthful charm. (Schubert’s setting of Friedrich Schlegel’s \textit{Der Schmetterling}, D633, has some similarities to ‘Papillons’ in shape and accompaniment: the image there is of the adolescent urged to taste all the beauties of sexual union.)

The title, ‘A.S.C.H. – S.C.H.A. (Lettres Dansantes)’, is a third non-sequitur. The presence of the composer is implicated through the title, though the notes S-C-H-A are nowhere visible. If ‘Papillons’ featured the fugitive, here the music is so dazzlingly static and repetitive as to seem shapeless. The underlying harmony repeats a single progression without strong harmonic movement, and apart from bars 13-16, continuous dominant pedals and chromatic decorations cloud each individual harmony, with relatively few pure chords, and not a single root position tonic chord. The metre and the often dissonant appoggiaturas (bars 1, 5, 9, 13 etc.) give a flickering overlay to this essentially static harmony: the downbeat is constantly unsettled, and the accent or \textit{sf} on the third beats of seven of the first eight bars set up a cross-current of metrical displacement; later (bars 25-32) the right hand, with accents on diminished

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Mottosammlung}, IX 233, from Menzel’s \textit{Naturwissenschaften}, citing Lorenz Oken’s scientific work. Compare Schelling, \textit{Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie} (1799), quoted by Pfau, ‘From Autonomous Subjects’, 2005, 112: sexual maturity is attained only ‘at the peak of individuation’; but the butterfly apparently assumes ‘this ultimate developmental stage solely for the purpose of propagating its species’: ‘nature aims at the annihilation of the individual’.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Brambilla} 302: compare Schumann’s fantasy of early 1836 (\textit{Briefwechsel} II 367, January 1839).

\textsuperscript{43} GSK I 260, 23; \textit{Jugendbriefe}, 200 and 217 (10 January and 2 August 1833); compare GSK I 109, 122 & 128.
chords, is displaced from the left by two beats. The material of bars 1-4 is repeated so often that it becomes difficult to find a shape in the piece; the final chord of bar 32 is not a conclusion, but only sets the entire piece going again. There is no reason for it ever to end; instead it dissolves into the image of ‘Chiarina’. Similarly, in Brambilla, for the lovesick Giglio, reading the script of a bombastic drama, ‘every letter on every page dissolved into an image of the pure and lovely Giacinta’: a spoof, perhaps, of Novalis’ Idealist image of a magical solvent or ‘alkahest’ thrown over our post-lapsarian eyes, so that letters swim, and sign and signified remain apart.\footnote{Brambilla 269; Novalis, \textit{Die Lehrlinge zu Sais}, in \textit{Schriften}, I, 1960, 79. The image of confused letters and words is in Goethe’s \textit{Wilhelm Meister} (III 12, \textit{Werke}, vol. 4, 1973, 177). Schumann wrote in 1840 of Liszt that in his playing ‘sounds and emotions rustled like the letters and concepts in a dictionary whose pages one raffles’: GSK I 479 (compare 122: ‘The letters flicker into one another’). Wackenroder contrasted ‘the sounding sea of music in which doubt and pain is lost’ with ‘the dizzying flicker of words and hieroglyphs’: ‘Die Wunder der Tonkunst’, 131.}

\textit{Conflict}

Now at last the female protagonists appear, bringing rather different confusions from those of the first half. Between them comes ‘Chopin’, who perfectly integrates his muted dissonances of metre, phrase length and harmony with a mildness better fitting the stereotype of the feminine than the masculine. One could see it as ‘Chiarina’’s portrait of ‘Chopin’, like Beda’s in Schumann’s essay; and perhaps it lacks a Sphinx because he is not a masked actor, but either a mere two-dimensional portrait or a real person. Thinking of Chopin’s role in that essay, one may read into the sequence both a composer’s and a lover’s admiring jealousy of him; and listening to Clara’s works of this period (for instance the \textit{Soirées Musicales}) one might feel in them the gravitational attraction for her of Chopin’s music, which she played from age 11 or so, giving it, Schumann thought, ‘almost more meaning than [Chopin] himself’.\footnote{GSK II 287; \textit{Neue Folge} 78-79 (14 September 1836).} The style of her compositions, and even their titles – the \textit{Nocturne}, two Mazurkas, \textit{Ballade} and \textit{Polonaise} in her Op. 6, for instance – suggest a stronger influence from Chopin’s music than from Schumann’s.

‘Chiarina’ wilfully insists on a stress on both the first and third beats of the bar to the very end. ‘Estrella’ mirrors those conflicts, with awkward intervals in the melody, harsh discords (e.g. bars 6, 15, 23), dynamic contrasts (12-13 and 28-9), and abrupt transitions (28-9); in bars 13-28 the metre is conflicted, with every weak beat accented, and treble and bass out of sync. It has ascending phrases in each hand as opposed to ‘Chiarina’’s descents, but both pieces employ the assertive repeated
octaves. If 'Estrella' expresses anything about Ernestine von Fricken, it is perhaps not so much her character, which was 'pure, childlike ..., tender and thoughtful', as Schumann's tortured, 'feverishly conflicted' feelings about her as rival to Clara.\(^{46}\) 'Chiarina', 'Chopin' and 'Estrella' might then form a group showing a tangle of conflicts and tensions like that between Giacinta, the Prince and Brumbilla. Each features \(\text{♭II} \) or its relatives (\(\text{♭II}\) in bar 12 of 'Chopin', \(\text{♭V}^\text{6/} \text{♭V}\) or \(\text{♭II}^\text{6}\) in bar 34 of 'Estrella', \(\text{♭ii}\) in bar 22 of 'Chiarina'), as no other pieces in Carnaval do except 'Lettres Dansantes', where \(\text{♭V}\) appears near the end. This peculiar tonal feature may link 'Lettres Dansantes' to the other three pieces, suggesting continuity between the pieces, or an affinity between the personas involved.

Recognition, resolution and humour
As 'Réplique' had followed the first, largely male group of characters, so 'Reconnaissance' now follows the second, largely female group. But in 'Reconnaissance', unlike 'Réplique', the harmony is settled, the answers complete. It makes an instant contrast to what has gone before: after mainly triple time dances, it is in duple time; after harmonic and metrical tensions, it is a comic and affectation polka. The bubbling gaiety of the A\(\text{♭}\) major opening suggests a half-ironic enjoyment on the part of the music's implied persona of a potentially sentimental style. Bar 9 adapts the 'H' (B or \(\text{♭C}_\text{♭}\)) of the opening Sphinx to turn to A\(\text{♭}\) minor, whence a middle section (17-44) shifts to the relative major, C\(\text{♭}\) (notated as B major). It is the first notated key change within a piece in the entire work, and to the most remote key in the work. The introduction to 'Préambule' adumbrated a similar move from A\(\text{♭}\) major through the tonic minor to replay the opening in C\(\text{♭}\) major in bars 11-14; and at a similar stage (bars 15-16) of the concluding A\(\text{♭}\) major 'Marche' there are also striking chords of C\(\text{♭}\) major. 'Reconnaissance' is in that sense a crux in the tonal structure of the work.

'Réconnaissance' is of course recognition, and the move to B major opens a view into a distant world in which that recognition may occur. The texture clears, after the frothier opening: treble and bass mirror one another in a two-part imitation that develops the simple polka motif, with syncopated triads transparently in the middle: first the soprano leads (bars 17-22), then the bass (28-9), and then they move together (35). Despite the sheen of metrical dissonance, the metre shows no conflict or complexity; instead there is a steady gaze, in contrast with the iridescence of

\(^{46}\) Jugenbriefe, 243 and 259 (2 July and 2 November 1834), and Briefwechsel I 96, 129, 200 (February, March and July 1838).
'Papillons' and the dazzle of 'Lettres Dansantes'. Syncopations, acting like diminutions, with consonant triads, motivic imitations and mirror-inversions in descending sequences give a sense of brimming fulfilment, in music that may suggest reflection in a surface that clarifies to become a mirror.\(^{47}\)

In *Brambilla*, mutual recognition in the mirror of Urdargarten's magic spring brings about the union of Giglio and Giacinta. For the gloomy King and glassily cheerful Queen had seen themselves and each other in the spring's water, and in that mutual recognition ['Erkenntnis'] found a humorous union and a new world of life and pleasure, and conferred it on their people. But thereafter the King and Queen had declined, and the pool had turned murky, and only when it was purified, 'its spring gleaming clear as a mirror', did Giglio and Giacinta likewise through some magic look into the clear, mirror-bright water, ... and as they saw themselves in the pool, there they recognised ['erkennen'] themselves, gazed at one another, broke into laughter ... and fell into one another’s arms in delight.

Through mutual recognition, abetted by love and humour, Prince Chiapperi and Princess Brambilla merge back into Giglio and Giacinta, and so Giglio’s 'chronic dualism' is healed. Hoffmann echoes a lyrical image in Goethe of Dorothea leaving a muddied village spring to find a purer source in which she and Hermann 'saw their images trembling in the blue of the sky, and ... exchanged friendly greetings in the mirror'.\(^{48}\)

As the German artists in Rome suggest in a dialogue with the charlatan, 'the spring of Udar ... is nothing other than what we Germans call Humor'; ... and at the end the spring is equated with the theatre of the *commedia dell’arte*.\(^{49}\) For in Urdargarten as in Rome, what brings about reintegration of personality, union of lovers and a thriving theatre is 'Erkenntnis', or recognition, of the self, an alter ego, or the beloved, in the mirror of art or of lyrical humour. Thus Giacinta and Giglio become a pair of comic actors 'whose deepest essence was true imagination, a true humour ... who were also in a position to recognise [erkennen] this state of mind and feeling objectively, as if in a mirror, and so to have it step out into the real world'.


\(^{48}\) *Brambilla* 256, 289, 320-1 (Hoffmann italicises 'erkennen' and repeats it at 323, 324, 326; compare 256); Goethe, *Hermann und Dorothea*, 7th Canto, *Werke*, vol. 1, 1972, 613.

\(^{49}\) *Brambilla* 258, 324-5.
The German word, ‘erkennen’, conveys knowing, recognising, acknowledging, identifying and realising as no English word can, and Hoffmann’s book plays with its multiple roles in Idealism, as a revelation of self, relatedness, love, destiny and even cosmic harmony. Mirrors, as images of recognition, contain reflection and self-reflection, and potentially infinite self-reflexiveness; they show to the subjective self both an objective self and the external world. They thus encapsulate concerns of variants of Idealism with knowledge, creation, art and the restoration of wholeness, and Brambilla, in which they are prominent, makes fun of these imposing connections.\(^{50}\)

The grand connections had grand ancestry. Luther’s Bible used ‘Erkenntnis’ for the Tree of Knowledge, and for Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, XIII.12, ‘Then shall I know even as I am known’. In Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night, as in The Comedy of Errors, twins are separated by life’s storms, and forced to alter identity and even gender; only recognition, as if in a mirror, can untangle crossed loves and bring unity. Novalis’ Hyacinth dreams that in lifting the veil of the statue of Isis he recognises himself behind it, but sees that the figure is also the higher essence of the girl he has always loved, Rosenblüthe: ‘Every fixed point established in the infinite fluidity [der unendlichen Flüssigkeit] becomes for him a new revelation of the spirit of love [des Genius der Liebe], a new tie between the You and the I.’\(^{51}\) More portentously, Novalis had a voice declare, ‘We sit at the spring of freedom [Quell der Freiheit] and gaze; it is the great magic mirror [Zauberspiegel], in which the whole of creation reveals itself in purity and clarity’. That ‘contemplation, that creative dimension of real satisfaction, deep self-recognition’ (‘jenem schöpferischen Moment des eigentlichen Genusses, des innneren Selbstempfängnisses’), is ‘the original purpose of … existence’, and the artist in his creative contemplation of himself and the world is emblematic of humanity, which sees itself ‘actively reflected in the theatre’; for Novalis saw ‘almost everyone’ as ‘to some degree an artist’. Goethe similarly had had a character say of a poet, ‘How charming it is to reflect oneself to oneself in the mirror of a beautiful mind!’; and Wackenroder said, ‘the human heart learns to recognise itself in the mirror of music’.\(^{52}\)

\(^{50}\) Mirrors are used to describe the spring at Urdar (256, 284, 289, 321), humour (324), the windows of Brambilla’s coach and Colombina’s triumphal carriage (221-2, 238), how Giglio sees himself (280), and a lover’s eyes (219, 274, 304).

\(^{51}\) Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, V.i.275, Comedy of Errors, V.i.420; Novalis, Die Lehrlinge zu Sais, in Novalis, Schriften, I, 1960, 89, 101; V, 1988, 266 (476), 229 (228); compare V 249 (336), and ‘poetry is the proper mode of action of the human mind’: Novalis, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, in Schriften, I, 1960, 287;
More cosmically, in Fichte’s monist version of Idealism, the objective world only appears through the absolute mind’s free activity of self-recognition, as ‘Das Ich’, observing itself, appears to itself as an object (‘Nicht-Ich’); in positing an absolute, unitary and indeterminate self, Fichte leaned on ancient accounts of the way in which an absolute infinite divinity created a determinate and limited contingent world. In Schelling’s version, a dualism of objective and subjective is also an identity, the ‘World-Soul’ (‘Weltseele’), whose self-recognition is a creative act, both free and necessary; and the process is reflected in artistic creation. Jean Paul and A.B. Marx expressed similar analogies between artistic and cosmic creation, the latter with a similarly prominent role for ‘Erkenntnis’ in his musical aesthetics (Chapter 3 above).\textsuperscript{53}

Recognition might also heal mythic fractures. Romantic culture exploited a triadic archetype of primal union, alienation, and the quest for restoration of harmony. In the pristine state, for Novalis, every being was, and was named as, itself; signs and beings were one. Since then, sign and signified have become separated, languages mutually incomprehensible, and poetry and science opposed; ‘an alkahest seems to have been poured over men’s senses ... everything swims in their gaze’. We have had to deal through ‘intimations’ of a ‘cipher-script’ that ‘will not settle in any fixed shapes’ of an understandable language; but in Novalis’ ‘creative Idealism’, true philosophy, science, poetry, fable and dream converge to give glimpses of a restored primal union of instinct, ‘Anschauung’ and self-reflection.\textsuperscript{54}

It was a grand vision, ripe for parody. The Nachtwachen von Bonaventura (IX) satirically puts a counterpart of Fichte, in the shape of a ‘demented Creator’, in the madhouse, mocking his Idealism of the Ego and the monomaniac Romantic assimilation of metaphysics, theology and aesthetics. Hoffmann, who had read and critiqued the Idealism of Schelling, joined in. In his Brambilla, a chorus intones: ‘Who is the Ich that can from itself beget a Nicht-Ich?’, and magi deliver mock-portentous oracles:

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Blackall, The Novels of the German Romantics, 1983, 137-142; Marx, Musical Form, 1997, 32-3 (1841) and 36 (1868).

Novalis, Die Lehrlinge zu Sais, in Schriften, I, 1960, 79; Schriften, V, 1988, 205 (15) (‘Anschauung’ and reflection), 209 (43), 210 (52) (union of all fields); 217 (92) (instinct); 211 (61) (signs); 264 (451) and 269 (494, 496) (fable and dream). See Dickson, ‘E.T.A. Hoffmann: Mind, Mythology and Meaning’, 1996, 252, 259-60.
Thought destroys Intuition, and ... man will wander homeless, blind and dazed until Thought’s mirror-image creates for Thought itself the Recognition that he is.

But these oracles, whose deciphering is thus given out to be the pre-condition for restoration of general well-being, are incomprehensible to the philistine ministers in the tale, who clearly have not read their Fichte or Schelling, and show themselves ‘donkeys’. Nevertheless, at the end a magus declares ‘the world, the Ich’ to be found, as a pair of lovers have recognised each other. Apparently the oracles did not after all need to be deciphered; the true enigma lies deeper. (Schumann’s Sphinxes, purporting to be runic, are similarly more a shallow distraction than a secret key to the true musical process). Hoffmann both spoofs and endorses the speculations of Idealism.

Recognition featured in the poetics of the German Enlightenment, and in particular in theatre and comic opera; it was a descendant of Aristotle’s ἀναγνώρισις, which in his analysis leads on to περιπέτεια, the turning point in a theatrical drama (with cousins in Sanskrit drama, including for instance The Recognition of Sakuntala, admired by Herder and Goethe). And as recognition traditionally brings fulfilment in love and art, so in Carnaval ‘Reconnaissance’, the pivot of the second half, brings on the resolution – or at least its beginning.

It opens a series of pieces involving mutuality in a relationship, earnest or comic. Though ‘Aveu’ offers no more than mild syncopations between supportive voices in its ingenuous declaration of love, other pieces show continuing conflicts between different keys, modes and metres. Thus in ‘Pantalon et Colombine’, a cantankerous and absurd minor mode opening (the routed de Knapp of the essay?) is opposed to a subtler D♭ major middle section and ultimately, it seems, out-maneuvered as ‘Colombine’ thumbs her nose at ‘Pantalon’ in the final gesture, in a carnivalesque usurpation of a male clown’s role. ‘Valse Allemande’ juxtaposes a delicately twisting opening with the comic energy, repeated octaves, dramatic leaps and weak-beat sforzandos of its middle section (bars 9-16). The masculine theme and

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55 Brambilla, 283, 286.
56 Brambilla 288, 253, 257, 320; O’Brien, ‘E.T.A. Hoffmann’s Critique of Idealism’, 1989, 390-406. The oracles are redolent of the doctrine of θεωρία in Plotinus (for example, Enneads, III.8); Plotinus influenced Novalis and Schelling (compare Novalis, Schriften, IV, 1975, 269).
leaping bass it adopts from Clara Wieck's *Valses Romantiques*, Op. 4 of 1835-36 suggests some cross-dressing; contradictory gender signals had occurred also in 'Coquette', 'Chopin', and 'Estrella'.

The 'Valse' is interrupted by an *Intermezzo* called 'Paganini'. It is a conjuror's illusion: its appearance of virtuosity results largely from the displacement of the left hand by a semi-quaver (with the bass beamed unconventionally), perhaps as if to suggest double-stopping. And after a wrenching reversal of the metrical roles of the voices in bars 33-34, there is a further conjuring trick, this time with the pedal: out of what had been an F minor chord (bars 35-6), 'Paganini' creates a chord that has not been struck, and demands a *crescendo* and *decrescendo* that cannot be executed but only suggested by the performer's body-language. Conjuring can be a metaphor, in *Carnaval* as in the traditions of carnival and Idealism, for the experience of both art and love. In 1832, Schumann described the famous caricature of 'Paganini in the magic circle'; for Paganini was, for him as for others, a magician of humour, an embodiment of Italian comedy in music, and associated with the idea of the Charlatan. In *Brambilla*, the 'Charlatan' Celionati, who is often called a sorcerer, pulls off a conjuring trick to bring on the resolution. The placing of the conjuring trick in 'Paganini' in the midst of a 'Valse Allemande' featuring Clara's own theme, and at a moment analogous to that of Celionati's conjuring trick in *Brambilla*, may not be coincidence: in Schumann's projected novel, Paganini was to 'work magic on Zilia' (Clara). Clara's compositions attracted Paganini's notice, and she was often in his company as a nine-year old; Schumann thought Paganini's influence on Clara unmistakable. Florestan dreamed of playing the violin in a wine bar when Paganini entered, and of playing a Paganini caprice to attract the maestro's attention. (It may however be coincidental that Schumann once described the violinist Lipinski, the dedicatee of *Carnaval*, as Paganini).
'Promenade' ends this resolution sequence, as 'Reconnaissance' began it, both islands of stability. It opens with a theme (bars 1-4) which sounds as if its true, \( \frac{3}{2} \), bars are twice as long as the notated \( \frac{3}{4} \) bars. Its melody's second half is notated entirely in grace notes, not so much a signal of an ornament, perhaps, as a visual representation of distance.\(^{64}\) The B\(_{b}\) of the Sphinx is less harsh here in D\(_{b}\) major than harmonised as a tritone in F minor in 'Estrella', and the mild harmonies, with the major mode, lilting rhythm, and pp ending, create a broad sweep of graceful movement. By contrast, the B\(_{b}\) minor motif in bars 5-8, with its opening tritone, insistent \( \frac{3}{4} \) rhythm, and sf on the first beat of each bar, is strutting rather than sweeping:

Example 5.8: Schumann, Carnaval, 'Promenade', 1-7

The minor theme holds the field at the end of the first half (bar 32); but thereafter, and especially from bar 56, the major motif supplants it, in a much more prolonged conclusion than in any other piece. The flowing ascending steps of bars 46-47 are complemented by descending steps, forming something like the cadential phrases in a classical work. The conflicting pair, \( \frac{3}{2} \) and \( \frac{3}{4} \), are reconciled. The \( \flat 6 \) of the relative minor theme disappears after a last spasm (bars 38-48), leaving only vanishing residues (bars 69-70, 73-4, 81-2) of what in bars 1-2 had been a Sphinx, eventually recalled only by accented C\(_{b}\)s (73 and 81) resolving to B\(_{b}\):

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\(^{64}\) Bars 3-4, 11-12, 19-20, 27-8, 51-2. The grace notes have durational value and melodic function; Schumann even inserts a real grace note to the highest of these 'grace notes' (bar 4, 2\(^{nd}\) beat, etc.). What the smaller font adds to the pianissimo marking in aural terms is perhaps that the treble is a little quieter in relation to the bass than one might expect: thus we may hear the treble notes as further away than the bass as well as than the preceding ones: visual and aural signals of distance coincide.
The ending is thus resolved thematically, metrically and harmonically; but it is also somewhat recessive, already subdominant in relation to the A♭ major of the work as a whole, and the C♭s lean further towards G♭ major. In the final dim. and rit., the reconciled pair recede as an A♭ clock chimes (albeit on some counts a carnivalesque 13).

Islands of stability in ‘Reconnaissance’ and ‘Promenade’ offer reintegation, apparently, through mutual recognition in love; but they are not the end. What is required classically is a resounding finale in the home tonic; and ‘Pause,’ returning to the vivo of ‘Préambule’, appears indeed as a summons to a concluding ensemble. But
only in carnival would a ‘Pause’ be precipitandosi; and its Sphinx emphasises a sore C, marked sf. Moreover, when its final transition, con forza ritenuto – which in ‘Préambule’ had served to raise expectations – this time leads to a concluding ‘Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins’, that opens with a $\frac{3}{4}$ disruptive of march time. Its material stems from nothing but that Sphinx, ascents and descents (scalar and semitone) and in bar 15 spectacular repeated octaves of $\flat VI$ harmony (relative to the E♭ major of 13-14). To the mix of march and waltz, some elements of sonata are added, in a humorous medley. An acceleration and dominant pedal (bars 25ff) are a lit fuse of laughter. With a move to C major, a sudden change of dynamic and register (bars 40-1) ratchets up excitement anew for the entry of the E♭ major ‘Grossvatertanz’ (50ff), combining parody with a sense of the end of a social ball. The repeated octave gesture that set acts going in ‘Préambule’ is replaced by a dotted and increasingly frenzied variant (bars 106 etc. and 202-224) shutting them off. When the end of ‘Préambule’ recurs, and the metre once again flies apart, resolution is only achieved if at all through the balancing repetition of imbalance, further unbalanced by acceleration. This disruptive Davidite waltz may share the spirit of Schumann’s 1842 contrast between true humour and the old-fashioned rococo spirit of philistines: the romantic humour of Beethoven’s last quartets is misunderstood by the philistine, who ‘calls romantic anything that is not clear to him, while what he does understand gives him hope of the return of the old times’.65 In any case, here as in the conclusion to Brambilla genres are mixed, while sentimentality, pomposity and theatrical artifice are transformed into the triumph of humour over philistinism.

The exuberant laughter crowns a humour that is melancholy in ‘Pierrot’, clownish in ‘Arlequin’, pantomime in ‘Pantalon et Colombine’, self-ironic and indulgent in ‘Reconnaissance’: all variants of a humane humour akin to Brambilla’s. Hoffmann’s ‘Humor’ sits easily with an ‘Erkenntnis’ resting on ancient traditions of thought and given new significance by Idealism: ‘Humour [is] the power of the mind to create its own ironic double ... in which it recognizes its own follies ... and those of all creation, and takes delight in them.’66 (Compare Jean Paul’s description of the ‘Besonnenheit’ of the artist as ‘seeing the self, turned both away and to the image at the same time, in two mirrors simultaneously’). At the end of the story, Giacinta and Giglio as husband and wife congratulate one another on the success of the comedy they have just performed together: ‘We carried on improvising our main scene for over half an hour

65 GSK II 72.
66 Brambilla 258; Jean Paul, Vorschule, §12.
while the spectators kept up their genial indulgent laughter’ (‘gemütlichen Lachen’). Her word echoes Hoffmann’s German artist’s claim that ‘even for the farcical’ (‘dem Possenhaften’), there must be an injection of ‘Gemütlichkeit’ of a sort ‘intrinsic to our German nature’; he doubts that ‘in Italy one could find men endowed with that profound humour’.  

Schumann expressed similar thoughts. In a letter to Simonin de Sire about his ‘Humoreske’, op. 20, he regretted that the French would not understand his title, as they had no word ‘for … concepts like genial indulgence [‘das Gemütliche (Schwärmerische)’], and ‘humour’, which is the successful fusion of genial indulgence and wit’ (‘die glückliche Verschmelzung von gemütlich und witzig’). These, he thought, were ideas ‘deeply rooted in the German nationality’, in contrast to the French.  

It has been said that Schumann was here adopting Jean Paul’s concept of ‘Romantic comedy’, with its mild patience and kinship with humanity; and that concept was probably an influence on many writers, including Hoffmann, and one source of Schumann’s view of ‘Humor’. Certainly in 1828 Schumann associated ‘a combination of the sentimental and the humorous’ with Jean Paul. But in two respects, Schumann’s 1839 letter is closer to Brambilla. True to his more nationalist time, after the long war of liberation from Napoleon, it is Hoffmann, not Jean Paul, who highlights Schumann’s word ‘gemütlich’, a concept that had become associated with Germany; and in Hoffmann’s account, as in Schumann’s, ‘Humor’ is specifically German, and incomprehensible to foreigners – borrowing nationalism from Gozzi while changing the

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68 Neue Folge, 148-9, 15 March 1839. In 1834, Schumann defined ‘Capriccio’ – a term Hoffman used for Brambilla, and apt for Carnaval – as ‘the genre of music that distinguishes itself from the lower form of comedy that is burlesque through its fusion of sentiment and wit’ [‘Verschmelzung des Sentimentalen mit dem Witzigen’] (GSK II 207).  
69 See Daverio, Nineteenth-Century Music, 1993, 64. Jean Paul (Vorschule 32) claims that its ‘mildness and indulgence [‘Duldung’] of individual follies is explained through [humour’s] universality … as the humorist cannot abjure his own kinship with humanity’; ‘that universal mockery of the humorist … warms the soul’. He talks (Vorschule 34) of the ‘good-heartedness’ (‘Gutmütigkeit’) of German humour. He was to some extent theorizing a view already expressed in Tieck and others, and associated with the ‘Verschmelzung’ concept: Appel, ‘Schumanns Humoreske’, 1980-81, 110, 140, and 171-2.  
nationality, and echoing Goethe's initial dislike of the humour of the Roman Carnival.\textsuperscript{71} By contrast, Jean Paul's 1804 statement is internationalist: it quotes examples of 'Humor' from England, France, Italy, and Spain, is aware of the influence of Sterne's 'Humor' on Diderot, and cites the 'Welt-Humor' of Voltaire and Rabelais; but talks of a 'German deficiency in poets of "Humor"'.

'Marche' suggests snooks cocked, forms destabilised, and dizzying humour; but although Davidites are clearly waltzing against philistines, their laughter is easier to identify than their actual targets. Carnival, a world where everything is also something else, makes the head spin; but it 'goes by like a dream, like a fairytale', and after suspending social norms it allows the existing order to resume.\textsuperscript{72} Carnaval's kaleidoscopic form, evanescent meanings and bewildering details likewise make the head spin, and though its humour and confusions are ultimately affirmative and integrative, a laughing imbalance remains to disrupt the restoration.

Without its titles, Schumann's music might seem a comic sequence of vignettes, character pieces, gestures and dances offering no foothold or framework for understanding, and for guides only the dissembling Sphinxes. But the titles create a network of ideas dense enough to fasten onto the carnival tradition in German literature without needing to invoke a particular book. In the later three works, titles do not play that role, and particular books are called upon.

\textsuperscript{71} Pace Appel, 'Schumanns Humoreske', 1980-81, 167. Goethe, Werke, vol. 6, 1973, 208; Gozzi, Five Tales for the Theatre, 1989, 4 ('No other nation can carry it off. The Italians are the only brave wits who ... have been able to manage this genre of improvised theatre').

Figure 1: ‘The Charlatan’, G.D.Tiepolo, 1757 (detail)
Vicenza, Villa Valmarana, with permission
Figure 2: ‘Carnival Dance’, G.D.Tiepolo (detail)
Musée du Louvre, with permission
Figure 3: After Callot (detail)

Figure 4: After Callot (detail)

Figure 5: ‘He swore the Princess his undying fealty’, after Callot (detail)

Figure 6: ‘She knew how to encircle him so that he could not evade her’, after Callot (detail)
Figure 7: Goethe, Hexenzene, 1776-8, 
Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Inventar-Nr. GGz/0851, with permission
Schumann’s Fantasiestücke, op. 12 was begun in summer 1837 – just before Carnaval finally appeared – and published in February 1838. The word Schumann adopted for his title had particular connotations from visual art, and he himself in 1834 promised ‘Phantasiestücke’ among the articles in the Neue Zeitschrift, and in 1839 suggested the title for pieces by Clara Wieck.¹ But it also echoes the title of the book that made Hoffmann’s name, Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier.

Schumann’s work seems to me to be driven and shaped by contrasts between dark or threatening music in the second, fifth and sixth pieces, and innocent, light or playful music in the first and sixth; or between repeated percussive chords, clanging like metal, and delicate sonorities like crystal bells; or between F minor and D♭ major or C major. Contrasts are resolved in an F major conclusion. Meanwhile, the music conveys vivid images, reflected in the titles, succeeding one another like dreams, without the solidity of objects or the clarity of logical connections. Threads of thematic affinity may create suggestions of a psychological trajectory affecting a persisting subjectivity. This chapter explores how these features resonate with images and associations from Schumann’s literary culture, and in particular from one particular item from Hoffmann’s Fantasiestücke, Der goldne Topf, whose images ramify through the rest of Hoffmann’s Fantasiestücke with the vivid inconsequence of dreams.

¹ ‘Des Abends’ (One Evening)
The D♭ major music creates a mesmerising experience of chiming triads and intertwining sinuous lines. The metre and harmony have the shimmering fixity of trance: the right hand suggests three in a bar, while the notated duple pulse is probably heard as a cross-rhythm, and a constant tonic D♭ major harmony across

¹ GSK II 272, Briefwechsel, II 629, 10 July 1839.
the first six bars is overlain with other harmonies. While a tonic triad sounds in each of these bars, A♭ as the first overtone chimes like a bell against the D♭ in the bass. Over these chimes, the theme descends the scale from G♭ (bar 1) to a delicately chromatic G♮ and then winds up again (3-4); and as it is repeated and varied throughout the piece, eye and ear concur in finding – in the tones and on the page – a seemingly endless curve of undulating melody.

It is however but one of three upper lines that run through the piece. They intertwine for hand as well as for ear and eye, as left and right thumbs are crossed almost throughout. The intertwining takes on a new shape in the middle section (bars 17-38). In bar 21 the melody continues on the even numbered semiquavers rather than the odd, slipping in that syncopated form beneath what had been the lower line. The effect is that for a while the lower line slithers past the soprano (in metrical terms) and above it (in pitch terms), sliding the more freely for its adoption in bar 22 of the grace notes from the soprano line in 20:

Example 6.1: Schumann, Fantasiestücke i, bars 17-24

In bar 25 the melody slips back up above the accompaniment, in a different key, reverting to the original odd-numbered semiquavers, and the process repeats. The music thus gives a sense of a continuous undulation without forward movement. Only in the coda, when the texture is varied, and the tenor sings in harmony with the soprano, does sufficient movement occur for closure to ensue; the hands, previously entwined, separate widely for the final chord, signalling the breaking of the trance.

‘Des Abends’ suggests not ‘Evening’ but what occurred one evening; and the music, with its shimmering fixity, tonic chimes and intertwining sinuous lines,
resonates with what happened at the start of Der goldne Topf. In an elderflower bush by the water, the young would-be poet Anselm saw one evening a vision of three entwined, slithering, slim, serpentine bodies, full of erotic yearning, and accompanied by crystal chimes and tonic triads. It was Ascension Day, and Ascension was Jean Paul’s image for artistic transport from the concrete to the ‘Unendlich’. Moreover, an entrancing dream-vision was traditionally the initial impetus for a young artist starting out, as in Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen. But Hoffmann’s serpents are an idiosyncratic version. In ancient mythologies, the serpent was a primal power, undifferentiated and protean, remorseless but potentially healing. It was a commonplace of contemporary aesthetics that beauty lay in the serpentine line; but for Anselm, like Adam, the snake that slithers and twines so seductively in the tree may offer the knowledge of art or love, or only perdition. In the golden age, Goethe says, when a bush entwined the lovers in its tender branches, the serpent was harmless, but now it is an instrument of the enemy: ‘It slithers up, the little snake, hissing its enchanting sounds with flickering tongue. How lovely it seemed!’ For Wackenroder’s Berglinger, art is a ‘goddess’ but also ‘a seductive, forbidden fruit’, a taste of which leaves one ‘irretrievably lost to the world of life and activity’. The hero of Hoffmann’s Meister Floh is seduced by an other-worldly figure with a voice like silver bells, whom he comes to see as ‘the serpent of Paradise’ and rejects in favour of true love. Such images resonate with Schumann’s serpentine lines, crystal chimes and mesmerising portrayal of the power of beauty – after which the next piece is a violent contrast.

ii ‘Aufschwung’ (Taking Wing)
‘Aufschwung’ depicts lifting into flight. Its opening two-bar motif is marked by brevity, a rushing tempo, a minor mode, and a forte percussive accompaniment of repeated chords. When the opening motif is repeated, a low octave on C in bar 3 rings against the repeated high D♭. The magisterial, dark sonority that results from

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2 Perhaps Schumann’s image of ‘music that calls one of an evening [‘des Abends’] over to the far side of the water’ (GSK I 368, of 1838) suggests what associations the phrase could carry for him.

3 Hoffmann, Fantasiestücke 180 &184 (‘Dämmerung’), 182-4 (‘Abendsonne’ thrice, ‘Abendwind’ four times, ‘Abendwolken’); 183, 198, 201, 214, 227-8 (serpents); crystal chimes and triads: 182, 183, 184 (twice), 189 (twice), 198, 201, 216, 226, 227, 245. In the footnotes to this chapter, references to ‘Hoffmann, Fantasiestücke’ relate to Der goldne Topf unless otherwise stated.

4 Jean Paul, Vorschule, §§4 and 18.

5 ‘Romantic melody consisted of a single unbroken, shaped curviline, and was invested with the ability to evoke the ideal, maternal feminine’: Cramer ‘Of Serpentina and Stenography’, 2006, 165 (Abstract); Goethe, Torquato Tasso, II.1 and IV.3, in Werke vol. 2, 1981, 735, 774; Wackenroder, Herzensergiessungen, 1948, 153; Hoffmann, Späte Werke, 793 and 795.
the association of this deep C with the metallic ring of the repeated chords is a striking contrast with the delicate crystalline chimes of ‘Des Abends’, and comes to seem progressively an engine of the piece.

In bar 4 the low C is propelled up four octaves, from where a now airborne melody floats to a cadence in A♭ major in bars 7-8. A sort of tonal up-draught, from the apparent B♭ minor of the opening bar, through F minor to A♭ major, might itself suggest lifting into flight. And in bars 4-8, the eye too might find such an image in the score.

*Example 6.2: Schumann, Fantasiestücke ii, bars 1-8*

The image persists through the following D♭ major passage, as a melody lifts up by semitones (bars 16-20) over a rippling figuration, and floats gently down to a plagal cadence (23-24). The urgent energy of the opening sentence had contrasted with the milder D♭ major ‘second group’; and now from bar 40 a restatement of the first four bar motif introduces conventional signs of classical development: *stretto* (bars 44-48), imitative writing (53-55), sequence (71-82), changes of texture (61ff), a move to a related key (52) and brief forays towards more distant keys. From bar 71, the upper voices scurry up in eight *staccato* steps, one step back for every two up, leap an ungainly octave, and tumble down again (73-4):

*Example 6.3: Schumann, Fantasiestücke ii, bars 72-76*
The *scherzando* marking suggests some humour: perhaps it is an immature imitation of the shape of the main theme, a chick's attempts to learn from the magisterial flight of the opening. It is a bathetic centre-piece for a development section, all the more so by contrast with the slowly building tension of an impressive re-transition (bars 93-115) to the opening material and key. A full recapitulation (from bar 115) folds the quaver movement of the bass into its surge of energy, as though folding callow flapping into mature flight. A concise eight-bar coda this time has an F minor cadence, now no longer floating into an indefinite distance, as in bars 7-8, but coming to a definite halt.

Taking wing and soaring were long-standing metaphors for artistic maturity and poetic rapture. The image dates back at least to Pindar in the fifth century BC. It was widespread in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For Wackenroder’s Berglinger when hearing church music, ‘it was as though great wings stretched out from his soul and he wafted up to the lucid heavens’; and Hoffmann’s inspired ‘poet’ of music ‘stirs himself for bold flight into the distant land of Romanticism’, and ‘on his wings we soar over the abyss’. The true artist’s inner voice constantly challenges him: “Why is your flight so lowly, so crippled by earthly powers – shake out your wings afresh and soar aloft to the gleaming stars!”

Schumann frequently used ‘taking wing’ (often with the word ‘Aufschwung’) as a metaphor of artistic maturity: the great artists, not least Beethoven, had a broad steady wing-beat; weakness, lameness, clipping or overloading of wings made for ineffectual flapping.

In a fable in Hoffmann’s *Der goldne Topf*, there is a prophecy that a young man, hearing the crystal voices of the snakes, will feel the intimation of that distant land of wonder to which he can soar away (‘emporschwingen’); and Anselm, after being apprenticed as a callow youth to Serpentina’s father, came to exercise his craft without blotting the manuscripts, and eventually ‘spread his wings confidently’ as a poet in Atlantis. But the tale’s dominant image of soaring is the dark, almost sinister way in which his master disappears in the deepening dusk:

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wings for rapid flight .... as Anselm stared into the twilight, a white-grey vulture rose high in the sky.

The urgent energy of ‘Aufschwung’ evokes an aspect of Beethoven’s style. Moreover, its form in places suggests sonata, contrasting with the less obviously studied forms of the adjacent pieces. The impact, though, is hardly classical, as the opening theme is in both F minor and A♭ major, settling on the former only in the coda; and given that end-point, an A♭ major recapitulation of the second group contributes little to tonal balance or resolution. Considering the implications of Schumann’s title, and his views on musical history, one could see in the Beethovenian energy of the opening material and occasional evocations of sonata form, an image of the authority of the musical tradition – magisterial but no longer usable by younger composers without some rethinking, as Schumann often pointed out. That authority, with ‘Soaring’ as its image, would then be contrasted with the ineffectual flapping of the apprentice.

iii and iv ‘Warum?’ (Why?), and ‘Grillen’ (Brooding)
These two Db major pieces portray a characteristic from opposite sides. ‘Warum?’, in sharp contrast with ‘Aufschwung’, is marked Langsam und zart, with a texture whose delicacy is enhanced by ornaments. Its opening is a question stretched out over 4 bars – interrogative in melody (the downbeats of bars 1-3 rising 1-2-3), harmony (suggesting A♭ major in bars 1-2 and D♭ major in 2-3), and metre (dynamic markings in bars 1-2 throwing into question whether the downbeat comes on the first or second crotchet). The rhythm of the accompaniment, initially independent of that of the melody, turns in bar 3 into a vamp (and again undercuts the bar-line). Bars 1-4 are thus an opening that, like the end of an exposition, is an expectation of something new to follow:

Example 6.4: Schumann, Fantasiestücke iii, bars 1-8

For instance, GSK I 394-5, II 10.
The expectation remains baffled, however. The piece is a maze, repeatedly circling back to the same place. The dotted rhythm recurs six times in bars 5-13. In bars 17-25 the opening motif is echoed in the bass, and stretched to rise up a triad and add a seventh (21-3), tracing the notes of $V^7/\text{ii}$. Though accented chords in the alto in bars 20 and 24 promise $\text{schenker3-schenker2-schenker1}$ to answer the opening question, the final $\text{schenker1}$ does not materialise, and the harmony is instead diverted towards $\text{ii}$. From bars 25 to 30 the motif comes every other bar in repeated overlapping demands, importantly leaving no room for an answer, while repeated chords of $V^7/\text{ii}$ (21-29) never reach their conclusion. Instead they lead (bar 31) into the same spread $V^7/V$ chord as in bar 13, suggesting the return of the opening music. The music indeed now enters a new loop, itself a tangle of loops. The soprano suggests, by restarting the opening theme in bars 31, 35 and 39, that it consists of three four-bar phrases:

*Example 6.5: Schumann, Fantasiestücke iii, bars 26-42*

At the same time, the soprano $D_♭$ of bar 38 is tied into 39, and a slur covers 35-37, suggesting a grouping of $4+3+4+1$. But the alto’s opening $F$ in bars 33 and 37 come a quaver later than in 3 and 15, and so functions also as the upbeat of its answer, and the harmony in bar 38 matches 34: thus the twelve bars could be grouped as $2½+4+4+1½$. The loops are inextricable.
In the last bar, the melody remains inconclusively on 3, the harmony on 6, and the rhythm on an offbeat; the vamping accompaniment, as in bars 3-4, sounds more like a preparation than an ending. On the repeat, the music simply stops on that interrogative note. The piece neither came in with a proper beginning, nor reaches a firm conclusion; it lacks clear structure; it leaves the listener expectant, circling, lost.

‘Grillen’, marked *Mit Humor*, seems very different. It is a picture of awkwardness. Dense chords in bars 1-3, a minor inflection in bar 1, and a subdominant leaning in 3-4 suggest brooding. The robust harmonic structure, low register and strong accents convey a latent but clumsy strength. The melody ends with an ungainly *staccato* lurch up an octave at the cadence in bars 7-8, and metrical complexity here offers neither shimmer nor expectation (as in the previous pieces) but awkward jolts. The repetition in bar 1 of the first two chords creates a duple time at odds with the ¾ time signature; the bass in bar 2 tends to undercut the downbeat; the third-beat accent of bar 3 clashes with the bar-line; and second-beat accents in bars 5 & 6 render the bass theme awkward. An F minor episode (bars 16-24) gives the movement a swing, but still with awkward accents on the upbeats in bars 16 and 20. The simplicity of the theme and harmonies suggests the gaucherie of a rustic dance; and the repeated thick bass chords in bars 17 and 21 hint at the drone of a peasant *musette* (as if in a *Trio* movement by Haydn or Beethoven). An A♭ major variant (bars 24-32) retains the drone in a tonic pedal, but exaggerates the gaucherie: *forte* where the F minor dance was *piano*, with accented upbeats as a feature of each bar.

That is nothing to the *tour de force* of metrical jolts and stumbles that follows in bars 60 to 95:

*Example 6.6: Schumann, Fantasiestücke iv, bars 61-76*

10 Compare *Myrthen*, Op. 25.6, setting the clumsy waiter of Goethe’s text: ‘Setze mir nicht, du Grobian, / Mir den Krug so derb vor die Nase!’
Example 6.6 (cont.)

This largely retains the low register and thick texture of the opening; bar-lines are undermined by chords tied across them; the metre appears to change more often than marked, sometimes at odds with the marking.\(^\text{11}\) Accents in bars 66 and 67 undercut both the implied and the notated bar-line, implying a cross-rhythm of \(\frac{3}{4}\), while in a climactic succession of violent jolts, those in 67-70 crash against both the previous metre and the notation: Metrical conflict persists as bars 72-76 can be heard as \(\frac{3}{4}\) again (76-80 likewise); the last two beats in each case feel strikingly supernumerary.

‘Warum?’ and ‘Grillen’ form a pair of character studies. Though simple, with but one easy theme, repeated, varied and answered, ‘Warum?’ is also endlessly involved, with tiny inflections to confuse the sense of direction. It is a picture of child-like innocence, asking questions without finding answers – of the way the brooder feels from the inside. ‘Grillen’ then shows how the person asking ‘Warum?’ looks from the outside: the clumsy, moody awkwardness of innocent self-absorption, devoid of social graces, seen by others with amusement (as the marking Mit Humor suggests).

The pairing reflects a complex of concerns in the literary tradition. Absent-minded, child-like self-absorption or dreaming was an image, for the early Romantics, for both the creation and the appreciation of art. Wackenroder said: ‘Is not the whole of life a beautiful dream? A lovely soap-bubble? My composition likewise.’ ‘Like children we view the world as if through the glimmering of a lovely dream’. Joseph Berglinger in the Herzensergeriessungen ‘lived in heavenly dreams’ and was suspected to be ‘simple’. For one character in Novalis, poets ‘simply play

with the imagination, just as a child plays with its father’s magic staff.’ In a passage excerpted by Schumann in the 1850s, Hoffmann described the artist:

devoting himself with childish simplicity to what the spirit conjures in him, he finds he can speak the language of that unknown romantic spirit-world, and like the apprentice who reads out loud from the Sorcerer’s book, he calls up all the wonderful images from the depths of his heart.

Childish infatuation, however, may displace the maturity, self-possession and craft needed for creation. The literary tradition is replete with those who failed to maintain such sobriety, including Goethe’s Tasso, Werther and Wilhelm Meister, Wackenroder’s Berglinger, and Hoffmann’s Kreisler. The failure may be associated with ‘Grillen’. Normally translated as ‘day-dreams’ or ‘whims’, the word, now largely out of use, is perhaps closer to brooding or moping; in Goethe’s Young Werther it is used of almost adolescent ‘moods’; in Wilhelm Meister it obstructs art; in Faust it trivialises what for Faust are moments of vision in which he dreams of soaring like an eagle. Schumann adopted this complex of ideas. He wrote to his brother that he ‘prayed continually to his guardian angel to sustain him in the childishness of the artist’, copied into his Mottosammlung the epitaph for Mozart comparing him to a child, and excerpted Jean Paul’s remark: ‘For whom amongst us does music not conjure up our childhood?’ He was seen by others as one who ‘is forever turned inwards to brood away [hinbrütet], and in the twilight opens his piano’; and in November 1837 and early 1839 he used the term ‘hinbrüten’ of himself.

Hoffmann’s Anselm too is described as ‘child-like’. He falls victim to otherworldly traits: self-absorbed dreaming, absence of mind, brooding (‘hinbrüten’). He repeatedly asks questions to which there is no answer. He complains that his ‘foolish brooding’ (‘Grillen’) and clumsiness unsuit him for social

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13 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana I.2, 33; Dichtergarten, 304.
14 Compare Jean Paul on ‘Besonnenheit’, Vorschule, §12. Schumann copied out his remark: ‘No hand can hold steady and control the poetic paintbrush if the feverish pulse of passion beats in it’: Vorschule, §3, Mottosammlung I 30. Compare Tagebücher I 378 and Paulin, Ludwig Tieck, 1985, 73-75.
interaction and bourgeois respectability; he crashes into tables, scattering cups and plates and inkwells. Serpentina explains that she is permitted to marry only

a child-like poetical spirit – and such a spirit is usually found in young men who are mocked by ordinary people because of their extreme simplicity and their total deficiency in worldliness.¹⁷

Schumann’s two paired pieces are simpler in form than the pieces before and after. The first half of the work thus couples two pieces with a high degree of intensity and contrast with a less intense pair moving to a humorous conclusion. In the second half something similar occurs, but with a stronger sense of drama in the first three pieces.

v  ‘In der Nacht’ (In the Night)
What occurs ‘in the night’ appears to be a drama – or melodrama – in the relationship between a primary voice and its accompaniment. In an F minor opening section, *Mit Leidenschaft*, a swirling accompaniment obscures four pairs of piano falling steps F-E (bars 1-4) – recalling falling F-E steps in bars 2 and 4 of ‘Aufschwung’, and perhaps in bar 5 of ‘Warum?’. A motif in triplets rises briefly above the accompaniment, seeming reluctant to follow its metre, and sinks back:

*Example 6.7: Schumann, Fantasiestücke v, bars 1-8*

From bar 16, the rising triplets lead into a piano descent (19-22) that is perhaps imploring; an answer comes from the remote world of V of D major (23-5). In another variant on the theme (from bar 26), in a dire E♭ minor, a chord hammers home, sf, a repeated G♭ octave (29 & 33), perhaps recalling the percussive chords of ‘Aufschwung’.

In what follows that drama takes a turn that cries out for explanation. The accompaniment clears to the major (bars 65-68), and a lyrical interlude opens in a slower piano duple rhythm. Its theme rises up the tonic triad (69-71) and then descends stepwise (71-2), perhaps recalling the opening theme of ‘Grillen’. If it were a simple love duet, interrupted in bars 87 and 91 by an echo of the opening triplet motif in the bass, the trajectory would be clear. But something tastes wrong. In bars 73-75 and again in 77-81 a lower voice adds a distorted reflection of the melody, off the beat, with some odd intervals, elongated at the end and then fading away, with a strange grace note at the end of bar 74 and a strange accent in 81:

Example 6.8: Schumann, Fantasiestücke v, bars 77-84

Moreover, chromatic insertions, starting from the tenor line of bar 69, become more insistent in 75 and 79-81. They generate frequent tritones (bars 71, 75-6, 79-80, 82), and other dissonances that are sharp in themselves, and sometimes in relation to the key as well; their register, persistence and ‘wrongness’ leave an odd taste in the mouth – perhaps even metallic, given the role of metals as a symbol, I will suggest, in Hoffmann’s tale and in Schumann’s work. In any case, they seem a distorting medium between the lyrical melody and its twisted reflection. Schumann was quite capable of writing a lyrical cantilena without such discords, or a duet in which one voice mirrors the other without such distortions – as for instance in the Trio of Op. 21.1, which has a similarly shaped theme and accompaniment, or the middle sections of the first and third pieces of Op. 16, or Opp. 18 & 19, or the duet of Reconnaissance. But here, as in the middle section of

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18 Daverio, Nineteenth-Century Music, 1993, 49-50, emphasises the unusual nature of these discords without trying to make sense of them.
Romanze from op. 32, composed in 1839, something is happening of which sense needs to be made.

Something similar holds for the next section too. From bar 109 the tempo speeds back up, for a theme that, for all its busy-ness, goes nowhere. The harmony consists of chords of vi/VI (with G♭ as upper neighbour) alternating every four bars with its dominant. The melody is limited. The contrast between the faster pace and the absence of movement suggests a note of comedy. The music resembles the busy and directionless staccato parallel thirds, alternating the tonic minor (vi/III) with its dominant, in the opening allegro of Mendelssohn’s Midsummer Night’s Dream overture, representing the fairies in the nocturnal wood. This passage seems oddly unconnected to any of the surrounding music and requires some explanation.

Schumann himself provided what many critics take as sufficient explanation. Some months after the music was written, he told Clara how to his delight he had found in the piece when completed the ‘lovely old romantic legend’ of Leander and Hero:

If I play ‘Nacht’ I can’t forget the picture – first how he plunges into the sea – she calls – he answers – he makes it through the waves to dry land – then the cantilena where they lie in one another’s arms – then how he has to set off again, but can’t bear to part from her – till night envelops everything in darkness again. Of course I think of Hero just like you, and if you were stuck in a lighthouse, I’d probably learn to swim even at my age. But tell me whether the picture fits the music for you too.

Schumann had earlier taken ‘the touching fable’ in an equally ironic spirit, describing how ‘the old Papa takes violent action … and confines her in a tower in the water because she loves someone she should not, and so Hero and Leander, who loved each other so much, are drowned’.¹⁹

The note of melodrama in the music when darkness and storms ‘envelop’ the lover(s) may indeed be ironic. From bar 122, expectations build of a return of the turbulent darkness of the F minor opening music, as the bass mutates into a theme a little reminiscent of the Scherzando theme from ‘Aufschwang’. Imitations, repetitions, rising and accelerating sequences, a greater density of minor and diminished chords, and increasingly frequent percussive discordant downbeats (bars 126, 130, 132, 134) wind up the expectation; finally a chord of V⁷ of G, major (bar 138) turns into the augmented sixth of F minor (141), preparing for the

¹⁹ *Briefwechsel*, I 154 (April 1838: Appendix 6) (compare *Neue Folge*, 120, of 22 April 1838); *GSK* II 303 and II 126-7. Tadday, *Das Schöne Unendliche*, 1999, 141-2, fits the story to the music precisely: the swim (bars 1-68), Hero’s call (10-12) Leander’s answer (18-22); lovers’ union (69-108); he cannot tear himself away (108-43); he is engulfed (143-223).
return of the opening key and music. The sense of melodrama is confirmed perhaps in the now more feverish pace of the returning storms. When the main voice is eventually overwhelmed (bars 219-222), and the piece ends with a discordant appoggiatura and an abrupt sfz F minor chord, the final darkness and tragedy are somewhat undercut by that melodrama.

But the music of the middle sections is much more colourful than Schumann’s dry words about Hero and Leander. And if its distinctive musical images are interpreted through their story, she seems to taste brine on his limbs during their night of love, and their souls mirror one another with inexplicable distortions (bars 69-108); and when he ‘has to set off again, but can’t bear to leave her’ (bars 109-121), he scurries around ineffectually as though looking for his swimming trunks. This is beyond irony, and rather too close to farce.

I wish the composer had not authorised Hero and Leander to squat in his piece, immune from eviction. To understand who calls and who answers requires a listener to make impossible distinctions between identities in the music; and above all, the story, even if fitting here, makes no sense of the rest of the work. I prefer to widen the net of associations. Clara’s ‘old Papa’ had taken almost as drastic action as Hero’s to obstruct the course of love. In the autumn of 1837, Schumann suffered from his anxiety as to whether he would ever see Clara again: ‘What a terrible night last night was. My head burned, my imagination led me from abyss to abyss… I’m ill, really ill’; and in April 1838, he called for help from dark forces:

Last night … I woke up and could not get back to sleep – and then I thought myself deeper and deeper into you and your soul and your dream life, and all of a sudden cried out with profound conviction: ‘Clara, I’m calling you’ – and then I heard right by me ‘Robert, I’m here beside you’. But a kind of horror overtook me, at how spirits can traffic with one another over the great expanses of land.

He was behaving not unlike Veronika in Der goldne Topf. Fearing the loss of Anselm, she followed an old hag out ‘in der Nacht’ as the storm howled, taking a cauldron of metals to forge a metallic mirror in which to conjure the spirit of her lover. Pressed on by the hag, she knelt ‘frozen in horror’, her ‘little hands clasped imploringly above her head’. As the metals seethed, shapes began to emerge, ‘and all of a sudden there stepped from the depths of the cauldron the student Anselm’. (Elsewhere in Hoffmann, metallic mirrors are used to similar effect, and there are several scenes of witchcraft in stormy nights; Goethe’s sketch of such a scene, Briefwechsel, I 32-33, I 138. Hofmann, Fantasiestücke, 219-223, 248-9; Die Geheimnisse and Der Elementargeist (Späte Werke, 191 and 389), and Nachrichten von den neuesten Schicksalen des Hundes Berganza (Fantasiestücke 86-7). Compare also Kleist’s Das
with a witch conjuring a homunculus from a boiling cauldron, is at figure 7). Hoffmann imagines the reader jumping melodramatically out of a passing coach to rescue Veronika, but ironically admits that the reader was not there. The howling storm, imploring figure, distorted image of a lover in the metal mirror, absent reader, irony and melodrama may all have counterparts in the music. But if this makes sense of otherwise puzzling music, it does so only by imputing a programmatic key, and I will come back at the end of this chapter to my unease with that.

It is perhaps understandable that it was not the association to which Schumann drew his fiancée’s attention in April 1838. He could not have wanted to stress the triangular pull between love and art in the Fantasiestücke, nor to risk Clara imagining herself cast as the bourgeois Veronika. In March Clara had refused to be reassured when she suspected herself miscast as the prosaic sister Ambrosia in his essay about Carnaval. An association with Anselm would not have helped persuade Clara’s father of Schumann’s suitability as a husband. Let Clara instead see herself as Hero. Anyway, Schumann could have associated all three stories in his mind, for he, Leander and Veronica each braved the forces of night to meet a beloved, in reality, or through witchcraft, but each was overwhelmed. The music could evoke multiple associations that do not exclude one another.

Be that as it may, ‘In der Nacht’, like the two pieces that follow, invites some quasi-narrative interpretation of its drama. Hoffmann’s Veronika (her dark ordeal ended by a mysterious intervention) found herself in her bed in daylight, slipping from dreaming to waking and back again, feverishly unsure which was which. The transition to Schumann’s next piece likewise leads into confusion between dreaming and waking.

vi FABEL’ (Fable)
The opening is a slow piano awakening into C major from the discordant sfz F minor end of the previous piece. The treble of bar 1 takes the G-A♯ of the last bar of ‘In der Nacht’ and stretches it out over two long beats before adding an A♮, stretching further slowly up the scale to a relaxed cadence (3-4). As the melody concludes by falling satisfyingly 3-2-1, it is like an answer to the question of ‘Warum?’.

A Schnell pp theme (bars 5ff) brings a sense of innocent play with melody, harmony and metre that does nothing to upset the fundamental security of each.

Käthchen von Heilbronn (1810), with its elderflower bush and witchcraft with cauldrons of metal, and its hero torn between two women.

22 Brieftauschel, I 80-81, 103, 107 (January-March 1838).
23 Fantasiestücke, 222-4.
The harmonies are mostly in root position, moving firmly along a conventional path, if spiced with dissonance. The downbeats as heard fall on the second and sixth semiquavers of each notated bar, out of sync with the notated bar-line. The teasing metrical complexity of this delicate dance may barely be registered at first, but bars 7 and 10 accent the seventh semiquavers, crossing both the metre as previously heard and the stresses on the even-numbered semiquavers arising from the melody and the bass in 8 and 12.

In contrast to these delicate sonorities, the repeated percussive chords that open bar 29 (and indeed every bar up to 41) can sound like the ringing of hammered metal perhaps evoked in the opening motif of ‘Aufschwung’ and in the repeated chords of ‘In der Nacht’ (bars 29, 33, 174 & 178). They seem derived, as in a development, from the accompaniment of bar 28; and the middle section they initiate (bars 29-69) adopts other traits of a development too (thematic derivation, sequences, changes of texture and mode, shifting tonalities). At the same time it uses clusters of ordinary materials to introduce further echoes of ‘In der Nacht’ and ‘Aufschwung’, foreboding a return to darkness or nightmare. Moreover, in bars 122-138 of ‘In der Nacht’, sequences rising in steps had served, along with the acceleration and the harmonic progression, to build tension for the return of the dark main theme.

Now in ‘FABEL’, a stepwise rise in the highest note of each bar in 62-68 likewise threatens a return, presumably again to darkness:

*Example 6.9: Schumann, Fantasiestücke vi, bars 60-69*

A syncopated accented motif harps on repeated accented Es in bars 29-33, and in 54 and 56 emphasises the step F-E, recalling the same step in ‘In der Nacht’ and ‘Aufschwung’. Patterns of rapid semiquavers (bars 33ff, 41ff, 61ff) resemble those in bars 116-137 of ‘In der Nacht’ and 61-114 of ‘Aufschwung’ (there in quavers). From bar 61 the pattern resembles the rising motif of ‘In der Nacht’ (bars 3 etc. and 86-7) – strikingly so in bar 63, with a similar rise from 5 to 1, 2 and then 3.

Compare bars 93ff of ‘Aufschwung’, whose stepwise upward motion picks up the similar steps in 90-91 and 60-63; in bars 104ff similar upward steps lead back to the main theme of the piece.
But the threat turns out to be insubstantial: daylight and innocence return. In a bar (69) falling outside the four-bar framework, the rapid semiquaver motif of bars 61-8 slows (in an echo of the semitone rise that opened the piece?) to reveal instead the *Schnell* theme (70-77); and the final word goes to the *Langsam* music from the very beginning. The opening music sounded like an awakening, and the middle section a nightmare; and when the opening music returns at the end, now moving from the dominant G major (bars 78-81) down to the tonic C major (82ff), with an ‘ever slower’ tempo, it perhaps betokens a reverse process of falling asleep, and entering a dream, as the title of the next piece, ‘Traumes Wirren’, suggests.

In that sense, these pieces confuse dreaming and waking; and in Hoffmann’s tale, images of dream and waking are frequent and equally ambivalent. Both drew on a rich cultural hinterland, in which dreaming is recognised as an exalted state of insight, illusion, and delusion, and associated with the creation and reception of art. Novalis had said, ‘Our life is no dream, but should and perhaps will become one’. Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister claims that the artist ‘lives the dream of life awake’, whereas others ‘even waking pursue dreams’; his Tasso asks himself, ‘Have you awoken from a dream...? ... Yes, you wake and sleep at once’; his life was said to lose all balance in a way that can ‘bring us at the end to dreaming by the light of day’. The young Schumann wrote: ‘Physical sleep is the soul’s real vigil, as physical waking is the soul’s dreaming’. He copied out Novalis’ thought: ‘We are close to waking when we dream that we are dreaming’. His Florestan, after a reverie about Chopin’s op. 2, bids his alter ego ‘awake to new dreams, and sleep’. For Schumann, sometimes music ‘dreams, and we in it’, and

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the listener ‘is in a reverie’. Novalis described the unbounded, integrative, primal nature of Romantic art in terms of ‘sleep’, which ‘is nothing more than the flood of that invisible ocean, and waking is the start of the ebb.’ Shakespeare had led the way. Prospero’s island is full of ‘sounds and sweet airs’, as Caliban said, ‘that if I had then wak’d after long sleep / Will make me sleep again’ and show him dreams that ‘when I wak’d / I cried to dream again’; similarly in Twelfth Night, ‘If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep’. It was an image Schumann echoed (once again about Chopin).

The confusion between dreaming and waking is akin to that between fable and the everyday, and so associated with myth, poetry and symbolism. Novalis wrote that ‘everything poetical must be like a fairy-tale’, and improvised on his theme: ‘a fairy-tale is in truth like an image from a dream – without coherence – An assembly of wondrous things and situations – for instance a fantasy in music – ... a masked ball’. In its title, ‘FABEL’, Schumann’s piece may recall the fable in Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen. There, a character of invulnerable child-like playful innocence, called ‘Fabel’, brings about the liberation of the world from dangerous forces, and its transfiguration through love and poetry. Der goldne Topf too associates fable with dreaming. In a room filled with teasing, clinking, delicately dancing sounds, Serpentina tells Anselm the fable of the marriage of her parents, a Salamander and a green snake, of her father’s fall, and of the need for the three sisters to marry poetical spirits if redemption is to be found. As she ended, Anselm awoke as from a deep dream and found her vanished – but his duty to copy out the fable she had told him had been magically fulfilled. With Veronica the next day, however, he was sure that ‘the fantastic saga ... had been written by him himself... He was amazed at his day-dreaming ... and laughed over his wild fantasy that he was in love with a little serpent’. Similarly, at the end of the tale, the author has a vision of Anselm in Atlantis that he thought he had dreamed in his garret, but when he wakes he finds it written out apparently by himself, and each

28 Tagebücher I 112 (1828: ‘Das physische Träumen ist das eigentliche Wachen der Seele, wie das physische Wachen das Träumen der Seele’); Mottosammlung IX 191 (Novalis, Schriften, V, 1988, 216 (82)); GSK I 7, 362; compare GSK I 117, 123, 180, 191. The idea of music as dream seems to be concentrated in 1835-37.

29 Novalis, Die Lehrlinge zu Sais, in Schriften, I, 1960, 104; Shakespeare, The Tempest, III.ii.147-55; Twelfth Night IV.i.67; GSK I 255.


32 Hoffmann, Fantasiestücke, 224-34. As Anselm was torn between love and art, so, in Schumann’s mind, was the artist-hero of Berlioz’ Symphonie Fantastique – between a feverish unrequited love for ‘the chilly British woman’, and a vision of pure, heavenly love of art: GSK II 212-4.
of the book’s chapters, named ‘Vigils’, is presumably the output of a similar nocturnal session. In each case it remains moot whether the vision is higher truth or mere fiction. As fable for Novalis ‘contains the history of the primeval world’ and its triadic pattern of harmony, fall and restoration, so in Der goldne Topf, fable reveals that pattern as the mythic kern of the story. But here there is irony. When Serpentina’s father told the fable of a primal conflict between Phosphorus, the bringer of light, and the dragon, his listeners scoffed at such ‘oriental bombast’; and Anselm hears a warning that from ‘a dangerous tendency to the Poetical, one can so easily decline into the Fantastic and the Novelistic’.

Now, however, Anselm appears to witness a fairytale conflict between Serpentina’s father and the forces of witchcraft – if he does not dream it; and images of dream and of fairytale conflict, presented with similar irony, occur in Schumann’s next piece.

vii  ‘Traumes Wirren’ (Swirling Dreams)
The opening phrase of ‘Traumes Wirren’ is regular in melody, harmony and metre; only the perhaps exaggerated brightness of the treble figuration suggests a dream. But thereafter oneiric features throng. A peculiar bar (8) interrupts the figuration to end the answering phrase: does it parody the semitone upward steps of bars 66-9 of ‘FABEL’? When a new phrase (bars 9ff) moves the opening melody and harmony up a tone in a sequence, regular bass accents shift in bar 13 to the second quaver, and stress an F♮ in the tenor that clashes with a sf F♯ an octave above, which itself clashes with a C♮ a tritone below. A similar jangling recurs in the next bar (14). In this dream, unnatural brightness suddenly becomes battle. Under the lively treble figuration martial calls sound in the left hand, in a march rhythm (bars 17-24):

33 Hoffmann, Fantasiestücke, 254 and 197 (for Schumann, a composer ‘dreamed…, and when he awoke, his concerto was written’: GSK I 152; compare 185). The self-reflexiveness is traditional. Wilhelm Meister found in a tower a scroll with the story of his life on it (Wilhelm Meister, VII 9, Werke vol. 4, 1973, 444). In Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen, Heinrich von Ofterdingen opens an ancient book and finds himself and his story in it: Schriften, I, 1960, 264-5.
34 Novalis Schriften, V, 1988, 264 (451); fable was also a philosophic-aesthetic category (‘language to a raised power, e.g. Fable, is the expression of an integrated thought’): 231 (249).
35 Hoffmann, Fantasiestücke, 193; 188; 236-43.
Example 6.10: Schumann, Fantasiestücke vii, bars 1-31

But it is an unreal battle. A pedal on a low F♮ every other bar turns jarringly (bar 25) into a pedal on a deep F♯, giving rise to four bars of F♯ major harmony: the melodic jangling of bars 13-14 is written into the harmony. And when the martial calls return (31-35), they issue in V for the return of the opening music.
In bar 63, after a modified return of the opening, the music is suddenly in D♭ major, pp. The immobility of its harmony, melody, rhythm and voice-leading contrasts sharply with the ‘extremely lively’ opening music. Low tonic and subdominant chords alternate (bars 63-66), plagal harmonies matching limited rhythmic movement. Four bars of uniform crotchets rise in cramped steps, and four fall (67-74), their stiffness accentuated by frequent parallel tritones:

*Example 6.11: Schumann, Fantasiestücke vii, bars 63-83*

Even this degree of freedom shrinks, the crotchets scarcely budging within a semitone step up in parallel tritones (bar 75). The step is repeated, first at pitch, then a semitone lower, and then a little higher as the harmony retreats to the subdominant G♭ major for five bars of plagal harmonies (bars 87-91). Since bars 67-74 have some thematic resemblance to the stepwise rise to the fifth degree and subsequent descent, all in low crotchet chords, that open ‘Grillen’, it is as though the blundering persona of ‘Grillen’ were now imprisoned in the paralysis of nightmare.36

Although the over-bright opening had been infiltrated by tritones and jangled, and martial calls were conventional signs of the topic of battle, they sound

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36 Perhaps the G♭ major harmony and stiff movements also recall bars 60ff of ‘Grillen’, and the featureless rhythm, rise and fall, and plagal harmonies may echo the ineffectual movement of bars 108ff of ‘In der Nacht’, with its emphasis on G♭ and subdominant harmonies.
to me more grotesque than serious. When liveliness returns with the opening theme (bar 95), the martial calls at first are given normalised harmony and voice-leading; and when further grotesque martial blasts – featuring tritone harmonies (bars 145, 149, 153, 157) – interrupt the concluding flourishes, they are forced gradually into the depths of the bass. Here their D♭ bass octaves under a treble C recall the sonority of ‘Aufschwung’. But in a disarmingly mild, somewhat anticlimactic, conclusion (mezzo forte, decresc. and rit.) any sense of conflict evaporates like a dream. As in ‘FABEL’, the conflict is only a fairy-tale; the threat of nightmare vanishes in a relaxation of tension.

Hoffmann’s tale has recurrent images of conflict, but throughout the final fairytale battle, between the Salamander and the old hag with her dark forces, Anselm is confined in a bottle:

His limbs drew closer and closer together ... he could not stir or move ... He was stuck in a crystal bottle... He could not budge a limb, but his thoughts beat against the glass, deluding him with dissonant sounds, and ... he heard only the dull noise of madness.

He was released only when the Salamander finally defeated the forces of witchcraft. The voice of a student suggests to the reader, however, that Anselm hallucinated the bottle while in fact standing on the Elbe bridge: his liberation may then have been a leap to his death in the water.37 If ‘Traumes Wirren’, with its dream conflicts and nightmare of immobility, ends in fountains of spray, they do not, however, to my ear carry deathly overtones, whereas the concluding piece probably does.

The first half of the work centred on D♭ major and F minor, and from there the second half moved through the F minor of ‘In der Nacht’ and C major of ‘FABEL’ to reach the F major of the last two pieces. Correspondingly, after the relatively static forms of the first half, those of ‘In der Nacht’ and ‘FABEL’ introduced a stronger sense of process or drama; now in the last piece, as in ‘Traumes Wirren’, more static forms bring a conclusion.

viii ‘Ende vom Lied’ (End of the Song)
The opening of ‘Ende vom Lied’ can be heard as akin to that of ‘Grillen’ – in its marking, Mit gutem Humor, low register, crotchet movement and thick chords, and even melodic pattern, rising through I to 5, followed by a stepwise descent. But awkwardness has been transformed into loose-limbed strength. The theme sprawls up the octaves (bars 1-3, 5-7 etc.) in a confident forte, a swinging rhythm,

37 Hoffmann, Fantasiestücke, 193, 230-1, 236-43.
sustained notes and cacophonous harmonies (on the third beats of bars 1 and 5). In contrast with the stiff confinement of bars 67-86 of ‘Traumes Wirren’ (which also perhaps echoed ‘Grillen’), the metre conveys a free movement, the first downbeat obscured by a rest in the bass, and the melody’s stresses initially on the second and fourth beats:

Example 6.12: Schumann, Fantasiestücke viii, bars 1-16

The melody of bars 9-12, with chorale-like harmonies, sounds like a peal of bells, perhaps wedding bells. In bars 14-16 a cadential phrase comes three times with a ritard. and cresc. to prepare, with some melodrama, and the apparent downbeat a beat early, for the entrance of the opening theme – thus cast as the groom, perhaps. That theme is now (bars 16ff) clarified: the notes of the melody clearly differentiated from the accompaniment, the chords sharply defined, the harmonies and voice-leading more normal and the phrasing unambiguous. The loose-limbed metre, with the barline still initially displaced by a beat, is the more striking. The thick chords and awkward rhythm are once again reminiscent of ‘Grillen’; but the ungainly octave leap of bar 7 of ‘Grillen’ is turned in bar 17 of this piece into exultant strength.

But so simple a happy ending is apparently not what Schumann intended. Nor is it what Clara heard. She was, she said, reminded of Zumsteeg in places; and Schumann replied: 38

38 *Briefwechsel*, I 112, 121 (4 & 19 March 1838).
It is good that Zumsteeg came into your mind – it’s true, I thought there, well, everything will after all be resolved in the end in a cheerful wedding – but then at the end the pain about you returned and so it sounds like wedding bells and a death knell mixed together.

They were presumably both thinking of Zumsteeg’s setting of Bürger’s gothic ballad *Lenore*. In it, a soldier returns to claim his bride at dead of night, and ride away with her. But he is a corpse. ‘The dead ride rapidly’, we are told, and ‘the bridges thunder’ under their horse’s hooves, with a variety of galloping and cantering motifs, which close on G minor to give way to a dirge in E♭ minor (♭vi). Between its phrases a major phrase intones: ‘Hark the tolling bell! Hark the dirge’:


Schumann does not copy or allude to Zumsteeg, but Clara’s association was natural. For Schumann’s B♭ major middle section (bars 24-60) opens with a simple melody and tonic harmony over a cantering bass, with percussive repeated chords (now no longer discords). After a sort of development passage (bars 33-44), a rising motif, bass and harmony ratchet up the expectation and issue in a thundering *fortissimo* reaffirmation (52-60) of the B♭ major theme. This might recall or spoof Zumsteeg’s galloping dead and thundering bridges; if so, the following return of the opening section (bars 60-84) with its wedding bells and chorale might seem ambiguous. Then suddenly (bar 85), as in Zumsteeg, the rhythm is far slower, and the tonality is ♭VI. Over ten bars, first *p*, then *pp*, and then *ppp*, swaying chords float slowly upwards through a liquefying pedal in various refractions of D♭ major harmony. (Compare the sudden piano, slower harmonic movement, and low register of the slowly swaying chords in the final couplet of the last song in *Dichterliebe*, Op. 48.16 – where we know from the text of the song that we are hearing a coffin sink slowly to rest in deep water). At bar

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39 As Heller, ‘Fantasiestücke’, 2005, 70, suggests without further comment.
95 a bell begins to toll on a low A as the harmony returns to F major. In the depths lies a submerged outline of the first two bars of the opening theme of the piece (bars 95-100), scarcely perceptible at half speed through the aqueous dimness. A second statement begins (bar 100), more audibly, a third from 104, and a fourth, much abbreviated, from 109. The melody and the tonic tolling cease together in bar 111, leaving only the final chords settling over the last six bars.

If Schumann’s coda suggests dream and fluidity, those traditional metaphors for art, Hoffmann’s ending does likewise. Anselm, now a fully-fledged artist, retires with his bride Serpentina to his father-in-law’s estates in submarine Atlantis; its sounds, colours, lights and crystal gleams, awoken from sleep, play in child-like joy – in ‘merry, joyful, jubilant upheaval’. But Anselm’s wedding to Serpentina was also a death to this world, either metaphorically, as the author would have it, or perhaps literally, as the student on the Elbe bridge may have suggested. Either way it left the author as bereft as Anselm was at the start of the tale: he wanders around as in a dream, trapped in a needy life in Dresden. As the author harps on Anselm’s wedded bliss (‘Seligkeit’), so Schumann described his work as ‘blissful’ (‘selig’). We had indeed heard triumph and exultation, with wedding bells in bars 9-12 and 69-72, but the association with Zumsteeg is gothic, mock or not, and the coda – with its swaying chords, submerged theme, and deep tolling bells – elegiac.

The work as a whole
This melancholy close crowns a mixture of mesmerised inwardness (‘Des Abends’), drama or melodrama (‘Aufschwung’, ‘In der Nacht’) and comedy (‘Grillen’, ‘Traumes Wirren’). In the work, images succeed one another like dreams: chiming bells, serpentine intertwining, evening, lifting into flight, ‘why?’, and clumsiness; a stormy drama at night, a distorted duet, and an awakening into fable; and after a fairy-tale conflict with frozen immobility, the loose-limbed strength, galloping hooves and submarine elegy of the final piece.

At the same time, however, the work suggests threads of continuity between these disparate elements. The very notion of dream images is one such unifying thread. The title of the last piece, ‘Ende vom Lied’, suggests some single entity behind the different pieces. At its end, moreover, Schumann gratuitously

40 Fantasiestücke, 250-55.
41 Tagebücher, II 34.
42 As was understood by Brendel at the time: ‘Robert Schumann’, 1845, 21, 89: ‘an anxious dream’, ‘contrary states of mind’, ‘a landscape veiled in mist out of which here and there something steps out in sunlight’.
43 Hoffmann signs off his tale with ‘Ende des Märchens’. Schumann may have wanted some parallel to that, and ‘Lied’ may embrace the ballad as well.
wrote *Fine*, having put no comparable marking at the end of any of his other early piano pieces: presumably it marks not just the obvious end of one piece, but of something that began with ‘Des Abends’. There is a basic tonal movement, perhaps, from F minor to a concluding F major introduced via its dominant, C major, though Schumann characteristically begins the work in what in this light is not the home key but the submediant D♭ major. Thematic affinities create other threads. A family of major mode themes exploits a rise, up a triad, or to 5, followed by a stepwise descent; it is often sequential, in uniform crotchet motion, or with dense chords in a low register. Examples are the opening themes of ‘Grillen’ and ‘Ende vom Lied’, the *cantilena* section of ‘In der Nacht’, and the middle section of ‘Traumes Wirren’. There is a temptation to impute a single persona to this family of themes. A cluster of minor mode motifs seems associated with dark forces (as in ‘In der Nacht’, ‘FABEL’, ‘Traumes Wirren’, and perhaps ‘Aufschwung’).

The energy and shape of the work, however, seem to come as much from recurrent contrasts of sonority, texture and metre associated with this tonal and thematic framework. The ring of rhythmically-driven percussive *forte* discords powers ‘Aufschwung’; similar discords maintain the tension in ‘In der Nacht’ (29, 33) and are markers of impending return to darker minor music in ‘In der Nacht’, and ‘FABEL’. As the final accented F minor discord of ‘In der Nacht’ relaxes into the delicate, metrically subtle play of the C major ‘FABEL’, so the F minor ‘Aufschwung’ contrasts with the crystalline chimes of ‘Des Abends’ and delicately ornamented textures of ‘Warum?’, both in D♭ major, as too with the lightly dancing sounds of ‘FABEL’. Percussive *forte* discords recur in ‘Traumes Wirren’ in B♭ minor, but are dissolved in the F major concluding watery spray. Meanwhile, other contrasts may appear – between the pure chiming of ‘Des Abends’ and the acid chromaticism of the *cantilena* in ‘In der Nacht’, for instance, or between a rhythmically immobile in bars 63-94 of ‘Traumes Wirren’ and metrically-conflicted blundering in ‘Grillen’. The humour of ‘Ende vom Lied’, however, resolves all these contrasts. It assimilates metrical blundering and *forte* discords within a freely-moving if cacophonous F major theme, and finally fuses metallic, crystalline and watery sonorities in the submarine bells of the coda.

Hoffmann’s story can help provide a context in which to understand such threads. As I have illustrated, it features images evoked by Schumann’s titles, embraces melodrama, comedy, irony and elegy, and confounds dream and waking. Moreover, it is full of contrasting sonorities, especially of crystal and metal, which form richly associative images. The bells in the elderflower bush were crystal, the Archivarius uses a crystal mirror to conjure a picture of his daughter, and crystal is associated with art and fable; but on the first page the hag’s curse condemns
Anselm to ‘fall into crystal’: and the curse was fulfilled when Anselm was encased in a crystal bottle.\textsuperscript{44} The contrasting image of metals occurs surprisingly often in Hoffmann’s tale. It is associated through the cauldron of metals and metal mirror with the Satanic arts and witchcraft; but the Archivarius too is described as having a voice ‘ringing like metal’, and distributes metallic coins to his apprentices.\textsuperscript{45} The contrast was resonant. For Hoffmann, crystal bells could be an image of the longed-for soul, of Eden or of art, while metals formed a powerful symbol in the culture. In Novalis’ \textit{Heinrich von Ofterdingen}, ‘Iron’ is a mythic symbol of a primeval curse; in Tieck’s \textit{Der Runenberg} (1802), the thrall of ‘this accursed metal’ (‘dieses verfluchte Metall’) alienates a man from life. In Hoffmann’s ‘Der Magnetiseur’, magnetic metals are tools of a psychic power both therapeutic and sinister; in ‘Bergwerke zu Falun’, the protagonist is tempted to descend into the underworld of metals, which seem in a vision to metamorphose into pure crystal, but then bury him.\textsuperscript{46} Schumann also called poetry ‘bright crystal’, and saw metals as capable of psychic power, describing the ‘Psychometer’ as ‘an as yet inexplicable invention resting on the magnetic interaction of metals with physical forces’.\textsuperscript{47} Thus when Schumann’s \textit{Fantasiestücke} suggests an evening vision, for example, contrasts dream and waking, or creates patterns of contrasting sonorities, it may evoke rich cultural backgrounds on which Hoffmann also played. The character and images of the music are brought into focus by the titles, and enriched by associations with Hoffmann’s tale and those general resonances.

To go a step further, Hoffmann’s tale sets all these features within an archetypal narrative trajectory of the ‘Bildungsroman’, within which Schumann’s music too can be interpreted. Since June 1831 the young Schumann had had in mind a novel featuring Florestan, Raro, Zilia, Seraphine, Paganini and Hummel; in April 1832 he had expressed the ‘core’ of his ‘musical novel’ as ‘purity of art, the artist, mastery, and irony’. He claimed in May 1832 that he ‘had not yet read anything substantial and complete about the distractions and diversions of the artist before he reaches fulfilment’, and planned his own attempt:

\textsuperscript{44} Hoffmann, \textit{Fantasiestücke}, 179 (‘Ins Kristall bald dein Fall – ins Kristall!’), 201, 239-40, 253. The ‘beautiful soul’ in Book VI of Goethe’s \textit{Wilhelm Meister} similarly feels trapped in a glass bottle which she need only burst apart in order to be free.

\textsuperscript{45} Hoffmann, \textit{Fantasiestücke}, 193, 195, 207, 220, 222, 223, 233, 237, 248-9, 251 (a ‘polished metal mirror’ is held up to the author by malicious spirits to show him his melancholy sleepless face). Witchcraft: 179, 195, 222, 231, 242, 243, 248, 249. The Archivarius: \textit{Fantasiestücke}, 195 & 226; ‘Speziestaler’: 190 (twice), 241. He is compared to Satan, as is Anselm: \textit{Fantasiestücke}, 179, 185, 246.


\textsuperscript{47} GSK II 184, \textit{Jugendbriefe}, 204-5 (9 April 1833).
Florestan is to be that artist, pure, changeable, receptive, inspired [leichtsinnig, empfänglich, genievoll]; he is to be driven on by the urge to please his beloved. Krümelchen, the embodiment of the mechanical, gives him a jolt. Seraphine, as the image of taste and fashion, almost puts Caecilia in the shade. Raro as an ironic principle, appears last, till in the end Caecilia leads him back to the purity of art.\textsuperscript{48}

In the four sentences of the English one could see in embryo the ideas of the first, second, fifth and sixth pieces respectively of the Fantasiestücke. Autobiographical overtones are obvious. And Schumann dished up for Clara a yarn that in June 1837 he nearly proposed to her bourgeois ‘look-alike’ – a Seraphine or Veronika – but she sensibly doubted the tale.\textsuperscript{49}

Even if the Schumann of 1832 claimed not yet to have read accounts of the diversions of the young artist, many existed. A prominent theme in the literature of the previous half-century had been the passage of a protagonist through hazards, ordeal or adversity to self-discovery or self-development, and perhaps to love. Goethe’s Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1793-6) had become emblematic of the genre of the ‘Bildungsroman’, a term coined in the 1820s.\textsuperscript{50} Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1802) is a poetic specimen, and several of Jean Paul’s novels fall into the genre, including Titan (1800-3) and Flegeljahre (1804-5). Literary protagonists often had artistic traits, or were artists – as in Goethe’s play Torquato Tasso (1780-90), the Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders by Wackenroder and Tieck (1797), and Tieck’s Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen (1798). These released a flood of ‘Künstlerromane’.\textsuperscript{51} Hoffmann frequently drew on this rich tradition. He subjected it to questioning in Kreisleriana (1810-14), brought out the dark side in stories like Der Sandmann (1815), and guyed it in the novel, Kater Murr, and in stories like Der goldne Topf and Prinzessin Brambilla (1821). His Meister Floh is another ‘Bildungsroman’, with many of the same images as Der goldne Topf, though not as central to the story.\textsuperscript{52}

If Schumann’s thematic families suggest a central persona, and the titles a poetic thread similar to Hoffmann’s, the music could be interpreted in the light of a

\textsuperscript{48} Tagebücher I 342, 358, 359, 371, 379, 381 and 382; Mottosammlung, IX 26 (Appendix 6). ‘Krümelchen’ is Hummel.
\textsuperscript{49} Briefwechsel, I 68, 82 (3 and 24 January 1838).
\textsuperscript{50} See Swales, The German Bildungsroman, 1978, especially 12ff.
\textsuperscript{52} A magical evening scene with silver bells (Meister Floh, 1965, 678), the magician soaring with his love in his arms (704), the emptiness of the hero’s life (687, 739-40), self-absorbed childish day-dreaming (‘Grillen’) (685, 739, 795), a stormy night scene, (694-6), ‘fabelhafte’ (794), ‘confused dreams’ (‘wirren Träumen’) (724).
'Bildungsroman'. Seen thus, it introduces a self mesmerised by crystalline, serpentine beauty, confronted by a magisterial dark presence, brooding like a child, and risibly clumsy; and in the second half that self becomes a victim of dark threatening storms and involved in a distorted love duet; awakens into innocent playfulness, despite the threat of a renewed nightmare; dreams of a fairy-tale conflict, entrapment and liberation; and at the end matures into strength, despite deathly associations and a submarine note of elegy. This resonates with the psychological trajectory I have traced in *Der goldne Topf*. In both works the comedy of character largely depends on taking each part in relation to the whole, not as isolated moments of farce.

But a further step towards seeing Schumann’s music in terms of a specific narrative or specific characters leaves me uneasy, even if Schumann was inspired by Hoffmann’s particular narrative. Schumann’s titles do not attribute identities as they do in *Carnaval*; there are no distinct characters or events, and no ambient world. Hoffmann’s narrative is not invoked as a programme instructing the listener what to listen for. There is some evidence that the exact order of pieces was not fixed externally. The manuscript reveals that Schumann considered several possible variants of the sequence before he reached the final selection and order of pieces. But changes (both to the entries on the title page and to the numbers of the pieces in the music manuscript itself) also show that the order mattered; and with the possible exception of ‘Warum?’, which may have moved two places, none of the surviving pieces ever moved further than one place from its final position. The work had, then, some overall trajectory from which Schumann did not consider departing, which I prefer to take as musical, psychological and imagistic but only vestigially narrative.

I am moreover uncomfortable if some external story is needed to make sense of the overall trajectory, or of puzzling passages – because then it becomes a key of the sort that Rellstab criticised in *Papillons*. But that is what seems to happen in the middle sections of ‘In der Nacht’; and the sparse critical comment on the work as a whole and frequent resort to a programmatic interpretation involving Hero and Leander suggests a difficulty that tempts others too to clutch at an

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53 The ‘Stichvorlage’ was sent for printing on 7 August 1837: *Neue Folge*, 421. It is described in Boetticher, *Robert Schumanns Klavierwerke*, 1984, II 207-212, and Herttrich, ed., *Schumann, Fantasiestücke*, 2004, 42-3. Its owner restricts access to it, but displayed copies of four sheets in an exhibition in Basel in 2010-11: I am grateful to Roger Harmon for his expert description. It is impossible to be sure on the basis of the available evidence which of the markings in the music manuscript were made or guided by Schumann himself. Similarly late changes were made to op. 6 in September 1837: Roesner, 'The Sources for Schumann’s *Davidsbündlertänze*’, 1984, 58-61.
external narrative thread. But if Hero and Leander become a programmatic basis for one piece, then the work as a whole has less coherence than I have found (for instance in the transition to 'FABEL'); or if it is Veronika and Anselm, that brings difficulties in the other pieces about causation and identity – whether a character persists across the work as a whole, and who is the subject of each piece. That obscures my appreciation of the work’s liveliness. I prefer therefore to set aside specific events and characters in hearing the music, and instead to find psychological and imagistic trajectories. That allows the work’s musical conception – its shape, energy and comedy – to resonate naturally with aspects of Schumann’s literary culture and with Der goldne Topf.

However, if the musical patterns of ‘In der Nacht’ do not suffice to make sense of its sequence, it may seem to demand a key of external identities and events, and to invite interpretations verging on the programmatic. The work is in that respect transitional between Papillons, Carnaval and the later ‘literary’ works, Kreisleriana and the Nachtstücke. These latter works have richer musical patterns, and a subtly different relationship to literature, and resort to programmatic or narrative explanations is less tempting. This development is part of a wider evolution in Schumann’s compositional style in 1836-38; and that is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 7

‘IN POSSESSION OF THE SECRET’

In February 1838, Schumann told Clara Wieck, ‘for about the last eighteen months I’ve felt as if I were in possession of the secret; that sounds peculiar’. ¹ Carnaval was largely composed before that eighteen-month period, the Fantasiestücke during it, and the later two ‘literary’ works after. It was a period in which there were significant shifts in Schumann’s style, and in the way his music related to literature.

Schumann had become aware how distant the demands of great music were from the literary enthusiasms of his youth. In his writing, fragile butterflies had already yielded as images of art and artists to oaks and commanding eagles; and masks gave way to faces as characterisations of his poetic music. Much as he still loved him, his musical thought had come over the years to centre less on Schubert as master of the dance sequence, and more on Beethoven and Bach. ² Schumann had studied Bach since youth, and periodically renewed his engagement with his music; but in 1837-38 that engagement was particularly intense. ³ Between February and October 1836 he first heard Beethoven’s late Quartets in A minor (Op. 132) and B♭ major (Op. 130), and by December 1837 the C♯ minor, Op. 131 and E♭ major, Op. 127. In 1832, following study of the Hammerklavier Sonata, op. 106, he had called Beethoven ‘not a guide but the destination itself’; now in 1836,

¹ Briefwechsel, I, 100 (February 1838): ‘im Besitz des Geheimnisses’: Appendix 7.
² GSK I 118 and 128 (1835); Briefwechsel, I 127, 18 March 1838; GSK I 328ff, 1838; Briefwechsel, I 169-70 (May 1838); Marston, ‘Schumann’s Heroes’, 2007, 49.
his comment on what he might have seen in the quartets, then only just over ten years old, was laconic: ‘Endziel’, ‘final destination’.4

Haydn, Mozart and middle-period Beethoven had developed a style in which material, treatment, form and expression were so inter-dependent that to work out form could also be to deal with profound human issues; but as Schumann recognised in relation to sonata form, composers had to move on.5 In the late piano sonatas, and still more in the late quartets, Beethoven reinvented his style, perhaps in cross-fertilisation with evolving aesthetic aims. In the quartets, relationships between melodic elements may seem ‘tenuous’ or ‘paradoxical’, in Kerman’s words, rather than clear and logical, and may thus create what Chua describes as ‘indistinct configurations’; material spreads across works, sometimes apparently as quotation.6 Metrical conflict and disruption can be marked, with irruptions of music in the wrong time signature. Local tonality may seem directionless, or accidental; on a larger scale, the Heiligerdankgesang, whose tonal centre is debated, arguably demands to be taken in more than one tonality at once.7 In these quartets, one tone, style or manner may clash with another, for instance the deeply-felt with the banal or excessively repetitious, or the wholly modern with a long-neglected historic manner. Stark juxtapositions, as in parataxis or collage, may suggest what Chua calls ‘immiscible fragments’. Forms may be radically reconstructed, or obscured through dislocations of formal function. Dissociation, or extreme contrast, threaten rupture; contrasting movements multiply; and continuity sometimes arises not organically but in ‘paradoxical’ processes and from secondary elements. Sometimes ‘digressions assume a life of their own’ to become the life of the work. But there remains a sense that each of the works nevertheless is profoundly right, ‘a separate paradigm for wholeness’, in Kerman’s words.8

Schumann saw in Beethoven’s last works an exemplary case of ‘idiosyncratic forms’ serving novel conceptions, but gave little more detail.9 We cannot, therefore, weigh their relative importance in his stylistic development. If what he saw influenced his style, it was probably as much through reinforcing vectors already at

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4 Tagebücher, I 394, 396, 398, II 23, 28 and 45. I assume that at some point he studied the F major Quartet, op. 135 (perhaps, but not necessarily, in time for its three mottoes, headed ‘Der schwer gefasste Entscheuß’, to influence ‘Sphinxes’ in Carnaval). Compare Bischoff, Monument für Beethoven, 1994, 189-93, 306-10, and 415ff.
5 GSK I 394-95.
6 Kerman, Beethoven Quartets, 1979, 241, 304-6, 226; Chua, Galitzin Quartets, 1995, 47, 50, 195-8 (including note 28), 211-12.
9 GSK I 73.
work as through pitching him into a wholly new course. Nevertheless, I will suggest that features of Beethoven’s late style, in the areas I have sketched, re-appear in Schumann. He integrated them with everything else that he was learning, including through the study of Bach; thus they are not aped in a pastiche, but become his own idiom, and serve his own particular purposes. They are at least as likely to have been major influences on his music as the formal ‘strategies’ from literature discussed in Chapter 4.

In 1836 and early 1837, Schumann pondered ideas for composing trios, and worked over the winter on sonatas, mulling over a couple of movements from an F minor Sonata, ordering the G minor Sonata, and completing the first movement of the C major *Fantasy*: attempts perhaps to digest what he had learned from Beethoven. He often said that he was not composing much, and he certainly worked hard on criticism; but from some time in the early summer of 1837, his composing flourished again, and he ‘composed in a state of bliss as never before’. He began the *Fantasiestücke* and *Davidsbündlertänze*, and then in early 1838 the *Novelletten*, *Kinderscenen* and *Kreisleriana*. These are works in which some significant shifts in style appear, and in the last ‘new worlds’, he thought. He said in 1836 and again in 1838 that he felt ‘as though we were at the starting-point, as though we could yet strike strings never heard before’.

Most of the works Schumann composed between 1834 and late 1836 (with the exception of *Carnaval*) had presented themselves as falling within traditional forms and genres such as sonatas, studies and variations. By contrast, most of the works of 1837-39 evade or defeat classification in traditional terms, presenting themselves overtly as ‘poetic’ or ‘literary’, though only the *Davidsbündlertänze* of 1837 purports to be a dance sequence. They pick up in that respect where *Papillons* and *Carnaval* had left off; but many adopt an expansiveness previously confined largely to Schumann’s works in the traditional genres of the classical style. In late summer 1837 as he prepared the *Fantasiestücke* for publication, he

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11 Tagebücher, II 30-32; 29, 31, 32, 34. 1836 yielded over twice as many pages of reviews for GSK as 1838.


apparently lengthened and complicated several of its pieces. The earlier versions convey more simply the image or idea suggested in each title, while in the final version each piece is more expansive (generally three or four times longer than most of Carnaval’s pieces), does more to develop an image or idea in its own way, and has a more complex form: a listener can ‘spread out comfortably’ in a steadier musical flow. Again, while in the final version most pieces are self-contained, it seems that in earlier versions most of the first six pieces would have flowed into one another in continuing sequence rather than being detachable units, and only the last two pieces had contrastingly assertive conclusions. The earlier version, then, would have been almost as fleeting, centrifugal and bewildering as Carnaval. The trend towards expansiveness continued in the Novelletten, Kreisleriana and Humoreske. At the same time, the relationship of part to whole altered: including fewer pieces within each work made a simple contribution to this. The Humoreske of 1839 maintains an unbroken flow, with flimsier partitions between sections even than those in Beethoven’s late Quartets; in Kreisleriana and the Nachtstücke close-knit continuities link separate pieces, as the following chapters will argue.

Schumann’s style changed in other and related ways too. His idiosyncrasies had always been striking, as his contemporaries noted. Brendel said that his ‘harmonic idiosyncrasy often put people off’, and his treatment of dissonance and counterpoint was indeed daring. Schumann had enjoyed metric ‘dissonances’ capable of variation, intensification, a kind of development, and resolution. He had used mutating and ramifying patterns of loose thematic relationships – with motifs often only suggesting affinities, rather than exposing logical developments or blatant similarities – to carry particular qualities or expressive overtones, or to

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14 The original ‘Aufschwung’, it appears, was only about 47 bars long; to ‘In der Nacht’, Schumann added bars 45-67 and 108-121, and perhaps 93-107, 122-137 and 144-60; to ‘Traumeswirren’ perhaps 135-42; and to ‘Ende vom Lied’ a new coda at 85-117. Or so Boetticher, Robert Schumanns Klavierwerke, 1984, 207-11, seems to imply.


16 In earlier versions, the endings of ‘Aufschwung’ and ‘In der Nacht’ were less conclusive (a descending bass, rit and dim, under a sustained chord in the treble in the former; pp in the latter): Boetticher, Robert Schumanns Klavierwerke, 1984, 210-11.


18 Krebs, Fantasy Pieces, 1999, passim and 82-114.
create cross-links across a work.\textsuperscript{19} He had developed novel ways to extend and manipulate forms to meet new needs; for some years his style had encompassed formal dislocations and obscurity, along with extreme contrast, abrupt transitions and a concentration on the seemingly digressive. Indeed, \textit{Carnaval} used the idiosyncratic and the centrifugal as paradoxically unifying forces. In the 'literary' works of the later years of the decade, however – perhaps learning from late Beethoven – he developed bolder ways to use these features within large-scale musical processes, sustaining the flow of a piano cycle in tighter constructions subject to a 'poetic idea' or specific expressive purpose. This was not wholly new from 1837, but comparing \textit{Papillons} (and even \textit{Carnaval}) with \textit{Kreisleriana} reveals a trend that may owe something to Beethoven.

During 1836-39 he took conventional forms that he considered abused by his contemporaries, and explored challenging transformations of them in the service of his own particular conceptions and aesthetic aims. He developed new ways to use tonality and thematic relationships on a larger scale. While the second movement of the \textit{Fantasy}, op. 17, that 'monument for Beethoven' of late 1836, pays homage to the style of a late Beethoven \textit{scherzo}, the first both invites and defeats re-construction as a traditional sonata movement. As befits its title, it is more radical in that respect than the preceding F\textsuperscript{♯} minor, G minor and F minor sonatas. In its multiple fractures and displacements it appears the ruin of some lost sonata movement – indeed Schumann considered 'Ruins' as a title. In some imagined lost form, the fragments now visible might have had functions and a sequence making more conventional causal sense, possibly even with a different tonic. In what we have, however, glimpses of the final Beethoven theme flit across the music, like the '\textit{fata morgana}' Schumann also considered as a title, emerging clearly only at the very end; and till then C major is not stabilised. Thus a tonality and motif crucial to the resolution are not established at the start, but loom through the movement like fractured ruins and mirages of a lost state.\textsuperscript{20}

The \textit{Fantasiestücke}, of summer 1837, revolve around the relationship, frequent in late Beethoven, between tonic (F minor / F major) and submediant (D\textsubscript{♭} major), but begin from the latter. Some of the key changes appear oneiric rather than architectonic. Formal patterns include parataxis or collage. A few months later, the \textit{Davidsbündlertänze} may present as a dance sequence, but develop a tonal shape whose innovation and subtlety outdo the relatively conventional \textit{Carnaval}.


Beginning in G major, the first and third pieces offer two alternative tonal directions: through B major harmony to E minor in ‘I’, and to D major in ‘III’. Meanwhile in ‘II’, B minor breaks in as though irrationally – as it will again in ‘XVI’- ‘XVII’. Similarly, the intervening pieces imply two different tonal tracks. In ‘V’-‘IX’, there is a descent from D through G to C (touching on E♭ major); elsewhere B seems central (with colour from a mediant D♯ / E♭ major), leaving C as a Neapolitan relation. These alternative tonal universes are connected, as if by a worm-hole, by the augmented sixth chord of B minor, or VⅦ of C. The co-existence of tonal alternatives, bound up with subtle thematic relationships, is close to the heart of the work. Thus the C major of ‘XVIII’ may be in tonal terms either home or a Neapolitan relation; expressively its tonality (with its textures, dissonances and melodic echoes) is correspondingly balanced between belonging, dream and loss. The alternatives are as delicately poised as a meniscus – between tears and smiles, perhaps, as in Homer’s famous ‘δακρυόεν γελάσασα’. (Schumann’s poetic epigraph to the piece, promising ‘bliss’ but suggesting tears, may transmute his October 1837 description of his feelings about Clara as ‘at once dead and blissful’: ‘todt und selig zugleich’). Several Beethoven codas, including that of the Hammerklavier’s Adagio, involve the same Neapolitan relationship (and some give the augmented sixth chord a similar role), with not dissimilar expressive effect – though unlike Schumann, Beethoven’s conclusions re-establish an original, unequivocal tonic. Musical processes in ‘XVII’, moreover, bear comparison with the slow movement of Beethoven’s Sonata, op. 101, creating a rapt, introspective world and a sense of tension without action, into which, from a tonal distance, a memory comes naturally but unbidden, or prepared but unexpected.

Kreisleriana, of 1838, as the next chapter illustrates, consolidates these shifts. It may start from variation sets, but is not one itself. In common with other Schumann works of these years, and like a late Beethoven work, it pits mutually alien kinds of genre or style against one another, confounding historical eras, and it may exploit deliberate banality and excessive repetition. Its opening piece is in a key that comes to seem not the tonic; and indeed throughout most of the work, B♭ major (in which the most settled resolutions occur) alternates with G minor (in which the work ends), with some local ambiguity between them; and they coexist as possible home keys. Its patterns are powerful and musically complex, and it

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21 Homer, *Iliad* VI 484.
22 Briefwechsel, I 33, 36.
contains multiple echoes of late Beethoven piano sonatas. Compared to Papillons and Carnaval, these later works develop from fewer thematic cells, and harmony, melody and texture are thus arguably more closely interwoven, more deeply implicated in a work’s fundamental structures.\(^{25}\)

Schumann’s use of others’ music also evolved over the decade. He often adopted, evoked or imitated musical styles or genres, or recalled, associated or interpolated passages – from his predecessors, contemporaries or from himself.\(^{26}\) But his criticism came to imply that if good music echoes other music, in style, mood, or detail, it should do so in order to achieve a similar effect, evoke a spirit, or associate a feature of the work echoed; echoes should not be too marked or frequent, or pointlessly slavish.\(^{27}\) Correspondingly, bare imitations and quotations become increasingly rare in his music after about 1836, except for humorous purposes (for instance, setting some chords from the Marseillaise within op. 26); and musical associations tend to be more fully integrated in the musical flow.\(^{28}\) Flavours of Bach and Beethoven in Kreisleriana, for instance, carry an expressive significance better rooted in the work’s musical conception than the imitations of Chopin and Paganini in Carnaval; again, echoes of Beethoven’s An die Ferne Geliebte in the Fantasy, op. 17, or in the Nachtstücke, op. 23, are more integral than that of Schubert in the second Intermezzo, op. 4.\(^{29}\) Studies of Schumann’s borrowings from Clara Wieck over the 1830s, and of his echoes of his own works, might reveal analogous developments: away from the esoteric and flamboyant, perhaps, and towards fuller integration into a musical and expressive flow.

Finally, Schumann’s use of words in his scores became more sparing from about 1837. His use of inscriptions, markings and titles in the period up to about 1837 had been denser and more poetic than in other composers. Thus the markings in for instance Moscheles’ Charakteristische Studien, op. 95, of about 1836, employ some poetic metaphor (sussurando and come un Zeffiretto); and striking markings draw attention to themselves in Chopin’s Op. 15.3 of 1832-33 (Languido e rubato, Religioso), though these are rare in his oeuvre. But such

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\(^{27}\) GSK I 240 (Bratchi), 307 (Ries), 320-1, 388, 396, 424, 428, and 453.


markings do not approach Schumann’s in idiosyncrasy. Some of his markings are not directly playable (for instance, Op. 9 Thème du XVIIème siècle, or in a more purely musical vein the accents on the tied chords in bars 2-4 of Op. 5.1), others unusually specific about style or mood (op. 5 quasi satira, op. 6 etwas hahnbüchen); some suggest a speaking or otherwise particular voice (bassi vivi, basso parlando, Stimme aus der Ferne), or point to imitation of a musical instrument. But such markings gradually became less extravagant, and by 1842 Schumann was expressing impatience at composers’ profligacy with expressive markings in a score: ‘always a bad sign’.30

Schumann also added inscriptions and mottoes to several works (though some he deleted before final publication), and in some cycles, the individual pieces have titles. In Carnaval these identify personae or events, so that an almost narrative thread accompanies the threads of tonality, melody and form; in Fantasiestücke, titles are instead imagistic. Though Schumann insisted that the music came first and the titles later, he sometimes glossed that refrain with the admission that nevertheless an external text, image or association might have lain at the back of his mind as he composed.31 In any case, it seems natural to take these verbal additions as relevant to listeners’ interpretation of a work. Thus we can trace minor adjustments made to titles in 1837 to convey exactly what he wanted.32 Verbal changes can certainly alter the nature of a work. The revised edition of the Davidsbündlertänze in 1850, for instance, deletes ‘tänze’ from the title, adds ‘Characterstücke’, and removes the signatures to each piece (‘F’ or ‘E’) and the poetic inscriptions. If we had never known the earlier version, the revised version would suggest a miscellany of individual genre pieces, in which the personal drama evoked by the music would wilt.

But for all their potential significance, Schumann’s titles were often elusive; and a sympathetic contemporary noted in 1845 that they ‘aroused opposition’, especially from those who ‘took them for the pre-existing schema to which the music adhered’, rather than for ‘a result of reflection on the music’.33 Perhaps because by 1837 Schumann had had similar thoughts himself, or as his music

30 GSK II 249.
31 Neue Folge 54 (22 August 1834), 92 (23 August 1837), and 148 (15 March 1839); 170 (5 September 1839); compare 223 (23 November 1842) and GSK II 429, n. 400. GSK II 74 guesses that the titles only came after the music was finished for a composer (Hirschbach) whom he saw at the time as a kindred spirit. 32 According to Boetticher (Robert Schumanns Klavierwerke, 1984, 214, 207), ‘Des Abends’ was in one autograph headed ‘Einmal des Abends’, and Schumann may have considered ‘Des Nachts’ for ‘In der Nacht’. But of those rejected titles, the one is perhaps too narrative in its suggestions, the other not enough. Clearly, however, he sought to avoid suggesting a description of ‘Evening’ or ‘Night’. 33 Brendel, ‘Robert Schumann’, 1845, 90-1.
became capable in itself of more powerful expression, later works are progressively more restrained in the use of words. Though the Fantasiestücke have titles to the individual pieces, the score contains no poetic inscriptions; its markings are relatively conventional, almost all offering standard instructions as to tempo, dynamics, or manner. After 1837, inscriptions become much rarer, and though Schumann added poetic titles to the individual pieces of Kinderscenen, he did not do so again for several years. The one-word titles of Kreisleriana and the Nachtstücke each suffice to suggest a context for interpretation of the musical flow and symbolism of the entire work.

The upshot of all these changes is an alteration in the way in which the works hang together. Schumann strengthened his control of musical means – including form, harmony, melody, rhythm and texture – and their interaction in the service of a conception. Carnaval is suitably kaleidoscopic in genre, form, treatment, image, narrative: tonality and thematic patterns and gestures may root the first piece and the last three in their positions, but other pieces could have changed places. In later works musical means are more closely intertwined; and trajectories and patterns in the sequence of the work are more deeply embedded, limiting the scope to imagine alternative orderings of the pieces. This reflects in part of course differences between the particular conceptions of the works, but those differences in turn reflect a shift in more general aesthetic aims marching in step with increasingly powerful musical means.

The greater power allowed expressive qualities to develop in core musical processes, rather than through musically incidental images and gestures, verbal additions, or literary allusions. In Papillons, a giant boot and an exchange of masks, for instance, are scarcely intrinsically musical, lack wider expressive resonance, and are connected to each other only through a particular chapter in a particular book, on which their significance and coherence depend. A ‘key’ seems to be ‘missing’ (in Rellstab’s words): the music can seem to reproduce and depend on extraneous material. Carnaval solves the problem of narrative by supplying its own words as a key: it explains its vestigial narrative through its titles, which suggest identities and events as well as images. But detailed, almost narrative correspondences are detectable between the end of Carnaval and the resolution sequence in Brambilla. Thus ‘Valse Allemande’ corresponds with Giglio’s wild dance with Brambilla, ‘Paganini’ with Celionati’s conjuring tricks (through which the lovers are magically transported to the Palazzo), ‘Aveu’ with the Prince’s avowal of love, ‘Promenade’ with Pantalon’s strutting ‘Spaziergang’ (or promenade) and the sweeping movements of Brambilla, and ‘Pause’ and ‘Marche’ with the summons to
the final assembly and the triumphal end. If such correspondences obtruded, they would risk becoming programmatic; wisely, however, Schumann minimised the risk by making no connection between *Carnaval* and *Brambilla*. Correspondences of this sort may simply suggest that in the year or two before publication *Brambilla* influenced how the idea of carnival shaped largely pre-existing music into a work with a particular conception. Be that as it may, *Carnaval*, like *Papillons*, obliges a listener to trace a sequence of images running parallel to musical threads, only loosely related to them, and scarcely self-explanatory without a verbal framework.

By contrast, there is no need for a ‘missing key’ or verbal support in the later two ‘literary’ works. In them, musical means implying poetic gestures or images tend also to generate musical continuity. As the music spins its own threads, and the musical flow, free of narrative, is unmistakably its own, rather than the creature of an extraneous verbal source, the one-word titles of those works suffice. They can afford to point clearly to a particular book without risking the distraction of a programme. It is probably not a coincidence that during these years the emphasis in Schumann’s criticism on how music re-presents external material was being softened, while that on the use of musical means in the service of a unifying conception was strong.

In a longer perspective, of course, 1837-38 was no more a culmination than any other year. Schumann’s style continued to evolve. Looking back in 1839 he saw progressive ‘softening and lightening’. On 4 April, Clara Wieck, pushing him in directions in which he was already going, begged him to write something that ‘is easily understandable, and has no titles, but is a complete and coherent piece’. In 1839 his output tended to music that was imaginative and sometimes elaborate in detail, but simpler in structure and undemanding in essence, local colour replacing poetic threads. The four pieces, op. 32, and *Drei Romanzen*, op. 28, are magnificent exceptions; and the *Humoreske*, op. 20 is subtle, and full of ‘import’,

34 Hoffmann, *Brambilla* 293-4 (“See how I circle round you, and elude you just as you think you’ve caught me, held me fast. And again! And again!” and “Hey what steps, what leaps! Ever bolder!”’); 318-9; 318 (“I am yours, wholly yours now”): he solemnly swore his unchanging eternal troth to the Princess’); 315-6 (Pantalon ‘paraded up the Corso and down again with solemn dignity... His boundless solemnity gave him an almost comic air’, while ‘the Princess Brambilla ... in her splendid opulent costume, moved majestically around the Corso. She seemed to have made Pantalon her target, for she deployed her skill to circle him’). This last comes earlier in Hoffmann’s sequence than in Schumann’s.

35 *Neue Folge* 150 (15 March 1839) and 197 (28 September 1840, seeing the change as evident in op. 15), and *Briefwechsel*, I 100 (February 1838): Appendix 7. Compare Koßmaly, ‘Schumann’s Claviercompositionen’, 1844, 20, and Newcomb, ‘Schumann and the Marketplace’, 2004, 266-68.

36 *Briefwechsel*, II 469.
Schumann said; but it is relatively expansive, and parades all but a few of its complex and extraordinary effects less bewilderingly. The *Arabesque* and *Blumenstück*, opp. 18-19, are relatively straightforward. Unlike its near namesake, *Carnaval*, the *Fachingsschwank aus Wien*, op. 26, has no esoteric titles, no fleeting short pieces, and little that challenges the listener to search for threads, musical or poetic.

What makes the *Nachtstücke*, op. 23, an outlier is partly that simplification and lightening are pushed to the point of a plainness that baffles, as Chapter 9 will discuss. But this is to anticipate; first I return to 1838 and *Kreisleriana*. Here there is a dense texture of poetic and musical thought, and my presentation must accordingly be more complex. Like the *Fantasy* and *Davidsbündlertänze* – and more strikingly, in my judgement, than the later works – it creates issues about its central tonality, form and thematic construction to embody a powerfully expressive aesthetic conception.

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37 *Neue Folge*, 167 and 169 (11 and 15 August 1839).
CHAPTER 8

KREISLERIANA, OP. 16

In Schumann’s *Kreisleriana*, form and content are fused in music which resonates with Hoffmann’s *Kreisleriana*, as turbulence, dissonance and anger alternate with calm, consonance and lyricism, and contrasting musical styles and aesthetics are juxtaposed.

From an early stage of composition, the music that became Schumann’s *Kreisleriana* was based in improvisation, and connected to Bach and Hoffmann. The material took shape in Spring 1838. Entries in Schumann’s diary for late March note a study of ‘Bach’s Well Tempered Clavier and Chorale Book again from start to finish’, and for early April ‘fugues and canonic spirit in all my improvising’ – in tune with his remark, ‘whoever has learnt to wallow in Bach will surely take something of that delight over into his own imagination’.\(^1\) A connection to Hoffmann’s *Kreisleriana* was in Schumann’s mind by 13 April, when he told Clara that he had then a whole volume of new things ready, which he would call ‘Kreisleriana’; his music, he said, ‘now seems to me wonderfully entwined despite all its simplicity’ (‘wunderbar verschlungen’); presumably his phrase echoed Hoffmann’s in *Kreisleriana* (‘wunderlich verschlungenen’).\(^2\) Three days later he told a friend that a new work, ‘Kreisleriana’, had been finished in a few days: ‘there is material to ponder’ (‘da gibts zu denken dabei’). Later in April Schumann referred in his diary to a Presto that became the first piece of the set. On 3 May he said: ‘Kreisleriana done in four days’, meaning presumably that material generated through the

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2. *Briefwechsel*, I 138, 13 April 1838; Hoffmann, *Kreisleriana*, I 3, 39 (compare I Introduction, 26, I 3, 37, I 4, 45, and I 5, 50; other echoes of ‘wunderlich verschlungenen’ in Schumann include *GSK* II 81 (1842)). Hoffmann’s *Kreisleriana* were collected in two Series in his *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* (1814-15); throughout this chapter, references to them give Series and essay numbers (e.g. ‘Kreisleriana I 3’ or ‘Kreisleriana II 7’) and the page in *Fantasiestücke*, 1960. Key passages are at Appendix 7.
process of improvisation had been rapidly shaped into a number of pieces. An entry shortly after refers to a ‘Kreislerstück in G minor in $\frac{6}{8}$’, which sounds like an early version of the final piece, though a ‘Trio in D minor’ is no longer part of it. Parts of pieces (like that Trio) might still be removed, and other parts presumably added, and the work was largely ready by about July, when he sent it to Clara and to the publisher.³

Schumann put the connection with Hoffmann’s essays beyond doubt in his letter to his Belgian admirer, Simonin de Sire, of 15 March 1839:

The title can only be understood by Germans. Kreisler is a figure created by ETA Hoffmann, an eccentric, wild, inspired [geistreicher] Kapellmeister.

That letter claimed that the headings of his compositions only came into his head after the composing was finished. The second edition of the letters implies, unlike the first, that Schumann included Kreisleriana within that claim; if so, one would have to take it either as a routine claim, wrongly applied in this case, a year after the event, or as a memory that in early April he had improvised a good deal of music that only by 13 April was to be given the title Kreisleriana.⁴

Hoffmann’s two series of essays by that name contain stories, fictional letters, aesthetics and music criticism, and feature the spirits of Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; they end with a novella about the fictional Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler, of whom they form a portrait. (Hoffmann may have built on the Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders, a set of essays published by Wackenroder and Tieck in 1796: this popularized a Romantic picture of artists, featured the spirits of Raphael, Leonardo, Dürer and Michelangelo, deployed anecdotes, fictional letters, aesthetics, art-criticism, and ended with a novella about a fictional musician in a philistine society.) Kreisler, while devoted to art for its own sake, suffers from an instability that upsets the self-possession needed for creation, and in that respect cannot emulate his great predecessors in musical history, whose aesthetic stances he surveys. He is at odds with a philistine society that treats art as a form of amusement; companionship for him is rare; love is doomed to disappointment; loneliness persists.

These themes are expressed in musical symbols that permeate the essays. For literature to use musical features as symbols of human states was not unusual. Heinse’s expression of the persisting Pythagorean image of ‘the world [as] all

³ Neue Folge, 119 to Fischhof, 16 April 1838; Tagebücher, II 55.
⁴ Neue Folge 148 (compare 464 (to Whistling, 20 November 1849)). The first edition (Leipzig, 1886) has ‘my other compositions’, the second ‘all my compositions’.
music’, embedding dissonance and consonance in the cosmos, probably influenced Hölderlin’s novel *Hyperion*, which is framed by a powerful symbol of dissonance and resolution.\(^5\) A scale and final discord are similarly symbolic in Bonaventura’s *Nachtwachen* (X, 119). Julius Becker’s *Der Neuromantiker* (1840) – which has a chapter on Schumann’s *Kreisleriana* – used intervals as symbols (the minor seventh for instance as life’s discords). Hoffmann’s Kreisler had excused his use in a letter of musical symbols, hoping that the recipient will not ‘take it amiss if I express myself in very musical terms’ (‘sehr musikalisch ausdrücken’): ‘everything for me takes the shape of music’ (‘alles, alles sich mir wie Musik gestalte’). Kreisler signed off that letter, he said, with a ‘serene and reassuring final chord in the tonic’. Schumann in 1835 said of Berlioz that he ‘had to express himself musically’ (‘musikalisch aussprechen’), even if he were renouncing music, and of himself in 1839 that he could not find rest, and ‘must express it through music’ (‘durch Musik aussprechen’); he too described a letter as beginning with a discord and ending with the tonic chord.\(^6\)

In Hoffmann’s essays, therefore, contrasts between consonances and dissonances, between elaborate counterpoint, simple song and trivial genres, could readily be understood as symbols embodying rich human themes. To judge from his writings, Schumann too was deeply concerned in the late 1830s, as composer, critic and person, with some of those themes, including turbulence, isolation, and tensions between great music and the mediocre.

Such themes are embodied, through similar musical symbols, in his *Kreisleriana*. Schumann’s music does not refer or allude to Hoffmann’s words, or re-present them; it does not invite a listener to super-impose a literary narrative or programme. Rather it brings musical features and styles used in the essays as symbols of human concerns to life as music, deploying them in his own order, following his own ramifying musical patterns. The music resonates with the essays’ symbols and themes.

One symbol from Hoffmann’s essays has structural significance in Schumann’s work. In Hoffmann, Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* serve as Kreisler’s writing-paper: as the essays’ fictional ‘editor’ reports, ‘on the plain reverse side of several sheets of music, brief essays had been hastily scribbled’; and Kreisler himself talks of scribbling an essay on the back of his copy of the *Goldbergs*. The


\(^6\) Hoffmann, *Kreisleriana* II 2, 289, 292; GSK II 213 (1835); *Neue Folge*, 151, 31 March 1839; *Jugendbriefe*, 15, 17 March 1828. Schumann asked a colleague to reply to a request ‘not in a stern C\(^{\#}\) major but a mild D\(_b\) major, for in life too most ... things can be enharmonically switched’: *Neue Folge* 65 (14 September 1835).
Goldbergs function however not only as note-paper but as a central symbol. When Kreisler tries to withdraw from a philistine musical tea party, he finds that:

some devil in the guise of a dandy… has nosed out the Bach variations under my hat in the adjoining room; he thinks they are pretty little variations, ‘Nel cor mi non piu sento’, ‘Ah vous dirai-je, maman’ and the like, and demands that I rattle through them… Right, I think to myself, you can listen and burst with boredom.

Kreisler plays first the complete Goldberg Variations, and then, provoked by ‘number 30’, the ‘Quodlibet’, ‘thousands’ of improvised variations – until everyone is gone. The Goldbergs as great music are contrasted with the triviality of popular variation sets; and the contrast is sharpened by a melodic affinity between Bach’s ‘Quodlibet’ and the song ‘Ah vous dirai-je, maman’, popular variations on which the dandy expected and which Hoffmann elsewhere reviewed with disdain. Mozart’s set, for instance, opens with the tune:

Example 8.1: Mozart, Variations, K265, bars 1-8

![Example 8.1: Mozart, Variations, K265, bars 1-8](image)

Similar patterns wind through the ‘Quodlibet’, mixed with another folk tune and super-imposed on the bass from the ‘Aria’:

Example 8.2: Bach, Goldberg Variations, ‘Quodlibet’, bars 1-8

![Example 8.2: Bach, Goldberg Variations, ‘Quodlibet’, bars 1-8](image)

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7 Kreisleriana, I 1, 26-7, 30.
8 Hoffmann, Schriften zur Musik, 1963, 256-57 (1814); compare Schumann’s contempt for the poverty and ineptitude of most contemporary sets: GSK I 219.
The presence in the ‘Quodlibet’ of the tune of a comic German song (audible perhaps, in a graver aspect, in the ‘Aria’) lends the Goldbergs an elusive complexity, depth and connectedness. Ordinary material sets off profundity, and the two are inter-linked.

Commentators have pointed out that Schumann’s Kreisleriana savours of Bach. For me, it sounds in particular as though it might begin from improvisations on melodic patterns in the Goldberg Variations’ ‘Quodlibet’, that ‘number 30’ from which Kreisler’s improvisations started. Critics often find family resemblances between melodies in Kreisleriana, though each identifies different patterns. I would highlight those overlapping in 5\textsuperscript{\#} - 6\textsuperscript{\#} - 5\textsuperscript{\#} and 4\textsuperscript{\#} - 3\textsuperscript{\#} - 2\textsuperscript{\#} - 1\textsuperscript{\#} : core motifs also in ‘Ah vous dirai-je, maman’, and in the ‘Quodlibet’.\(^9\) (Schumann might have been thinking of this relationship with the ‘Quodlibet’ when he suggested that ‘the profound power of combination in recent music, the poetic and the humorous, have their origin above all in Bach ... Bach is incommensurable’).\(^10\) Differing aspects of those patterns appear throughout Kreisleriana, as triggers for quasi-improvisation, and as embodiments of differing musical styles or characters, each with its own expressive or symbolic force. The patterns are common to much music, and are not the only ones visible in Schumann’s Kreisleriana; that it is impossible to be sure how far they underlie it is part of their point. The fugitive nature of their appearances, in various loose transformations and obscure guises, adds an echo perhaps of Kreisler’s irony; and elusiveness and difficulty were parts of Schumann’s aesthetic too. But Schumann’s use throughout his work of patterns that also feature in an everyday tune shows how simple melody can be a basis for the profound as well as the trivial: a main point in Hoffmann’s essays, where...

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\(^10\) Neue Folge, 177-8 (to Keferstein, 31 January 1840).
Kreisler notes ‘the mysterious magic at the master’s command – that he can lend to the simplest melody, the most artless structure, this indescribable power of irresistible impact on every receptive spirit’.11

Alongside these melodic patterns, many other kinds of musical patterns can be discerned in Kreisleriana, which embodies an aesthetic and expressive conception in part through creating issues about its thematic construction, central tonality, style and manner, and form. Schumann, like Kreisler, sets echoes of Beethoven, and perhaps Haydn and Mozart, alongside Bachian aspects, as expressions of differing musical aesthetics contrasting with his own; juxtaposes song-like episodes with turbulence; and retains elements reminiscent of improvisation. In contemporary practice, popular variations were often a starting point for improvisation; and imaginative ‘fantasy’ was easily construed as the vehicle of an anti-bourgeois freedom, so the genre inherently encapsulated a tension between the inspired artist and philistine society. It may have served that end for the young Schumann, as for Hoffmann’s Kreisler.12

Tonally, after the opening D minor piece, B♭ major and G minor alternate throughout the work, and either could be seen as ‘the’ tonic. The first half ends by evading a decision, but ‘vi’ seems to come home to B♭ major. At the end, however, ‘vii’ descends from the opening C minor to a closing B♭; and the final piece picks up that descent as its first episode emphasises B♭, its second continues down to A minor, and it concludes on G minor. It is perhaps /schenker4/-/schenker3/-/schenker2/-/schenker1 written into the harmony, but now finally in the minor.

Structurally, in each of the work’s two halves, one pattern is that three pieces make up an A-B-A form, while the fourth adds a coda moving into a different sphere. Thus pieces ‘i’ and ‘iii’ open with a turbulence and violence that energise the entire work; each features dissonance and metric conflict in minor mode outer sections surrounding a calmer interlude. The intervening ‘ii’ contrasts consonance with dissonance in a more complex form. The fourth piece is then suspended between the B♭ major of ‘ii’ and the G minor of ‘iii’, though it ends on a chord of D. The second half both confirms and transcends these patterns. It contrasts different musical styles and aesthetics. The more complex forms are in the outer pieces of its A-B-A shape, ‘v’ and ‘vii’. The intervening B♭ major piece ‘vi’ is a sort of resolution, with little contrasting minor, and little harmonic or metric

11 Kreisleriana, I 1, 26-7, 30.
dissonance; instead it foregrounds the potentially cadential pattern \(4\rightarrow 3\rightarrow 2\rightarrow 1\). Piece ‘vii’ however is a torrent of C minor and G minor; but it ends with a coda very different from that of ‘iii’, reiterating both \(5\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow 5\) and \(4\rightarrow 3\rightarrow 2\rightarrow 1\), first in B\(\flat\) major and then in its subdominant. But that inconclusive major coda is followed by a final G minor piece, like a coda to the entire work that is both fitting and an alienation. It is not a resolution in thematic terms, with no place for the melodic pattern \(4\rightarrow 3\rightarrow 2\rightarrow 1\). At its end, the music simply vanishes.

This powerful and subtle musical conception requires no added words or parallel strands of associated narrative or image. As the music embodies and fuses literary, symbolic, expressive and music-historical aspects, it has no need of added references or parallel strands.

The first piece, in D minor, contrasts turbulence like Kreisler’s with a clarity that evokes Bach. The regularity of the overall shape, with three eight-bar sections to open, three in an interlude (bars 25-48), and an exact repeat of the opening three to conclude, only sets that turbulence – as extreme as in any previous opening Schumann had published – in sharp relief. The piece seems to begin in the middle of a rushing movement. An opening fragment \(5\rightarrow 6\) unleashes an eight-bar surge of energy. There is barely a melody; the metre is confused, the rhythm disjointed, the tonality clouded, the harmonies dissonant and unresolved. The notation of the first edition showed separate tails for the last note of the second and fourth triplets in each of the opening bars:

*Example 8.3: Schumann, Kreisleriana i, bars 1-5, first edition*

It is not until bars 10-12 that a melodic fragment appears: \(5\rightarrow 6 \rightarrow 5\rightarrow 4 \rightarrow 3\rightarrow 2\rightarrow 1\) in the minor mode (though arguably this pattern underlies the opening bars as well\(^\text{13}\)):

Example 8.4: Schumann, Kreisleriana i, bars 9-14

If this were from a conventional set of variations on a major tune like *Ah vous dirai je Maman*, these bars would be from a minor variation in the middle of the work, as in Mozart:

Example 8.5: Mozart, Variations, K265, VIII, bars 9-16

To think along those lines is to reinforce the sense that this first melodic fragment in the Schumann is not the origin of the work, but would conventionally come late in a set. Schumann’s bars 1-8 would then have occurred in the middle of such a late minor variation. The music began, that is, very much *in medias res*.

The lyrical Bb major interlude that follows has something of Bach about it:

Example 8.6: Schumann, Kreisleriana i, bars 25-26

Its stepwise melody, rhythm, triplet figuration divided between two voices, and even its notation resemble the *Goldbergs* (except for the rests, omitted in the Schumann):
Example 8.7: Bach, Goldberg Variations, XXIX, bars 17-18

If one begins to hear melodic connections in the work, the opening of the melody on $\hat{6} - \hat{5}$, and its continuation with $\hat{4} - \hat{3} - \hat{2}$ (which then plays with the avoidance of the final $\hat{1}$) might seem related to the $\hat{5} - \hat{6} - \hat{5} - \hat{4} - \hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$ pattern.

Overall, this first piece juxtaposes a turbulence like Kreisler's with the clarity and sobriety he lacked; and Schumann's third piece varies that structure and character, so that the first and third pieces frame the second. The third piece opens with rushing triplets in the tenor, whose accented beats, juxtaposed with staccato octaves in the bass, produce a G minor theme. The bass moves from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$ and back (bars 1-4), and then to $\hat{6}$ and back to $\hat{5}$ (5-10) in unbalanced phrases. In bars 11-22, a variant of this dislocated, low, percussive music ends dissonantly with three violently accented off-beat bass octaves (18-21). A B♭ major interlude, by contrast, rises in flowing steps first to a sf $\hat{6}$ (bar 35), and then to a sf $\hat{5}$ (39), and then repeats the $\hat{6}$ and $\hat{5}$ (41 and 43). Voices cross and intertwine; quintuplets, turns and delays add a sense of free improvisation. A middle section of the song flattens $\hat{6}$ (bar 51) (and one thread in the work as a whole may be the contrast between melodies that reach $\hat{6}$ and those that instead reach $\flat\hat{6}$, major or minor). The music then shifts to G♭ major to dramatise $\hat{5} - \flat\hat{6} - \hat{5}$, redoubled in the bass (bars 62-63):

Example 8.8: Schumann, Kreisleriana iii, bars 61-66

There follows a stepwise descent (78-81):

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14 The $\flat\hat{6}$ in cadences in bars 36, 90 and 160 of 'ii', 38 of 'vi', and 113 and 115 of 'vii' may be related to this pattern.
Example 8.9: Schumann, Kreisleriana iii, bars 77-82

The texture, movement and quasi-plucked alto line might suggest a lyrical love song. Unlike the first piece, this third interrupts the reprise of the opening music with a *Noch schneller* coda, whose final twenty bars pound down and up the registers in a frenzy of violence, alternating harmonies without direction, accenting beats and off-beats indifferently.

Kreisler’s ‘life as an artist kicked so hard against the pricks of all that counts as good sense and taste that there could be little doubt that his mind was deeply unsettled’; he sometimes found that through music ‘his imagination became overwrought’ and his mind escaped to a realm of ‘intricate contrapuntal twists and imitations’, where ‘none could follow without jeopardy’; his improvisations drove him mad; and the notes of his music – as in the opening of Schumann’s first piece, especially in the notation of the first edition – often ‘leap off the white page like little black many-tailed demons – they whirl me along in that wild manic gyration, and I make weird goat-springs and pull unseemly faces’.  

Great music sharpened the danger: ‘What would have become of me if … Beethoven’s mighty spirit had confronted me and seized me as if with arms of red-hot metal?’ Kreisler’s ‘friends maintained that in putting him together Nature had tried out a new recipe, and the attempt had failed’; and he ‘was tossed hither and thither by inner imaginings and dreams as if on an ever restless sea’. Schumann thought the picture of Kreisler based on an eccentric pianist called Böhner, whose imagination he compared, ‘in its dislocation, darkness and bleakness, confusion of the old and the new, to a storm or shipwreck’.

The idea and the image were traditional. Wackenroder’s Piero di Cosimo, whom ‘people took to be a highly confused and almost mad figure’, was ‘ceaselessly plagued, hounded and exhausted by a restless dark imagination’ – to

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17 *Jugendbrieve*, September 1834, 254; GSK I 366, 1838. Schumann may have been wrong about the model for Kreisler: Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism*, 1990, 182ff.
the detriment of his creative power, as ‘heaven is not reflected in a raging and foaming sea’. His Joseph Berglinger was ‘tossed on the sea of inner doubts, sometimes lifted on the waves high above other men, sometimes plunged into the deepest abyss’. Jean Paul wrote, as Schumann noted, ‘true genius calms itself from within; not the towering wave but the smooth sea mirrors the world’, but Kreisler could not achieve ‘Besonnenheit’, nor reach ‘the port which might offer him at last that peace and serenity without which an artist can create nothing’.¹⁸

Mental disturbance was a long-standing literary theme, a traditional hazard for lovers, artists and artists in love.¹⁹ Shakespeare had suggested that ‘the lunatic, the lover and the poet / Are of imagination all compact’, and Novalis that ‘madness and enchantment have much in common. A magician is an artist of madness’. The theme loomed large at the end of the eighteenth century, reacting with new interests in the ‘Bildungsroman’, in psychology and in the border between physics and the occult. Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister contains a disquisition on the treatment and types of madness, and several of its characters are on the brink. The Nachtwachen of Bonaventura featured a mad-house with several different typologies of madness satirically represented among its inmates, one a poet, another a victim of disappointed love. In Goethe’s Tasso the poet-hero is driven mad in part, as Schumann noted in 1835, by unrequited love: ‘But She, but She! Hence it was that Tasso entered the mad-house’.²⁰

Kreisler suffered similarly. A woman’s voice might promise him healing, but he was ‘driven to the highest pitch of madness through a quite fantastic love for a singer’. For him, when ‘the heavenly form that had penetrated my innermost heart … dissolved into mist’, ‘every desolate sigh of that yearning … was turned into the raging pain of wrath’. Likewise, his ‘friend and companion’, the mild ‘young poet’ Baron Wallborn, ‘found in unrequited love madness and a healing death’. He had once thought his music had touched his beloved’s soul, only to find ‘the angel’s lips twisted into … an overpowering yawn’; and that, Wallborn confessed, was ‘the reason why I have become what people call crazed’.²¹

¹⁹ Ziolkowski, German Romanticism, 1990, chapter 4; Blackall, Novels of the German Romantics, 1983, chapter 9.
²⁰ A Midsummer Night’s Dream V.i. 7-8; Novalis, Schriften, V, 1988, 269-70 (499); Goethe, Wilhelm Meister, V.16 (Werke, vol. 4, 1973, 310-13); GSK II 214. Schumann re-read Goethe’s Tasso shortly after completing his Kreisleriana: Mottosammlung III 5ff..
²¹ Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, I 1, 31-32, II Introduction, 284-5, II 2, 291; II 1, 287-8.
Wallborn was for Kreisler an alter ego. But each was condemned to separation and loneliness. Their letters to each other were never delivered, and they themselves vanished, in the ultimate expression of isolation. Wallborn signed his letter to Kreisler as from ‘the lonely Wallborn’, and disappeared. As for Kreisler, the essays had opened with the emblematic question: ‘Where is he from? Nobody knows’ (echoed by Schumann, talking of his mysterious friend, the old Captain: ‘Nobody asked where he came from, or where he went’); now the editor noted of Kreisler that ‘once, no-one knew how or why, he had disappeared’; he had ‘confessed to me that he had resolved upon death and would stab himself in the nearby forest with an augmented fifth’.  

The culture was rich in images of artists estranged from the real world, and of men disappearing into isolation or death, like Augustin in Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister, or the heroes of Hölderlin’s Empedocles, and Tieck’s William Lovell and Der Runenberg. Such literary images may have struck Schumann because they resonate with his own experience. From his youth, Schumann had known of the artist’s need for ‘isolation as an active, contemplative, creative peace, the friend of Art’; and he had told his mother once he became a published composer, ‘From here on,... I stand alone’. He wrote in 1834: ‘The artist should communicate with people and the world in a friendly manner, like a Greek god; but if the world dares to interfere, he may have to disappear’. Now, around the time of his work on Kreisleriana, he often expressed the artist’s vulnerability, isolation and need for companionship and love. He talked of the artist’s need, if he is to create, for ‘the deepest isolation’. He told Clara, ‘I am so isolated and lonely on my path’, and he had nobody to talk to about his music; he wrote to a friend of his ‘fairly lonely path’, on which ‘a real companion in art is a rarity’, and ‘only my great predecessors Bach and Beethoven look on me from afar and offer support’; and he gratefully accepted Henriette Voigt’s appreciation of his op. 12, saying, presumably in an allusion to the woman who succoured the wounded and isolated Wilhelm Meister, ‘I have need of such Amazons’.

He confessed to Clara in February 1838 that in 1833 he had felt in danger of ‘losing his reason’. A doctor had given him the conventional advice that he find a

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22 Hoffmann, *Kreisleriana*, II 2, 289; I Introduction, 26 & 25 (imitating Diderot’s *Jacques le fataliste* and imitated by GSK I 261, 1837); II Introduction, 284-5.
24 GSK II 188, 1827-8; *Jugendbriefe*, 172ff, 8 May 1832; GSK I 19, 1834.
good woman. In 1836 an agitated depression recurred (‘a deep depression out of which I can’t lift myself for work’), perhaps precipitated by the death of his mother and his enforced separation from Clara. He told his sister-in-law Therese, ‘I have no womanly presence to guard me’; ‘in my deadly agitation [‘tödtlichen Herzensangst’] ... I have no-one but you to take me by the hand and protect me’. He confided in his landlady his ‘deadly agitation’ (‘tödtliche Angst’) and ‘wonderful hours’ of what we might call hyper-activity: ‘when my mood is elated, it often develops into a sort of over-confidence in which I could take the whole world by storm; and the reaction follows hard on its heels, and then the artificial treatments. The right treatment for such dangerous extremes is, I well know, a loving woman’. Schumann’s diary laconically captured a ‘change in my nature’ from July 1837 on, ‘and genuine yearning for a wife’.26

Musical features symbolise the soothing effect on Kreisler’s troubled mind of his comrade in art, Wallborn, and the anguish of his loneliness:

You, Sir, to whom I will sing in all those friendly thirds, are none other than that Baron Wallborn whom I have carried in my heart so long that it seems to as if all my melodies are shaped like him ... as if I were him himself... So you see, Baron Wallborn, I promise you solemnly that I will be you, and just as full of love, mildness and respect as you ... All the sevenths evaporate into proper thirds.

But it was not to last:

How much I had still to say – unresolved dissonances howled unremittingly at my innermost self, but just as all the snake-fanged sevenths were about to settle into a whole lucid world of friendly thirds – right then you, Sir, were gone – gone – and the snakes’ fangs bit and pierced!

Nevertheless, he signed his letter off with ‘Let this be the serene and reassuring final chord in the tonic’.27

Schumann’s second piece, sehr innig und nicht zu rasch, creates a conflict between thirds and sevenths. In the opening section, middle voices move broadly in parallel and often a third apart. Thirds or sixths figure in three-quarters of the chords in bars 1-8, and dominate 12-16; for seven bars from 29, there is an unbroken run of parallel thirds on every quaver in the inner voices. In bars 1-6, successive waves of swelling melody are grouped in bars, but the treble implies

26 Briefwechsel, I 95 (compare Tagebücher I 419; in Goethe a good woman is the best cure: Wilhelm Meister, VII 10, Werke, vol. 4, 1973, 542); Neue Folge, 74, 2 July 1836 (‘tiefen Seelenschmerz’; compare Briefwechsel I 33 (October 1837): ‘depressive to the point of illness’); Neue Folge, 72, 1 April 1836, and 83, 31 December 1836; 73, 1836 (undated); compare Briefwechsel I 101 (February 1838); Tagebücher, II 33.
27 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, II 2, 289-92.
three three-bar groups in $\frac{3}{4}$, reaching up from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{6}$ and falling back to $\hat{3}$ on the implied downbeats; Schumann plays on traditional associations of this melodic pattern with gentle pastoralism and parallel thirds. In bars 6-8, $\hat{5} - \hat{4} - \hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$ supervenes, but melodic resolution is undercut by dislocated tonal and metric developments:

Example 8.10: Schumann, Kreisleriana ii, bars 1-8

![Example 8.10: Schumann, Kreisleriana ii, bars 1-8](image)

The waves thereafter are extended or compressed, overlain, and varied in melody, harmony and rhythm, with occasional contrary motion. The harmonic lucidity is no more unqualified than the metric, as in bars 12-20 an upper voice creates passing dissonances of seconds and sevenths. Some have heard in the metrical ambiguity, the ‘odd commingling of pacification and disturbance’, and the continual undermining of the dominant harmony an undercurrent of persistent quiet madness; in the light of Schumann’s title, I would take it as a disturbed yearning for consonance of souls.¹⁹

The flowing legato waves, reaching up, contrast with the downward push of two Intermezzi. The first is a brisk and simpler $\frac{3}{4}$, staccato and forte. Its initial melody might recall, in its upbeat, and the shape of its opening and closing bars (37-8 & 40-1), the lyrical interlude of the first piece (24-6 & 31-2). But in place of the expansive bars 28-30 of that interlude, with its melodic repetitions and lilting rhythm, here there is a merely functional join (39-40) to the end of the melody,

and the regular markings of *forte* or *sforzando* on the last quaver of each of bars 37-46 undercut and so flatten the metre. Compared to the lyrical interlude, or the opening *legato* waves, this music is coarser, almost dismissive. In *Intermezzo II* in G minor (bars 91-118), the density of dissonance, metrical and harmonic, and in particular of sevenths, builds up. It opens with a dotted motif (like a minor version of that in *Goldbergs* XXVI) that starts $\hat{6} - \hat{5} - \hat{4}$, and falls in sequences to $\hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$ by bar 95. But then the sequence becomes stuck, repeatedly starting from A; and from bar 100, accents stress the second beat of each bar, while the bass (whose off-beat semitone rise recalls that of the opening of the first piece, though here *pp*), obstinately emphasises the third beats as well. Metrical and harmonic conflict gradually intensify. The melody features tritone leaps in each of bars 101-105, and 100-106 have an extraordinarily high density of sevenths among other dissonances. In bars 103-8 the accented second beats are harsh dissonances, metrically exacerbated in two unmarked bars of $\frac{2}{4}$ (107-108).\(^{30}\) The canon at the seventh in the *Goldbergs* (XXI) has a similar relative density of dissonance, compared to the thirds and sixths that dominate IX and XVIII.

Material from the opening returns after the first *Intermezzo*, with a similar ending. In bars 24-37 and 78-91 the waves reach an expressive climax where three voices rise to a high A, then, over a deep bass pedal on I, the treble falls on alternate downbeats to $\hat{6}$, $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{4}$; but instead of reaching $\hat{3}$ and falling to $\hat{1}$, the return home goes awry. As the music slows, the hands converge, as though about to be united on a tonic chord on the third quaver of bars 35 and 89; but they cross and are swept apart (the notation emphasising the symbolism, rather than placing the upper voice in the right hand):

*Example 8.11: Schumann, Kreisleriana ii, bars 33-37*

![Example 8.11: Schumann, Kreisleriana ii, bars 33-37](image)

In an *Adagio* bar an accented interval of a flattened sixth might recall that of the cadence in *Goldbergs* XIII (bars 16 and 32). Perhaps the gesture is of a promised

but unfulfilled convergence of souls, and the resultant stab of desolation – with Kreislerian resonances, albeit delivered by a flattened sixth rather than an augmented fifth.

After the second Intermezzo, though the opening tempo and rhythm return, the ‘snake-fanged sevenths’ fail ‘to settle into a whole lucid world of friendly thirds’. The music instead descends into airless depths, and repeats the descent (bars 118-126). However it works its way out of this depression, briefly tonicising D minor, B♭ major, A major and emerging onto V/ii of the latter – where in a sudden vision, the opening motif appears, initially in the foreign key of F♯ major, then enharmonically notated in G♯ major, and then again in B♭ major with the pitches of bars 1-2. But unlike in bar 2, the passage now ends with an accented flattened sixth, echoing those heard before (and notated in 138 as an augmented fifth). The music breaks down, and a brief cadenza (bars 140-1) adopts an air of recitative, with a turn and accelerando arpeggios in the bass; then two bars of Adagio hint at the motif, and the tentative style, in which for Schumann the poet steps forward to speak, as at the end of the contemporary Kinderszenen; but the moment passes. The music, that is, climbs from a low to an initially strange vision of familiar music, promising that a poet will speak.

Kreisler’s letter to Wallborn uses very similar musical features as images of a ‘feeling of great strangeness yet great familiarity’, as a ‘young nobleman’ approached: an odd sequence of chords began to stir and swell higher and higher... The wild sequence of chords melted into gentle angel harmonies that spoke magically of the poet's life and nature.

It became clear to Kreisler ‘from what key the whole set forth’, as he recognised Wallborn.31 Schumann uses these musical features to create his own vision, motivated and making sense wholly within the musical process: an association with Hoffmann’s text is both fitting and unnecessary, a resonance rather than a programmatic key.

In a coda, the hands again converge and are swept apart. The flattened sixth is converted (bar 161) into an augmented sixth, from which spins out an Adagio concluding cadence on the tonic B♭ major. In any other work a solid cadence on the tonic might be ordinary; but in Schumann’s first edition it is highlighted because the fourth and fifth pieces have no such cadence, while the first and third have cadences that are abrupt or violent, the sixth tinged with ♭II and on the mediant, the seventh a weak cadence in the wrong key, and the last

31 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, II 2, 290.
un-harmonised. Here the coda is like a valedictory blessing tinged with a melancholy that persists even through ‘the serene and reassuring final chord in the tonic’:

Example 8.12: Schumann, Kreisleriana ii, bars 158-165

From the furor that ends Schumann’s third piece emerges the fourth, sehr langsam, in B♭ major. It begins in dialogue and ends in silence, as something vanishes from our world. A slow melody seems to start in mid-phrase; the long eight-beat bars obscure both bar-line and beat, landing on 6 and 5, and then \( \frac{4}{3} - \frac{3}{2} - \frac{2}{1} \):

Example 8.13: Schumann, Kreisleriana iv, bars 1-2

The theme drifts inexorably in a subdominant direction, and by bars 4-7 all sense of metre is lost. The style and melodic shape, including the turn, may again recall Der Dichter Spricht from Kinderscenen, here carrying a burden of tangled human emotions, such that the poet stepping forward to speak is more Prospero than Puck. It is both an improvisation on a single melodic thought and an unsettled, sombre dialogue of kindred poetical spirits; but it issues in monologue when the upper voice disappears. The bass then moves slowly down a G minor scale without accompaniment (bar 10), coming to a halt on a low unharmonised and tonally
ambiguous B♭. There is nothing explained. There are long rests (bar 11). Something has passed out of our world into the depths, and silence supervenes.

Thereafter a tune in even crotchets climbs up a G minor scale, with octave displacements and a chromatic insertion; an answer (from bar 13) climbs a B♭ major scale and falls again, without displacements or chromatic notes – like a straightened-out version. It is a simple tune with a simple accompaniment, albeit in artful suspension between G minor and B♭ major. A second time round the answer reaches F♯ (bar 20) – with a rest in the figuration like a catch in the throat as the harmony pauses on IV (third beat) – before rising further. Repeating the pattern in bar 21 a third higher, it jumps to a pianissimo high D, and as that note and its accompanying arpeggiated chord are released (bar 22) into a C minor chord, and the G minor tune restarts, there is a sense of untying, of floating up (the more so with the first edition’s ‘ritard.’ at the end of 21):

Example 8.14: Schumann, Kreisleriana iv, bars 18-23

Under the melody, a two-bar rising scale in the bass had circled round four times, and after pausing in bars 20-1, it resumes its circling: as though this vision of the release of a simple melody were only a dream of freedom.

On one occasion, Kreisler describes himself in another musical symbol as a ‘harmless melody’ craving freedom, or as a ‘basso ostinato’, repeatedly or compulsively circling, and echoing his name, ‘Kreisler’, or ‘Circler’:

33 Compare the ‘lift’ and ‘suspension’ Hatten (Interpreting Musical Gestures, 2004, 203-04) finds in Beethoven’s C major Cello Sonata, op. 102, and elsewhere.
‘a dark shadow has passed over my life! Don’t you think a poor innocent melody that craves no place on earth might be granted its freedom to waft harmlessly through the great expanses of the heavens? Oh, I’d like to sail away through that window right now.’ ...

‘As a harmless melody?’ interrupted his true friend, smiling; ‘Or as basso ostinato, if you prefer, but I must move on soon one way or another’.

And it soon turned out as he had spoken.34

Kreisler, that is, vanished.

When Schumann’s opening music returns, there is only the first entry and a subdominant answer descending into the bass. It fades away with a ritard. to Adagio and ends, in the first edition, on a bare chord which could be either D major or minor. It is barely a resolution. During this mysterious, almost consecrated cadence, an after-image of bars 8-11 may remain in the mind, with its lonely disappearance into silence. The cadence is reminiscent, perhaps, of that in bars 181-2 of the slow movement of Beethoven’s op. 132, with its diatonically unorthodox C₇, similarly overdue resolutions and bare final chord of D (albeit starting from a different tonality).

It could have been the end of the work. But Schumann has more to say; and Beethoven’s late quartets might well have taught him how to follow such an Adagio. A sardonic Scherzo introduces the second half of the work, in which, as in Hoffmann’s essays, the great composers and their music may loom as emblems of different kinds of music and symbols of different modes of imaginative apprehension, of relating to the world.35 In Hoffmann’s Kreisleriana, Bach figures in the first essay, and recurs in the fifth:

There are moments – especially after I have immersed myself in the works of the great Sebastian Bach – when the numerical relationships of music, and indeed the mystic laws of counterpoint, awake in me a deep dread. Music! I invoke you with an eerie shudder, even with horror! You! – Nature’s primal language expressed in notes!


Bach’s counterpoint, with its ‘wonderful entwinements’, epitomises music’s mysterious kinship with the nature of the cosmos. Beethoven figures in the second

34 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana II 3, 296-7.
35 Charlton, Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 1989, 35-6, interprets them narrowly as paradigms of excellence in branches of music.
36 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, I.5, 50, excerpted by Schumann in Dichtergarten, 305.
essay as a ‘mighty spirit’ too powerful for vulnerable minds; the fourth takes him as its subject. It starts from his predecessors, Haydn and Mozart. In Haydn, ‘the expression of a child-like serenity prevails’; ‘the majority of people can measure themselves against Haydn, and grasp him’. Mozart ‘lays claim to the supernatural that dwells deep inside human nature’, and ‘leads us into the depths of the world of spirits’ where ‘fear embraces us’, and ‘love and melancholy sound in graceful spirit voices’. But it is Beethoven who ‘penetrated the innermost being’ of instrumental music: his works ‘awake that infinite yearning that is the essence of Romanticism’.

It is an interpretation of musical history which Schumann adopted in part. In 1838, his eye was caught by Zelter’s comment, perhaps influenced by Hoffmann, that Bach was ‘dreaded but also divine’. Bach was Schumann’s ‘daily bread’, ‘one of the greatest creators of all time’, ‘inexplicable as ever’, with a ‘boldly labyrinthine style’, many of whose fugues ‘are character pieces of the highest kind, sometimes truly poetic creations’. While Schumann thought Haydn one of the great composers, not least of string quartets, he shared something of Hoffmann’s idea that his music is a little too comfortable: ‘he is like a familiar friend of the family, always received with pleasure and respect, but no longer with any deeper interest for today’. His view of Mozart deepened with age, making room perhaps for Hoffmann’s insight that in him grace, while ever present, can sometimes be driven by dread; but in 1839, he wondered what Mozart might have achieved if he had known Bach in his entirety, rather than in part. In 1835 he had said that Haydn and Mozart brought an elastic grace to music, while Beethoven, entering the Viennese ball-room unkempt like Hamlet, found it constricting, and burst out into the dark night. Schumann had the advantage over Hoffmann of coming to know Beethoven’s late works too: he spoke of the Quartets, Opp. 127 and 131, as works ‘for whose greatness no words can be found, works which alongside some chorales and original pieces by Sebastian Bach seem the outer limits that human art and imagination have reached to date’. Schumann spoke of ‘the highest kind of music, as Bach and Beethoven have given us in some compositions’, and said: ‘I am satisfied only by the ultimate – Bach almost always, Beethoven above all in his later works.’

37 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, I 3, 39, I 4, 42-3.
38 Mottosammlung, I 197 (echoed in GSK I 403); GSK I 305 (1837), 376, 357 and 354 (1838); Briefwechsel I 126 (March 1838).
39 GSK I 333, 1838, and II 54, 1841: I 328 (1838); Neue Folge, 177, GSK I 390, 1839. If in the last of Hoffmann’s essays (see below), Chrysostom carries some allusion to Mozart, his only partial absorption of counterpoint may point to a similar notion. See Charlton, Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 1989, 39-40.
40 GSK I 107 (1835), 380 (compare II 420 n. 365) and 343 (1838); Neue Folge, 157 (to Krüger, 14 June 1839).
A gulf yawns between such great art and the philistine. Hoffmann in one essay ironically allowed a philistine to speak:\footnote{Hoffmann, \textit{Kreisleriana}, I 3, 36-41.} Some unfortunate enthusiasts ... call the wholly useless games of counterpoint – that do nothing to cheer the listener up and so completely miss the real purpose of music – thrilling arcane combinations, and are ready to compare them with inextricably entwined mosses, herbs and flowers.

By contrast, ‘a successful composition ... keeps demurely within bounds and has one pleasant melody after another’. The philistine lauded music produced from simple pre-fabricated components, a means to rest, recreation, entertainment, or mood-management, like modern ‘elevator music’: ‘let me take you into the domestic circle, where Father, tired from the serious business of the day, ... cheerfully smokes his pipe to the Murki of his son’.\footnote{Murkis – derided by German 18th century theorists as banal – have a bass of broken octaves, normally rising by steps; see Halski, ‘Murky’, 1958, 35-37.} Bourgeois society requires that an artist supply such a commodity, and if instead he pours his heart into playing masterpieces, it yawns, or chatters:

Has it never happened to you, that you went off six or seven rooms away from the chattering company to play or to hear some piece of music, only to find the company had come running to hear – and gossiped as loudly as they could?

Such a world, said Wallborn, is ‘horribly cramped for people like us’.\footnote{Hoffmann, \textit{Kreisleriana}, II 1, 286-87.} And it is in part through infecting trivial music – such as popular variations – and maltreating great music that society persecutes a true musician, and isolates him from his fellows.

The conflict between philistine and artist had often been described. It arises in Moritz’s \textit{Die Neue Cecilia}. Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister is warned in his ‘Lehrbrief’ against ‘mediocrity’, teases a philistine for turning everything into a commodity, and discusses the manifold pressures on artists to embrace ‘the mediocre’, including society’s tendency to ‘reduce everything’ to its own mental capacity, ‘to so-called effect, so that everything becomes relative’. In Wackenroder’s \textit{Herzensergießungen}, the aspiring composer Berglinger sets his emotional reaction to music against the prevailing empty-headed insensitivity. The philistine merchants in Novalis’ \textit{Heinrich von Ofterdingen} are imitated in Hoffmann’s ‘Der Artushof’.\footnote{Boulby, \textit{Moritz}, 1979, 222; Goethe, \textit{Wilhelm Meister}, VII 9, VIII.1 and 7 (\textit{Werke}, vol. 4, 1973, 444, 448 and 513-4; compare Watkins, \textit{Metaphors of Depth}, 2011, 92-3); Wackenroder, \textit{Herzensergießungen}, 1948, 101-2 (compare...}
Schumann’s criticism, which frequently opposed the ‘philistine’ to great art, was in large part ‘a seawall against the mediocre’.\(^{45}\) As Florestan, Schumann excoriated himself: ‘Did you study Marpurg, dissect the *Well Tempered Clavier*, learn Bach and Beethoven by heart, just to weep at a miserable aria by Donizetti?’; and vented his self-disgust by parodying the aria; Schumann the hack reviewer complained, ‘if you had any idea with what reluctance I turn to such miserable compositions, you’d feel sorry for me. But after taking them to pieces, I usually reach for my old Bach: he gives me back strength to work and zest for art and life’.\(^{46}\)

But the everyday may not be dismissed. In Hoffmann, Wallborn speaks up for amateur music-making:

> Look, Johannes, you seem to me very harsh in your zeal against all music that is not the work of genius… Such tootling, whether dance or march, reminds us of the highest that lies within us.

And Kreisler concedes the point:

> When my inner music streamed forth – playfully and childishly and with childlike enjoyment – in all sorts of cheerful melodies, amusing *Murkis* and waltzes, you, Sir, … did not heed the sorcery with which the mocking Puck … led me on this evening. In such cases, when under the spell of some imp, I know I often pull some peculiar faces.\(^{47}\)

(Schumann shared Kreisler’s suspicion of ‘amusement’, deriving the French word from the Greek for ‘Without Muse’: ‘in that sense many a concert is indeed an amusement’).\(^{48}\) Kreisler goes on:

> The music-making of hoi polloi often drives me to furious rage, but … when I’ve been properly battered and beaten by some bravura aria or concerto or sonata without redeeming features, then some unpretentious little melody, sung by a mediocre voice or played with uncertain stumbles, but meant well and honestly and genuinely felt, could often comfort and heal me.

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\(^{46}\) For instance *GSK* I 347 (1838); 384 (1839); see also 85, 219 (1835-6) and 438 (1839). *Neue Folge*, 123 (to Hirschbach, 13 June 1838) calls for a campaign against the philistines. Compare *Mottosammlung* I 212 (1838).\(^{46}\)

\(^{47}\) *GSK* II 283, 1835; *Neue Folge*, 103, 4 December 1837.\(^{47}\)

\(^{48}\) Hoffmann, *Kreisleriana* II 1, 288, II 2, 290-1.\(^{48}\)

\(^{48}\) *Mottosammlung*, IX 227 (source unknown, copied 1834 or before); compare *GSK* I 500, and 437, where Schumann uses Hoffmann’s German word, ‘ergötzen’, with equal ambivalence.
In 1835-38, Schumann noted similarly indulgent comments. Goethe had written, ‘there are pieces that are empty without being bad’. Thibaut had said that ‘even mediocre stuff may retain some respect, as long as it is not degenerate or distorted. A person is not required to read the Psalms or Homer every second of the day’. And Thibaut had refused to ‘criticise some currently well-loved songs half as sharply as art-lovers may have’: ‘a large part of the public has taste and capacity only for the mediocre.’ Several years earlier Schumann had noted Novalis’ remark that ‘there is room for some fine achievements in the field of bad and mediocre writing. To date there has been little but bad and mediocre writing about it – but a philosophy of the bad, the mediocre and the vulgar would be of the highest importance’. Goethe’s Wilhem Meister (VI) described an education of taste from mediocre pietistic hymns to masterpieces by Italian Renaissance composers; and Schumann agreed that music ‘should exist to suit every stage of development’: ‘the more widespread the taste for art, the better’. He knew that serious music could use the trivial for its own purposes, admittedly including parody.  

Some of this resonates in Schumann’s work. His fifth piece opens pianissimo in G minor with a jumpy staccato figure which could seem to embody Kreisler’s (or Puck’s) ‘weird goat-springs’. Bar 4 offers a familiar Ė-Ş-Ś-Ŷ-İ, subsequently treated to Bachian imitations – or perhaps it is Bach as seen in a late Beethoven scherzo, such as the Vivace Alla Marcia from Beethoven’s Piano Sonata Op. 101. A second section (bars 15-37) reinforces that. It features Ė and Ş in B♭ major, then Ė and Ş in D♭ major, with two voices in canonic imitation, a texture opened by rests, insistent dotted rhythms, accented cross-rhythms, sharp dynamic contrasts, and a sense of Bach’s influence; bars 26ff in particular share the key, melodic shape, and rhythm of Beethoven’s bars 30-33, and bars 30-36 their imitative and sequential treatment and function as retransition:

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49 Mottosammlung, I 202 (from Zelter’s letter to Goethe of 7 June 1828, which itself echoed Goethe); V 255-6 (compare GSK II 137); IX 193 (from Novalis, Schriften, V, 1988, 234 (269)); GSK I 96 and I 79 (1835), 182 and 185 (1836).

50 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, II 2, 291-2.
Example 8.15: Schumann, Kreisleriana v, bars 28-37

Sequential imitations:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{upper:} \\
\text{tenor:}
\end{array}
\]

Example 8.16: Beethoven, Piano Sonata, op. 101, Alla Marcia, bars 30-33

Sequential imitations:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{upper} \\
\text{tenor}
\end{array}
\]

As Hoffmann’s philistine contrasted such arcane music with ‘pleasant melodies’, so Schumann’s third section (bars 51ff) juxtaposes to these evocations of Bach and Beethoven an undemanding G minor waltz. Its texture is very different from the sophisticated and free-flowing music that came before: block chords are followed by unison octaves. Root position harmonies largely repeat simple harmonic moves (iv-vi\textsuperscript{5}-i or iv-V-i). A square two-bar motif occurs thirteen times in thirty bars. Is it an ironic parody (similar to those found in the Humoreske)?\textsuperscript{51} Is the irony the sharper if this melody too emphasises, on every other downbeat, i, 5, 6, and 5 again, as though derived from the same germ as the most profound music in the

work? It eventually gives rise to a fourth section: a forte outburst in E♭ major in which the waltz pattern is pounded to fortissimo destruction (bars 63-68) and then torn apart in sharply accented hemiolas, with a trite Murki in the treble. But if this is an example of those ‘amusing Murkis and waltzes’, it is as angrily scorned by Kreisler: the conventional ascending broken octaves have been given idiosyncratic features, mocked by a bass with two strands of irregular upward movement in semitone steps.\footnote{52}

The form then retraces its steps from this fourth section through returns of the third, second (bar 105), and finally first sections (128). It is as though the sardonic opening material and the Beethoven-like material continued all the while in different rooms through which a listener moves, reaching the one in which the Murki follows the waltz, and then retracing the path (perhaps as party-goers in Hoffmann’s Kreisleriana move from one room to another in search of diverting music).\footnote{53} At the end the descending dotted overlapping sequences halt (bar 140) on a cadence which in the first edition is not on i but on V: an inconclusive end, and one that links the piece to its predecessor.

The final D of the fifth piece (in the first edition) is picked up by the first note of the sixth. From it winds a slow movement: in musical and emotional terms, a still centre as close to home as the work permits. A pianissimo B♭ major melody unfolds in a ⁴⁄₈ marked sehr langsam, durchaus leise zu halten. Bars 1-2 sustain an F, ⁵, while bars 3-4 emphasise ⁶ and then fall back ⁵-⁴-³. Tonic, dominant and subdominant sound in glowing tenths, perhaps related to the thirds in the second piece. As in that piece, and the fourth (bars 1-10), voices move together in metrical consonance. Here a baroque-style improvisation provides contrast, alternating rapid demi-semiquaver runs and sharply-accented chords (not unlike the seventh or sixteenth of the Goldbergs). A sequence of harmonies, described by Deahl as ‘kaleidoscopic’,\footnote{54} eventually melt back into B♭ major (bars 8-11).\footnote{55} A third statement of the opening music seems to begin at bar 17, but immediately starts to dance in an etwas bewegter ⁶.\footnote{56} The sequential treatment of the ascending motif, with its dominant pedal and movement towards iii (bars 19-24), is broken for an accented statement of ⁴-³-²-¹ (24-6) as the harmony touches on the tonic (25): it might be a home-coming, if only melody and harmony had been synchronised:

\footnote{52} Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, II 2, 290 and 291. Interestingly, Beethoven’s Vivace alla Marcia has a Murki near its end.
\footnote{53} Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, I 1, 30; II 1, 286-7.
\footnote{55} The B♭ II harmony, descending octave arpeggios, ritard., and dynamics in bars 8-9 resemble bars 131-134 of ‘ii’, perhaps with similarly Kreislerian associations.
Example 8.17: Schumann, Kreisleriana vi, bars 21-34

The pattern of a quick, brusque movement (piece ‘v’) followed by a slow one (piece ‘vi’) that is gradually animated into a spiritualised dance occurs in Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, Op. 111 (which Schumann presumably knew by 1838, though his first attested encounter is 1842).\textsuperscript{56} The faster pace, carolling rhythm, and dominant pedal of Schumann’s bars 17ff may evoke such a dance, and along with the melodic shape and sequential treatment of 28 and 30, they resemble bars 16-18 of Beethoven’s \textit{Arietta}:

Example 8.18: Beethoven, \textit{Sonata op. 111, Arietta}, bars 14-18

Schumann’s \textit{Adagio} final cadence is once again shadowed (bar 38) by $\flat \hat{6}$, as at the end of \textit{Goldbergs} XIII. If there is melancholy, it is now, unlike in pieces ‘ii’ or ‘iv’, transfigured by a redeeming power in music of a sort embodied not least in passages of late Beethoven. The piece reaches a conclusion in B\textsubscript{b} major, which one

\textsuperscript{56} Bischoff, \textit{Monument für Beethoven}, 1994, 448, using GSK II 81.
might take as the home key of the work; but *Kreisleriana*, part of whose point is that Schumann’s aesthetic is not Beethoven’s, will not reach that home again.

Instead, the seventh piece opens in C minor. This opening may recall the third piece – in its accented step-wise upward motif in the tenor, rapid treble figuration, discrete chords in the bass, and of course minor mode. It has some classical touches, and something of the Viennese ‘C minor’ style (compare for instance the opening of the finale of Haydn’s String Quartet op. 76.3); and in a G minor passage (bars 9-33), something too of the character that Hoffmann attributed to Mozart, who ‘leads us into the depths of the world of spirits’, where ‘fear embraces us’:

*Example 8.19: Schumann, Kreisleriana vii, bars 9-14*

\[\text{G minor motifs:} \quad |----| \quad |----| \quad |---------| \]

Mozart’s G minor Symphony, K 550, with its similar motifs, may be emblematic of the character Schumann wished to convey:

*Example 8.20: Mozart, Symphony, K550, first movement, bars 1-3*

\[\text{G minor motifs:} \quad |--------| \quad |-----| \quad |----------| \]

A new episode (bars 40-68) begins as if a *fugato*, with a C minor theme whose core varies $\frac{5}{2} - 4 - \frac{3}{2} - 1$:
There is perhaps an eighteenth-century flavour to the motif. Rising sequences and motifs and a circle of fifths in bars 52-61 suggest a ‘development’; the dominant of C minor (59-67) evokes a ‘retransition’ to a tonic ‘recapitulation’ (69-88) of material played in G minor in the ‘exposition’. Though such aspects are suggestive of sonata form, classical balance is not restored: the ‘recapitulation’, with its whirlwind energy and accelerated tempo, seems not so much a balancing resolution as a continuing development.

Out of the ‘recapitulation’ emerges a ‘coda’ (bar 89) in B♭ major, based on a melody akin to the opening motif (1-2). But it is a different world: a simple tune played in three pairs of regular phrases, and treated to simple textbook harmonisation.57 Downbeats fall on the familiar pattern:

When it begins again in E♭ major (bar 100), this ‘unpretentious little melody’ shows unexpected capacity to ‘comfort or heal’, in Kreisler’s words. The harmony becomes less schoolbook from bar 105; there are markings of *ritard.*, a chromatic grace note in 109, and a ♭6 in the final cadence, as in piece ‘vi’ and *Goldbergs* XIII. A square, popular tune made a natural cadential theme for Haydn or Beethoven; Schumann qualifies that function by the weak cadence in a key that is home neither for the piece nor the work as a whole. But that ♭5 cadence links the seventh piece not only to its predecessor, which likewise added a ♭6 to a cadence ending on ♩, but also to the fourth and fifth pieces.

In Tunbridge’s words, by lifting the C minor opening theme to its relative major, the coda serves to confirm its relationship to the theme ‘and perhaps grant it redemption’.\(^58\) Or one could see the coda as continuing and developing the debate about simple and arcane music that had opened up in Schumann’s fourth and fifth pieces: in the fourth a simple tune circled and was released as if in a fleeting dream; in the fifth a repetitive waltz was juxtaposed with ‘convoluted’ counterpoint and hammered to destruction, and a conventional *murki* treated to mockingly idiosyncratic treatment. Now in the seventh, after the whirlwind, there is a milder acknowledgement of the power of even the simplest music. That music is not only redemptive; it is also poignant. The coda is in one sense the triumph of what both Schumann and Hoffmann saw as the familiar humanity of Haydn, in the face of the driven (Mozartean?) energy of the rest of the piece. The time and key signatures, melodic shape and length, repeated rhythmic pattern, simple accompaniment, and bass descent through ♭6 to the cadence, all resemble the opening of Haydn’s String Quartet, op. 76.6:

*Example 8.23: Haydn, String Quartet, op. 76.6, first movement, bars 1-8*

Haydn conjoins simplicity and sophistication, old and new, with genial ease: he sets a potentially jaunty popular theme to a simple accompaniment, varies it and

finally speeds it up for a partly contrapuntal *Allegro* conclusion. Schumann’s tiny modification to Haydn’s rhythm makes it less jaunty; and richer harmonies, grace notes, and *ritard.* markings add poignancy. Schumann’s echo of Haydn’s music (if that is what it is) perhaps casts a regretful eye on Haydn’s easy combination of the popular and the sophisticated; and that regret embodies an aspect of Kreisler’s aesthetics, his view of the recent history of Viennese music, and his more isolated standing in the world.

Hoffmann’s essays end by turning their themes into a fable of artistic maturity. Kreisler writes a certificate (‘Lehrbrief’) for his apprentice, Johannes Kreisler, and recounts how the young Chrysostom came and told him a story. A strange musician came to a castle, where the lord’s daughter fell in love with him; she was heard singing to his lute under a tree at midnight. One day the pair vanished. The lord galloped into the wood with his horsemen, and under the tree they found a stone, blood welling from it, and below it the stabbed girl’s body and the stranger’s shattered lute. Since then a nightingale has sung from the tree at midnight, its laments piercing the heart, and from the blood have grown strange mosses and grasses entwined around the stone. For Chrysostom, the mosses united with the songs of the nightingale, of the girl, and of others to bring him exquisite music which he could not reproduce; but perhaps that inspiration, allied with technical skills in counterpoint, would eventually lead him to artistic fulfilment. Kreisler tells his apprentice that he ‘has come to detect the voice of the poet buried within him’, and bids him farewell ‘as if we were in the end but one person’; then he too disappears.

His disappearance, like that of the stranger in the fable, evokes the whole network of disappearances in Hoffmann’s *Kreisleriana.* Perhaps Kreisler abandons his friends and disappears to death, maybe even with violence – as a result of madness following disappointment in love, or the loss of companionship, or alienation from the bourgeois world. Or perhaps Kreisler the Master is now ready (in himself or as his pupil) to voyage to the world of art – the temple of Isis at Sais – as a mature artist. Perhaps to commit oneself to art is to disappear from the world of ordinary life. Schumann’s review of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique,* with its imagery of violence, disappearance, death and the dissolution of the mind into music, may imply as much. For if Kreisler’s spirit lives on, in the nightingale, or Chrysostom, or the apprentice Kreisler, it has been metamorphosed; and what remains at the site of his disappearance is something inhuman – a bird, a stone, a

moss. Earlier Hoffmann’s essays had referred to the stone found by the young pupil at Sais as a symbol of the discovery of the secret of art; and Kreisler contemplating himself or his apprentice in the mirror may evoke the same cluster of imagery.\textsuperscript{62} Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister penetrated behind the curtain to find the image of his father and his son and to receive a ‘Lehrbrief’ (VII 9); Novalis’ Hyazinth discovered himself and his beloved Rosenblüthe behind the veil at Sais. These images lived in Schumann’s mind too. He looked in the mirror and wrote himself a sort of ‘Lehrbrief’ in 1830; he used the image of the veil in his criticism; and in February 1838, he said, ‘for about the last year and a half I’ve felt as if the secret were in my possession.’\textsuperscript{63}

As Schumann’s final piece opens, a staccato theme in G minor hops up the octave and down again (bars 1-4), in motifs that may be a metamorphosis of bars 12ff of ‘iv’ and 24ff of ‘i’ respectively. The alto accompaniment adds a slight semiquaver drag to the hopping movement, perhaps reinforcing the sense of bird-like movement (Schumann recorded not only studying Bach but also hearing the songs of nightingales during the period in which he wrote this ‘Kreislerstück’).\textsuperscript{64} In bars 10-12, accents pick out barely coherent hints of another inner voice, which seem an alien denial of meaning: as Rosen says, they ‘come from nowhere and lead to nothing’; they ‘hint at forces that will not discover themselves’. A ‘light and free’ bass goes its own way, out of sync with the treble and with the metre. It resembles the similar bass voice of previous movements; but here, where there is less regularity, pattern or direction, it is an almost impersonal contradiction of the hopping treble, like an opposition of ‘rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious’.\textsuperscript{65} In a bold aesthetic choice, Schumann does not resolve the contradictions as the material recurs through the piece, but sharpens them. The marking of \textit{Schnell und spielend} seems then to mean that the music plays with us, not we with it.

From bar 25, while the hopping alto persists in $\frac{2}{4}$ regardless, Schumann sets below it an ardent $\frac{2}{4}$ song in B♭ major with a strummed accompaniment. Here, unlike in the song in the third piece, there is a note of power or of triumph, alongside harmonic restlessness. After a while the opening music is there again (bar 48), still hopping, as though it had carried on all the while. Once again, from bar 73, it gives way to, or metamorphoses into, a violent canter in F major, \textit{Mit aller Kraft}. In bars 81-87, a tenor voice repeats an accented off-beat motif rising

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} \textit{Kreisleriana}, II 5, 313.
\item \textsuperscript{63} \textit{Tagebücher}, I 242-3; \textit{GSK} I 148 (1836); \textit{Briefwechsel}, I, 100.
\item \textsuperscript{64} \textit{Tagebücher}, II 55.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
by semitones – which may recall rising tenor motifs in the opening bars of the third and seventh pieces – while the bass hammers $5\cdot6\cdot5$. By bar 89, this section, given the repeat, has already lasted for twenty-four bars, as long as the B♭ major song. But instead of rounding it off there, Schumann extends it for a further twenty-two bars, ten bars of which (100-109) alternate V and i in A minor: a pounding that exceeds all reason. There is no preparation here for the return of G minor, or of the opening motif. But return it does (bar 112), apparently indestructible, initially in C minor. This time the bass disappears at bar 140 before the hopping descends on its own into the depths, perhaps recalling similar descents and disappearances before and resonating with Kreisler’s disappearances.\footnote{Bars 10-11 of ‘iv’, and possibly bars 137-40 of ‘v’. Rosen, \textit{Romantic Generation}, 1996, 682, Moraal, ‘Life and afterlife’, 1994, 183, and Crisp, ‘\textit{Kreisleriana}’, 1993, 17, describe the end of this piece, like that of the fourth, in terms of a disappearance, the last two invoking Kreisler’s disappearances.}

The music does not so much resolve or conclude as pass out of our world, descending into and beyond the bass clef, diminishing to \textit{pianissimo}, and losing all sense of melody, counterpoint and harmony, as it ends not with a cadence but a mere residue of G minor. It is a far cry from the firm B♭ major cadence in the second piece and homecoming in the sixth.\footnote{Rosen, \textit{Romantic Generation}, 1996, 673-4.} What ends the last piece is a final blank: ‘a surprising expression of negation’ of the sort that Goethe noted in music by Zelter, or a \textit{danse macabre}, picking up elements of fear that have run through the work.\footnote{Goethe to Zelter 6 March 1810, a letter Schumann excerpted in 1838 (\textit{Mottosammlung}, I 160). Moraal’s word is ‘spooky’, ‘Life and afterlife’, 1994, 183. Compare the 1838-39 \textit{Fughette} in op. 32.}

As the music vanishes into nothingness, it conveys perhaps an ultimate isolation characteristic of the Romantic artist’s self-perception, in which creativity and adherence to great art demand a kind of withdrawal from the personal. To Clara Wieck, on 18 September 1838, the eve of Schumann’s emigration to Vienna, the pieces seemed sad, as if they might be the very last gift she received from him – a fitting reaction to the suggestion of the disappearance of the artist from the everyday world.\footnote{\textit{Briefwechsel}, I, 239.}

\textit{Stimme aus der Ferne}

In Hoffmann’s \textit{Kreisleriana}, the form of the essays is an expression of Kreisler’s nature and fate. Causality and temporality are indistinct; identities often confused...
(as between Kreisler and Chrysostom, Kreisler and Wallborn, or one beloved and another); symbols, images and intimations of narrative are repeated and jumbled. The first essay opens in mid-flow: ‘They are all gone’; the last offers no clear narrative resolution. The tone fluctuates abruptly, between the bitter, the polemical, the realistic and the ironic. Musical analysis is mixed with fable, letters and satire. The essays appear to be assembled at random. As first published, half of the essays appear in the middle of Volume I of the Fantasiestücke, the other half at the end of Volume IV. There may be structural patterns – links from the end of one piece to the opening of the next; patterns of self-parody; an articulation through the presence of letters at the end of the first series, and the beginning, mid-point and end of the second – but any such patterns are veiled.\textsuperscript{70} One could extract from this description formal strategies at a level abstract enough to be analogous to strategies that could be found in music too: so one might detect formal parallels between Hoffmann’s and Schumann’s Kreisleriana. But most of the strategies so abstracted could in a sense apply to all music (indistinct causality, for instance), and several to much (such as the fluctuating tone and absence of a classical opening or conclusion); whether any such strategies relate more closely to Schumann’s Kreisleriana than his Carnaval or Humoreske seems to me a moot point, judgements on which may be more subjective than illuminating.

Others have interpreted the form of Schumann’s work in terms of Hoffmann’s novel, Kater Murr, which also contains, according to its subtitle, a fragmentary biography of the Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler in accidental interleavings. ( Whoever illustrated the 1838 edition of Schumann’s work connected it to Hoffmann’s Kreisleriana, whereas Konewka, illustrator of the 1863 edition, highlighted the novel; but he was a silhouette-cutter, like Abraham in the novel, which seems to have influenced his choice.) Some find a formal parallel with Hoffmann’s interleaving, either within specific pieces or for the Schumann work as a whole; others go further and compare the music with Hoffmann’s ‘double-novel structure’.\textsuperscript{71} But Schumann was fastidious about titles, and criticised composers who were not: to suppose that in this case he carelessly pointed listeners to the wrong book is perverse – and the less persuasive if there is any reasonable alternative. I preferred other descriptions for the forms of ‘v’ or ‘vii’ than the particular metaphor of ‘interleaving’; and if one sees interleaving in several other


Schumann works as well, the term is stretched too thin to carry plausibility and significance. To find a double-novel structure in the work is possible, but if a parallel with Kater Murr injects into ‘iii’, ‘v’ and ‘viii’ feline associations – with the complacent and pompous Murr in particular – the result, for me at least, is to trivialise ‘iii’ and ‘viii’ and to banish the richer symbolism I have suggested.

Another Schumann piece may however resonate with the novel. Just before writing Kreisleriana, Schumann completed eight Novelletten, op. 21, and the last may bear comparison with aspects of the novel, including its interleaving of two opposed strands. In the novel, that interleaving is not merely an abstract formal device. Instead, a coherent, complete account of the pompous and complacent Murr alternates with disjointed and incomplete fragments about the unsettled but inspired Kreisler. The alternation is such that Murr’s interrupted sentences are completed when he resumes after an interleaving, while those beginning and ending the Kreisler passages are not. The interleaving thus expresses something of the character of the protagonists; and it expresses too the tearing grief of the emotional climax of the book. For at that point, Meister Abraham hears the distant voice of Chiara, the ‘invisible maiden’ whom he had loved, wed and lost. As he laments in his loneliness that he will never hear her sweet voice again, a melodious sound comes to him, reminding him of it, albeit from afar, as ‘her words sounded yet softer, yet further’. But ‘here the cat tore out another couple of the interleaved sheets’, and the continuation is lost. When Abraham later begs the voice to return, it is to no avail; and Murr, who has been seduced by a miaowing ‘sweet voice’, continues with his own trivial love story, in a painful travesty of Abraham’s grief.

The last of the Novelletten shows Schumann ‘playing with forms’. Resulting from the combination of two pieces composed at the time when Kreisleriana began to take shape, it is ‘a series of interlocking Novelletten within a Novellette’. Its first part contrasts a passionate, aspiring F♯ minor passage, in the spirit of Schumann’s Kreisler, with two jolly Trios with dotted rhythms and simple harmonic patterns. The transition from the first back to the passionate F♯ minor music (bar 94) creates an interleaving effect similar to two joints in Kater Murr where interleaving sections (as it were accidentally) complete the sentences they interrupt. The second Trio is subjected to an interleaving as well: repeated cadences in its home key of D major are diverted (from 196) into a quite different

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73 Kater Murr, 619-21, 636, 645.
74 Briefwechsel, I, 100, of 11 February 1838, the period of composition of the Novelletten.
75 Hoeckner, Programming the Absolute, 2002, 110.
76 Kater Murr, 448 and 456-7.
world: a B minor ‘Stimme aus der Ferne’ (‘Voice from Afar’) echoes a melody from Clara’s *Notturno* with deep melancholy. Thereafter (255) the interrupted music from the *Trio* resumes its own key, tempo and cadential pattern, this time reaching a conclusion. (Conceivably, Schumann’s marking, ‘Continuation’, plays on Hoffmann’s notation for the resumption of a text after interleaving: ‘Murr continues’).

Schumann then opens a complete new part, in its own time-signature and complex form (A-B-A-C-A-B-A, D-E-Stimme-E-D, A-B-A). The form is further complicated by a progressive acceleration, so that each section on its return seems more frantic. Once again, an echo of Clara’s *Notturno* (picking up the A major chord it left off at bar 254) breaks into a section which resumes its tempo, key and melody when the voice disappears, though this time the voice may sound as if it comes from within rather than from outside.\(^{77}\) Like Abraham, Schumann feared the loss of his own unseen maiden, his Chiara; and he let her voice (her *Notturno*) sound in this piece, calling to him from afar. Unlike many commentators, I hear the insistently repetitive, frantically cheerful (‘munter’) music of bars 282ff as redolent not of blissful (‘selig’) fulfilled love, but of the triviality remaining after such loss: a heart-rending form of irony.\(^{78}\) On that reading, interleaving, in itself, and as bringing associations with the form and impact of *Kater Murr*, is a powerful vehicle for the expressive force of the piece.

Schumann left no direct indication of a link between this last *Novellette* and *Kater Murr*, and any idea of an association must remain tentative. (He claimed however – albeit perhaps teasingly – that the *Novelletten* contained ‘tales of Egmont’, that Egmont whose vision of his lost Clara so moved him at this time; nothing else in the final work seems to fit the bill).\(^{79}\) But the parallel with Hoffmann’s interleaving, the use of expressive form, and the association of the distant voice of the unseen maiden, Chiara, raise the possibility of a relationship to *Kater Murr*; and that would imply that in Spring 1838 Schumann was absorbed in Hoffmann’s Kreisler fictions.

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79 Briefwechsel, I 73 (5 January), 90, 97-8 (6 and 11 February 1838). He said (100) that he loved Clara’s *Notturno* above all her works, apparently hoping it was her lament for the love they lost in 1836.
CHAPTER 9

NACHTSTÜCKE, OP. 23

Within months of Kreisleriana’s publication, Schumann began (in Spring 1839) another work that could be seen as related to Hoffmann, as it was to be called Nachtmusik, a title Hoffmann had used for a book in 1816-17. But where Hoffmann’s Kreisler is introduced by the title of Schumann’s Kreisleriana, and arguably in the music, here no Hoffmann figure is introduced by titles or encountered face-to-face in the music; instead a listener might adduce Hoffmann’s tales as comparators to elucidate the music’s puzzling trajectories.

Schumann’s Nachtmusik started life, however, under a different name. His diary for early April 1839 records: ‘Since Monday I’ve been writing a Corpse Fantasy – how remarkable my premonitions were; the parting from Eduard, and how good he was, is clear to me’.¹ His brother Eduard was about to die, as Schumann explained to Clara Wieck on 7 April:

I don’t have much [hope], and yet I can’t believe that Eduard could be dead. I’d written to you about a premonition; I had it between 24 and 27 March as I was working on my new composition; there’s a passage there that I kept coming back to – where it is as though someone were weighed down with sorrow and groaning “Oh God” – as I composed I kept on seeing funeral processions, coffins, lost despairing people, and when I had finished and was long searching for a title, I always lit upon: Corpse Fantasy [Leichenfantasie]. Isn’t that odd? As I was composing I was often so shaken that the tears poured out and I didn’t know why and had no reason for it – and then came Therese’s letter and it all became clear to me.²

Meanwhile the work’s name had changed to ‘Nachtstücke’. In November Schumann was ‘putting the set in order’, which must have involved selecting, ordering and altering the pieces, and probably new composition – in December he

¹ Tagebücher, II 89.
² Briefwechsel, II 473-4.
envisaged three pieces, in January four. One piece was removed and later used in the *Faschingsschwank*. Thus much of the composition probably took place well after he had in mind the title ‘Nachtstücke’, though we do not know how much.³ (It would be typical for Schumann to conceive a mass of material in a short period, and claim to have composed an entire work, but to take time thereafter to add, subtract, re-order and revise, so that some or even much of the eventual form emerged only later). Then on 7 January 1840 he consulted Clara about giving the individual pieces their own titles:

1. Trauerzug [Funeral procession]
2. Curiose Gesellschaft [Weird company]
3. Nächtliches Gelage [Nocturnal revels]
4. Rundgesang mit Solostimmen [Roundelay with solo voices].⁴

Clara, however, advised against, and Schumann concurred.

These letters from the composer do not make the work any more accessible. There is no obvious connection between the music and the rejected titles of the second and third pieces. ‘Corpse Fantasy’ fits the first piece, but not the third or fourth, nor in any obvious sense the second. It is far from clear how any of these ambivalent pieces, from the first three of which grief and love seem banished, could be about a brother’s death.

The work deals instead, I will argue, in more peculiar disturbances of the mind. In this sense, it lives up to its title, *Nachtstücke*. For although in music the word could simply be a variant of ‘Notturno’, its connotations were not confined to gentle romance. Schumann used it for Field’s *Nocturnes* but wrote approvingly in 1838 of others that contain something distinctive.⁵ In the visual arts it characterised for instance Salvator Rosa’s gothic images. In literature, Jean Paul applied it to menacing scenes as to idyllic. He put the ‘Nachtstück’ near the heart of the aesthetic of the time, speculating that Christian Europe opened an imaginative gulf between concrete objectivity and illimitable perspectives where endless possibilities of terror lurked.⁶ Hoffmann used the title *Nachtstücke* for a collection of stories published in 1816-17 in which the perils of the mind loom large. He had studied the works of G.H. Schubert, which explored a nexus linking night, the occult, mesmerism and the sub-conscious, and learnt about contemporary psychology in part from an 1811 book whose title page illustrates night as ‘origin of

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³ *Briefwechsel*, II 801, 24 November; *Neue Folge*, 175, 11 December 1840; GSK II 471 note 577, *Tagebücher*, II 494, note 332. *Briefwechsel* III 845-881 of January 1840 reveal other aspects of the revision process.

⁴ *Briefwechsel* III 877.

⁵ GSK I 188 and 366.

⁶ *Vorschule*, §§5 and 22 (about Ossian); *Titan* (1st, 122nd & 139th Cycles); *Die Unsichtbare Loge* (49th Sektor); *Vorschule*, §24 (terror).
the beautiful and the frightening'. But a substantial tradition of German literature explored self-destructive psychoses. In 1782-3 Karl Philipp Moritz had compiled case-histories of psychological aberrations. His *Anton Reiser. Ein Psychologischer Roman* (1785-90) is in part the autobiography of someone blighted by self-contempt. Achim von Arnim’s *Hollinsliebeleben* (1802) and Jean Paul’s *Titan* (1800-03) feature similarly self-destructive characters. In Tieck’s *Liebeszauber* (1811) dark forces combine with psychosis to destroy the hero, and in *Der Runenberg* (1802) and *Der Pokal* (1811), imaginative suggestibility becomes enthrallment to a fantasy that takes over, shapes and perhaps destroys life. Similar themes emerge, with a distinctive twist, in stories written by Heinrich von Kleist around 1810, which influenced Hoffmann’s *Nachtstücke*. Even Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, emblem of the ‘Bildungsroman’, deals in part in such negative syndromes. The *Nachtwachen by Bonaventura* (1804) is in this respect the anti-matter of German Romantic culture. Its bitterly satirical portrayal of descent into madness and devilry inverts the trajectory of the ‘Bildungsroman’, and its exposure of the terrifying loneliness of the subjective self parodies the dominant Idealism of Fichte and Schelling. There is no evidence that the book was to Schumann’s taste, but its images of chillingly robotic or deathly figures, and of young women condemned to death or madness (*Nachtwachen* V, III, X and XIV), may haunt Hoffmann’s *Nachtstücke*, and may be relevant to Schumann’s too.

There is another difficulty, however, in Schumann’s *Nachtstücke*. It seems deliberately to repel appreciation and interpretation. Schumann praised Chopin’s *Preludes* in 1838 as containing ‘the diseased, feverish and repellent’ (‘Abstoßendes’), for the repellent in life may be attractive in art, he said; and in 1841 he saw something ‘repellent’ in the funeral march in Chopin’s *Sonata* op. 35. His own *Nachtstücke* is strikingly bare of the charm, extravagance and sense of imaginative freedom typical of his oeuvre. In a marked plainness of form, all four pieces are rondos. In the first three, the refrains are presented with little of Schumann’s characteristic suppleness and fluidity in harmony, metre, texture or melody, and the form is rigid, with unvarying repetitions, little development, and virtually no responsiveness between episodes and refrain. (The piece displaced to

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10 GSK I 418, II 12, 14.
the *Faschingsschwank* is not a rondo, and was perhaps too impassioned to remain here.) Only the final piece shows human warmth, and much of the difficulty of the work results from our having had to wait so long.

Thus the work exaggerates a formal property that Schumann’s criticism scorned. He lambasted the rondos of his day, issued in industrial quantities, with their rigid repetitions: ‘boxed between two planks, one stands at the end of the world, and can move neither forward nor backward’; ‘moving in a small circle of thoughts’.11 These stark criticisms of others’ works, paradoxically, are a clue to the conception of his own. They echo passages from the writings of Moritz, whose *Anton Reiser* describes a ‘labyrinth’ out of which the hero ‘finds no way’, a ‘plank wall’ ‘that cut off any further view’, his thoughts ‘turning in a circle’, ‘fixated and confined within himself’. In a scene ironically described as ‘ein schönes Nachtstück’, Reiser tramps obsessively across the fields in the gloom and stops in a churchyard: ‘the end of all things seemed to him to lead to just such a point – the stiflingly narrow coffin was the last thing – behind this was nothing further – here was the nailed-up plank wall’.12 In Moritz, parataxis, tautology and repetition of symbols (circles, labyrinths, walls) express obsession and claustrophobia; his book is shaped by relentless cycles of self-destructive abnegation. Schumann’s rondos are similarly obsessive or claustrophobic, and their refrains return as relentlessly.

### Trauerzug [Funeral procession]

If Schumann’s first piece is a funeral procession, something is awry. A funeral march, like the slow movements of Beethoven’s *Sonata* Op. 26 or Chopin’s *Sonata* Op. 35, characteristically opens in slow common time with a regular metre, a dotted rhythm, a low register, an unambiguous minor mode, and a melody in a narrow range. A consistently restrained and sombre tone may be confirmed by repetition, and perhaps by a brief break-through into a higher register or a major key. Other pieces, though not quite funeral marches, such as Chopin’s C minor *Prelude* Op. 28, may adopt these features even if only to subject them to an unusual twist:

Example 9.1: Chopin, C minor Prelude, Op. 28, bars 1-4

Schumann’s piece likewise has a slow march time, low register and regular four-bar phrases; its rhythm and melody resemble Chopin’s:

Example 9.2: Schumann, Nachtstücke i, bars 1-8

But unsettling features undermine the mournful respect befitting a funeral march. (Contrast the more evenly dark treatment of a similar musical idea – albeit in triple time – in the 1835 Leides Ahnung; or the second piece of Albumblätter, op 124; or the accompaniment to the thirteenth song of Op. 48). The repetition in each of seven consecutive bars of the same rhythm – with a similar step-wise melody in the soprano and contrary motion in the bass – is not so much respectful as obsessive. The rests lend a lightness or hollowness to the texture. The first bar contains jarring tritones in its first, third and fourth chords, and a semitone slide in the bass. The tonality is unsettled, shifting in alternate bars between suggestions of D minor and G major, with a C major cadence only in bar 8. The marking oft zurückhaltend, ‘holding back’, suggests not the respectful evenness of pace of a funeral cortege but something more complex. The piano descent of the bass in bars 3-4 opens a registral space into which the octave doubling in the bass of bars 5-7 lurches, suddenly mezzo forte, like an invading nightmare. These features connive
to leave the ‘tone of voice’ of this apparent death march uncertain: sinister, ironic, trite, grotesque, or leering?

Bars 1-8 can be heard as the opening section of a ternary rondo theme, with 9-16 as a middle section, and that reading will become significant at bar 81; but since in this rondo what returns is otherwise only the eight-bar march-refrain, I will for simplicity describe the remaining material, including 9-16, as ‘episodes’. These episodes might be seen as different responses to the death-march. The first (bars 9-16) treats the same basic material – dotted rhythm, stepwise descent, contrary motion in the bass – as in the opening, but with an unambiguous G major, and a lilting legato movement. Any reassurance is unsettled, however, when the music is repeated in A minor from bars 12-13, and drifts further in 16 to a chord of E minor. A second episode in bars 25-40 begins in A minor, sounding more like a real funeral march, as though to ground the uncertainty of the opening. Here if anywhere one might hear the ‘Choral von Posaunen’ which Schumann said he had heard at the moment of his brother’s death. But the impetus is gradually lost in repetitiousness, metrical displacement and confusion (bars 33-34, and 35-36 and 39-40), and a harmonic drift through E minor, B minor and D minor (27-35) to an eventual chord of C major in 40. The third episode is very different. A held bass octave on C (bar 48) brings, as if from far away (piano, and in a remote key that turns out to be G♭ major), a simple, barely harmonised descent. Its largely even crotchets, ending with a rising fourth and falling fifth, its imitation in the bass and its six-fold repetition of the same motif in different keys, all suggest peals of bells:

Example 9.3: Schumann, Nachtstücke i, bars 49-60

\[\text{(Sheet music image)}\]

14 Briefwechsel, II 478, 10 April 1839.
The peal repeats in C, major, and in D, followed by G and C, and recedes to pianissimo. Those dynamics and shifting tonalities might imply increasing remoteness; but the descent by fifths suggests a return ‘home’, and the descending scale is related to that of the march – to which it thus returns.

But each episode finds itself confronted by a return of the march-refrain, which thus appears six times – an unusual frequency for a rondo of this length. On the first four appearances the march is unaltered, making no concession to the intervening episode. But each moment of return seems different, partly because of the different tonalities on which it intrudes. At bar 17 it may be more menacing, as the exposed bass E on the downbeat draws attention to the bass line and the possibility of the E minor prepared by the previous bar. At bar 41 its tread could seem relentless, with D minor prepared by its dominant. At bar 72, the march enters early, and pauses as though to be invited back: the repetition may begin to seem willed or compulsive.

Bars 81-88 develop the material of bars 9-10, with the same lilting legato and relative harmonic normality, as though at last a return of the middle section of the rondo theme. That sets up an expectation – by now perhaps dread – that the march must again follow it. The music however is now forte, in the home key of C major, and with an emphatic and repeated descent to (bars 82 and 84) – as though opening a coda that might resolve the piece reassuringly; but instead the march indeed returns (bar 89). Moreover, with an accented organ point on G, its grip now seems unchallenged; and for the first time its final cadence (bar 96) does not seem weak. Suddenly it expands, both in time and in apparent space:

Example 9.4: Schumann, Nachtstücke i, bars 93-100
The second half of the march had jumped up a fourth at the end of bars 93 and 94, which in retrospect foreshadowed an unexpected development: in 96-97, the upper part steps up a fourth to beyond the range the march has ever reached before; the harmony slides to IV of IV for two bars (97-98): over a sustained bass octave a mutation of the main theme swings in phrases suddenly twice the expected length, with a high fanfare stretching the registral space. The march has swollen to nightmare proportions.

But the mood immediately changes again. Though bars 104-5 start with the low E and diminished chord associated with each return of the march, as though to begin all over again, bars 105-6 instead invert the gestures of bars 9-10 and 81ff to become a neat cadence on I. It sounds glib after what has gone before, and still more so when the phrase repeats, launched in bar 107 from a German augmented sixth.\(^{15}\) Once again the tone of that chord is elusive: common-sense, leering mockery, or ironic trivialisation? The music ends in deflation. The march, one of its notes missing in each bar, disappears into the distance: in the last four bars, the holes in the upper part leave the semitone slides in the bass more exposed, and the pause before the final pianissimo chord is long. The tone remains unreadable; I can only suggest perspectives from which to view the perplexity.

The spectre of death tainted 1839 for Schumann. His letters to Clara are full of fears that she or he might die of an illness or accident before they overcame her father’s attempts to block their marriage; Clara reflected similar fears back to him. She dreamed she died, and from her bier heard bells ‘sounding of heaven and horror’ (‘himmlisch’ and ‘schauerlich’). In April he wrote to her of Agnes Carus, whom he had loved: ‘Now she’s dead. One after another they go. What about us in ten years’ time?’ He awoke on his birthday in June to the sense of ‘peals of inner bells’. But in the same letter he wrote about a pianist’s fiancée who drowned herself in a river, and he fretted about a similar rupture of his own engagement. Later he transcribed Henriette Voigt’s last diaries, describing them as ‘heavy with premonition’.\(^{16}\) She died that October.

In July he gave Clara a description of ‘an extraordinary day’, ‘where all the threads of life seemed to run together as if into one ball’. It was:

a day of such ghostly quiet … I kept seeing coffins being carried, walked by chance past the Thomaskirche, heard an organ, went in, and there a couple had

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\(^{15}\) In his own copy of the first edition, Schumann annotated bar 105 with the same chord (Schumann, Nachtstücke, 2008, 21).

\(^{16}\) Briefwechsel II 368-9 (24 January), 438 (11 March), 474 (7 April), 479 (10 April), 488 (17 April, Agnes Carus), 492, 496 (22 April), 558 & 563 (9 June), 657 (23 July); Clara’s dream and fears: I 387 (14 February), 420 (28 February), 483 (13 April), 592 (24 June); GSK I 451.
just been married. The altar was covered with flowers. I hurried out. ... [Later] I meet Voigt by chance; he asks me to visit his wife who is going away to a spa tomorrow. In the evening I walk by chance past Voigt’s house, remember his wife, go up; she doesn’t look as if she’ll be coming back; she gives me a ... letter, and in it is the announcement of Ernestine’s husband’s death, aged 25 – think of the blow to Ernestine – made me feel faint – I parted from Voigt’s wife as from one on her death-bed – as I was going home that evening, suddenly the hearse flies rattling past me.

The threads all run back into ‘one ball’, the wasting of couples’ love through death, and perhaps it was that conjunction that made Schumann’s state of mind ‘fearful’ and ‘uncanny’ (‘unheimlich’).17

Indeed, the premonitions and repeated encounters that disturbed Schumann anticipate Freud’s 1919 characterisation of the uncanny. In wandering around a strange town in Italy Freud became disoriented and found himself in a sinister quarter; trying to leave it, he repeatedly found himself arriving back there, rather as Schumann found himself once more confronting the coffins. As Schumann emphasised ‘by chance’, as though some part of him doubted it, so Freud interpreted his experience as ‘uncanny’ – an experience where ‘the familiar is made strange’. In experiencing the uncanny, ‘the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced’, ‘something actually happens in our lives which seems to confirm the old discarded beliefs’ of superstitious fear, and ‘the compulsion to repeat ... lend[s] to certain aspects of the mind their demonic character’. Similarly, Freud once claimed to begin ‘to notice that everything with a number — addresses, hotel rooms, compartments in railway trains — invariably has the same one,’ ‘62’. Feeling this to be ‘uncanny’, he was tempted to see in this ‘obstinate recurrence’ an omen of death at that age – the age at which he was writing.18

Schumann’s piece, with its ‘obstinate recurrences’ and effacement of ‘the distinction between imagination and reality’, seems similarly to explore the ‘compulsion to repeat’ and the uncanny. Freud’s essay makes no reference to Schumann. But mention of Freud here is neither a mere anachronism, nor is it to claim Schumann’s work as a startling – or uncanny – pre-echo of Freud’s description. Instead the ways in which Schumann foreshadows Freud reflect both the fact that each was capable of an acute diagnosis of common fears, and the role played by Der Sandmann, the opening tale of Hoffmann’s Nachtstücke, in the cultural hinterland of each.

For Freud, ‘the uncanny in literature is a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life’, especially where the author ‘promises to give us the sober truth, and starts from common reality, and then oversteps it’, or ‘keeps us in the

dark about the presuppositions on which the world he writes about is based’. The work he cites as an archetype of the uncanny is *Der Sandmann*. That story tells of Nathanael’s nightmare sense of being stalked by Coppelius, whom he identifies with the Sandman of fable. It describes his shifting, bewildered reaction, and his doomed attempts to escape. The young student Nathanael recalled his childhood terrors:

‘The sandman is coming’; and I really heard then a heavy slow step clump up the stairs... Through the hall it went with a slow heavy thudding tread towards the stairs... Closer, ever closer thudded the steps ... my heart shook with fear.

Nathanael’s mother had offered him a reassuring version of the fairytale of the sandman, while his nurse had scared him with the macabre version in which the sandman plucks out children’s eyes. But Coppelius had indeed been a harbinger of death – literally for Nathanael’s father, and almost for the child Nathanael too. Now the student Nathanael again heard Coppelius, or someone like him, clump up the stairs, bringing, as Nathanael described it to his fiancée Clara, ‘dark premonitions of a terrible fate’. The sensible Clara responded:

To my mind all the horror and terror you speak of only occurs inside you, and the real outside world probably plays no part in it... If there’s a dark power ... it is the phantom of our own self... Your Father probably brought death on himself,... and Coppelius is not responsible. If every line of your letter didn’t declare the depths of your mental unrest, I’d honestly have to laugh at the story of the sandman ... and Coppelius.

Coppelius however stalked Nathanael again, growing suddenly to ‘giant stature’. Under his nightmare spell, Nathanael leapt over a parapet:

As he lay on the pavement, his skull shattered, Coppelius melted away in the throng...

Several years later there was a report that Clara had been seen in a distant place, sitting hand in hand with a benign husband before the door of a nice country house, watching two happy boys at play. It would be reasonable to conclude that Clara found that restful domestic bliss, suited to her untroubled fun-loving nature, that could never have been secured for her by Nathanael’s fractured self.

Nathanael’s story can be seen as a series of compulsive re-enactments of the childhood nightmare in his father’s study when the Sandman tore him apart – re-enactments such as Freud sees as a substitute for addressing the trauma. Through

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this compulsion, Nathanael destroyed both his prospect of marriage to Clara and his own self.

The tale withholds any hierarchy or reconciliation between different perspectives, so that the reader remains uncertain whether to see the approach of Coppelius through Nathanael’s terror, his mother’s reassurances, the old crone’s spooky version, or Clara’s sensible mockery. And the end derails what should have been Nathanael’s happy reunion with Clara not only through his renewed madness and then death, but also – in the final paragraph about Clara’s ultimate domestic bliss – through an ironic belittling of all that has gone before. Indeed the reader may even toy with suspicion that a manipulative narrator, seemingly in love with Clara, exploited Nathanael’s destruction in order to win her. If so, the uncanny, far from being just part of the story we have enjoyed, invades the level of narration, as Freud noted, and thus the level at which we read – it infects our world. If a part of the ordinary world has been infiltrated, becoming alien and inscrutable, perhaps the entire fabric of familiar security is in fact radically alien and hostile.\footnote{Hoffmann might have noted such a self-reflexive magnification of the power of the uncanny in Tieck’s \textit{Der Blonde Eckbert} of 1796-7; it has since become archetypal: for instance Susan Hill, \textit{The Woman in Black}.} The tale’s ambivalence is insidious.

The music conveys a similar ambivalence. The refrain variously suggests the tramp of death, the spoof of a satirist, or the leer of a nightmare, and the ‘episodes’ can be seen as labile reactions to it. Through the dissonance between the signals of a funeral march and the ambivalent tone, sign and effect are separated and the march acquires a certain hollowness. The rondo’s excessive repetition of the death-tramp suggests either a spectre lurking around every corner or a neurotic compulsion, such as a Freudian might see as a trauma being avoided and re-enacted. It even interrupts (bar 89) what should be a reassuring coda, as though escaping from one level of narration to invade another. At the point of aggrandisement of the nightmare, in bars 97-100, where the main march is fleetingly swollen to giant stature, the listener is tempted half to share its exultation, as Nathanael fell once again under the spell of the approaching Coppelius, now grown to giant proportions. When the threatening tread melts into the distance (bars 109-112), as Coppelius melted away in the crowd, the contrary perspectives are unresolved, and we remain uncertain as to the object of the irony of bars 105-8. One voice in one’s head is suspicious that a rondo with six appearances of the march-refrain is obsessive, and sees the piece in terms of death and nightmare. A reassuring counter-voice (the voice of the episodes, perhaps) insists that that is an over-interpretation; repetition does not make a march
obsessive. Yet a third voice responds that exactly that oscillation between irrationality and common sense, or imagination and dullness, or emotional engagement and alienation, is what Schumann manipulates in order to convey the sense of neurosis and of the uncanny. All of these symptoms – ambivalence, hollowness, compulsion, trauma and alienation – can be viewed through a modern lens (see Chapter 10), but also through aspects of early Romantic culture, exemplified in Der Sandmann, or in the ‘continual recurrences’, repeated affliction by trivial accidents and confining emptiness in Anton Reiser.23

It is not difficult to imagine that Schumann in 1839 found Hoffmann’s story disturbingly powerful. The evidence that the composition of what became his op. 23 was influenced at an early stage by premonitions of his brother’s impending death cannot be dismissed. But nor can the music in its final form be taken simply as a response to a brother’s death: its irony remains uncomfortably dissonant. Instead, the presentiments of death that Schumann felt over several months in 1839, and the confusion of his reaction to it, could have meshed with Hoffmann’s story to produce something more complex. The music presents neither Nathanael nor the Sandman, and its rejected title was ‘Trauerzug’, not ‘Sandmann’; but it might resonate both with experiences like Schumann’s ‘chance’ encounters with coffins and weddings on that ‘ghostly’ day, and with the recurrent menace in Hoffmann’s uncanny tale.

ii Kuriose Gesellschaft (weird company)
The second piece juxtaposes apparently opposed natures. It opens with faceless regularity:

Example 9.5: Schumann, Nachtstücke ii, bars 1-4

The volume is uniform, the texture unvarying, and the voice leading mechanical. The harmony changes on every quaver. Accents fall relentlessly on every beat. In a monotonous succession of short two bar phrases, the melody (based on the

opening of the first piece\textsuperscript{24}) descends and rises again, with regular cadences. It is subjected to mechanistic development; it is repeated (bars 5-18). There is no give, but instead the charm of a jackhammer: a mechanical mimicry of life rather than life itself. Perhaps it parodies piano studies contrasted by Schumann in reviews of 1836-39 with living music: ‘all that is mechanically lifeless’ (‘alles mechanisch Toten’), or ‘simulacra of life’ (‘Scheinleben’), as against ‘pure poetic creation’\textsuperscript{25}.

A stomach-wrenching $D\flat$ in the bass in bar 23 unseats the harmony, and the regular metre of the first 22 bars becomes a metric swamp, out of which emerges in $A\flat$ major the theme of an episode (bars 25-65):

\textit{Example 9.6: Schumann, Nachtstücke ii, bars 20-28}

This piano music could not be more different from the loud opening. It is in the style of those pieces in which for Schumann ‘the poet speaks’: its halting, quixotic and evolutionary style accentuates by contrast the robotic regularity of the opening material. It flows in unaccented legato quavers, a lilting dotted rhythm, and many layers: in bars 25-8, for instance, the three main voices are subtly metrically apart, with a middle voice descending in quavers, an upper melody, such as it is, perhaps a crotchet ahead, and a lower voice perhaps five quavers behind. It unfolds organically, as the upper motif evolves almost unnoticed, one strand growing from what came before (transforming bars 28-32, for instance, into 51-55). Phrase lengths are flexible and ambiguous, and the tone quixotic, with a sort of melancholy in its opening, a brief glimpse of what sounds like humour in bars 37-8, and a moment of recitative in 45-7. The music is hesitant, with for instance ten markings of \textit{ritard.} in forty bars; and its main, alto melody, unlike the opening theme, is unable to close, leaving its repeated attempts at cadences unfulfilled. It

\textsuperscript{24} With the same descending line, chordal texture and opening diminished 7\textsuperscript{th} chord: Moraal, ‘Schumanns Nachtstücke’, 1997, 78-79.

is suggestible, with cadences in bars 33-34 seemingly influenced by 8-9 (or even by bar 8 of the first piece), and in bars 57-9 by 18-21. And its material (bars 25ff), if opposed in character to that of the refrain, is also a continuation of bars 20-21 and dependent on 1ff, which the bass reproduces in bars 43-45.

The piece is indeed a **Kuriose Gesellschaft** – an ill-matched coupling of the mechanical with a hesitant, human voice. The human voice turns out the weaker. A concise reprise of the refrain, all the starker for the omission of bars 5-18, sweeps the episode aside. A second episode in D♭ major (bars 74-93) is like a robotic dance. It opens in a featureless rhythm with an unusual density of repeated notes in the inner parts, rather mechanical contrary motion between soprano and bass, and for melody little more than ascending and descending scales:

*Example 9.7: Schumann, Nachtstücke ii, bars 71-77*

In bars 80-1 a brief hesitation, with a cadential turn and *ritard*. (the sole expressive marking in this passage), both borrowed from 39-40, leads to a moment of metric confusion (82-84) – but hesitation is briskly swept aside by the unbending rhythmic regularity of a repeat of 74-81. And the mechanical turns out to have the last word too. An identical repetition of the first episode, differing only in showing fewer *ritardandos*, seems to suggest that the human voice has begun to be taken over by the machine – or perhaps was always an uncanny mechanical imitation or even extension of humanity. Then the refrain returns, repeating bars 65-73 exactly, and closing with the same brisk flourish, only now *Presto*.

This piece repels appreciation and interpretation. But it is tempting to allow the ‘weird coupling’ of its rejected title to resonate with the literary tradition. In Hoffmann’s story, *Die Automate*, Ludwig comments on odd couplings between people and ‘lifeless figures that mimic the human in their form and movement’, and on ‘something oppressive, uncanny, or horrible’ about them:
It must be possible to give a mannequin a hidden inner mechanism so that it can dance with nimbleness and grace; it could perform a dance with a human, such that the living dancer grasped his lifeless wooden partner and swayed with her – and would you be able to bear the sight of it for even a minute without a deep shudder?  

Ludwig admits that his sensitivity to automata arises in part from his horror of ‘all that mechanised music’ prevalent in society: a distaste shared by Schumann, for whom in 1839 one singer was ‘an automaton’. So Hoffmann’s automata may be images of the mechanical in art too, as opposed to the living human voice. For Hoffmann, true melody is ideally ‘song, streaming free and unforced straight from the human breast, which is itself the instrument that resonates with Nature’s most wonderful and secret lutes.’ Ludwig goes on:

The greatest reproach one can level at a musician is that he plays without expression, and so ... destroys the music in music – and yet the most soulless and insensitive performer achieves more than the most perfect machine... The efforts of technicians to imitate human organs in their production of musical tones, or to replace them through mechanical means, is for me a war waged on the human spirit.

Automata – bodies alienated from souls – arouse the fear of the living dead that haunts a culture of dualism of body and mind; but human and robotic, live and mechanical, are mutually dependent in music and elsewhere, and continuous as well as opposed; the banality of their traffic can make suspected exchanges between them the more uncanny.

In the middle of Der Sandmann Nathanael became infatuated with Olimpia, seduced by her ‘beautifully sculpted features’. Though seeming human, she was in truth a robotic mannequin, made by Coppelius, and at first her eyes seemed to Nathanael ‘oddly fixed and lifeless’. However, when she ‘played the piano with great dexterity and sang a bravura aria in a bright, almost diamantine glass harmonica voice’, Nathanael ‘was bewitched’, seeing in her eyes a ‘yearning’ for him never conveyed by the ‘cold’ Clara, whom he accused of being a lifeless automaton. But when he grasped Olimpia’s hand, ‘it was icy; he felt the shudder of

27 Briefwechsel, II 473 (7 April 1839). See also GSK I 437-8, 451 (1839).
28 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana, II 6, 318 (which Schumann copied in the 1850s into his Dichtergarten, 306); ‘Die Automate’, Die Serapions-Brüder, 347. Compare Müller-Sievers, ‘Verstimmung’, 98-106 and 113. Kleist (‘Uber das Marionettentheater’, Berliner Abendblätter, 12 December 1810) characteristically put a perverse twist on similar ideas. He noted the graceful dance of mechanical puppets, so hard to replicate in self-conscious humans, and speculated that tasting of the Tree of Knowledge resulted in a Fall from an unself-conscious state, but innocence and grace might be restored through an infinite extension of ‘Knowledge’ (‘Erkenntnis’) as in self-reflecting mirrors.
a terrible frost of death’. With her as partner, Nathanael, who ‘thought he danced rhythmically’, quickly ‘saw his deficiencies’. His friend later tried gently to bring him to his senses: ‘her playing and singing have the unpleasantly rigid, mindless rhythm of a machine, and her dancing too’.²⁹

Olimpia’s ‘diamantine’ singing, mechanically dexterous playing and rigid dancing encapsulate the simultaneous allure and horror of the automaton, enacting Ludwig’s fear of uncanny partnerships between human and machine in life and art. She acts as a symbol of the mechanical as against true art, prose as against poetry, or chilly perfection against life. Hoffmann satirically has the ‘Professor of the Poetic and its Discourses’ declare of Olimpia that she ‘inscribes a project of allegory – of metaphor embodied’; in effect, he interprets her as standing for the created art-work as against its living model. She is also a parody of the classical requirement for an extreme of flawlessness and purity in female beauty, and Hoffmann satirises the anxieties and perversions of relationships to which this gave rise.

Schumann’s piece – sometimes comic, ultimately chilling – can be interpreted as chiming with that complex of mental states. His refrain can be heard as embodying a lifeless dexterity;³⁰ his first episode as expressing poetic aspirations and manner, as unable to assert a living sense of self, as colluding with its lifeless partner in a weird coupling, and by the end of the piece as overwhelmed. In his second episode, a cadence brings only a brief ritardando before being rushed back into strict tempo, like a human dancer with a robotic partner. That the refrain and episode are both fashioned from similar thematic material, heard as derived from that of the death march, brings out the uncanny mutual dependence of human and mechanical.

The automaton might also stand for a willed denial of life, and that state too may find its echo in Schumann’s piece. In Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister, Mignon sometimes seemed a marionette, an alternative to adult love for Philine, a projection of Wilhelm’s regressive enthrallment by childhood puppet shows, of his absorption in an inner world, or narcissism; she herself was unwilling to grow up, and longed for angelic purity and death instead. As Anton Reiser recalls, Goethe’s Werther once saw life as a play of marionettes; grasping someone’s ‘wooden hand’,

²⁹ Hoffmann, Nachtstücke 345, 348, 351-56.
³⁰ Can the similarity with Offenbach’s setting of Olympia’s song ‘Les oiseaux dans la charmille’ from Les Contes d’Hoffmann be coincidence? Both melodies begin on the same note, and descend by steps and then rise again, in groups of even quavers, with Offenbach’s mechanical staccato matching Schumann’s regular accents. Perhaps Offenbach too thought Schumann’s piece related to Hoffmann’s tale, as I have suggested; or perhaps each composer independently expressed the same idea (of an automaton’s music) in similar ways.
he recoils with a shudder. In that summer of 1839, Clara felt that the misery would leave her a ‘Todtenbraut’; and Nathanael himself fleetingly feels Olimpia’s chill as that of the lifeless bride who was the subject of Goethe’s 1797 poem, *The Bride of Corinth*. There, a young man travels to meet the bride his parents had long ago chosen for him; he finds himself, in the midst of warm-blooded enjoyment of his youth, making love to a dead woman whose chilly embrace condemns him to death too; for unless she is laid to rest, she will draw one young man after another to perdition.³¹ If Schumann’s title brings Hoffmann’s *Nachstücke* to mind, then, it is not to underlay any of its narratives to the music, but to suggest an abyss of images, anxieties and hidden drives in which the music reverberates.

### iii Nächtliches Gelage (nocturnal revels)
In Schumann’s third piece plain elements are juxtaposed in a perplexing whole. Here perhaps the encounter is between a vulnerable sensibility and a coarseness that comes to seem brutal. A boisterous *forte* waltz in D♭ major, with its tonal simplicity, bluff rhythms and plain fanfares, has something of the hunt ball.

*Example 9.8: Schumann, Nachtstücke iii, bars 1-20*

![Music Example]

The bass is too assertive in bars 6-8, hitting a discordant F♭ in 7, and hurrying its next two notes, as though impatiently. There are accented blaring discords in bars

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14-15, and a glaring sf C, in 21. If these are the nocturnal revels of Schumann’s suppressed title, there is something coarse or even overbearing about them.\textsuperscript{32}

The first episode is very different, opening \textit{piano} in Bb minor, in repressed or inhibited passion; long accented melodic notes in the bass die away before being as it were impulsively renewed, over a rolling torrent of accompaniment in the same low register. The bass adds a metric tension by coming in on the third beat of every other bar. The passion brews as the melody slowly builds, remaining within the bounds of just three adjacent notes for thirty bars (33-64). From bar 81 the piano evokes a soprano voice entering, perhaps tentatively, into a duet. Meanwhile the bass repeatedly strikes a low E♭, as though a reminder of imminent change (bars 81-95). Chromatic arpeggios suggest the intoxication of the moment, and the circle of fifths (bars 97-109) promises fulfilment; but the harmony overshoots B♭ minor to D♭ major, and the melody is displaced to the second beat (109ff), as though rattled by a threatened return to the opening tonality. The bass advances by a beat (bar 117), perhaps hastening the return of the refrain, which indeed interrupts (121). The episode’s theme, as a minor mode version of the returning refrain, can appear not only the victim but also the creature of that now overbearing power.

The waltz is repeated exactly, but this time it concludes with a \textit{mezzoforte} coda: ineffectual cadences turn into a bass figure whose repetitions (bars 160-164) sound more like an ironic vamping preparation than a conclusion – as though to say: so much for that; what next? Under that pressure of expectation, the second episode is agitated. A \textit{staccato} phrase in F♯ minor quivers (bars 165-66) and, doubling the pace of its harmonic and metric movement as it jerks up in 167-68 to an echo of bars 14-15, it seems to buck. It is abruptly repeated in C♯ minor:

\begin{example}
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\end{example}

Interrupted by hectic passages (bars 173-180 and 189-96) in \(\frac{3}{4}\), the jerks of the \textit{staccato} phrase sound on their return all the more convulsive.

But the episode is engulfed when the refrain suddenly starts up again, in an over-bright A major, before being wrenched back, at the dark climax of the piece,

\textsuperscript{32} Appel, ‘Nachtstücke’, 2005, 130, sees the theme as a parody.
to its home key of D♭ major (bars 211-13), now shadowed and sinister. Music that originally seemed merely coarse might now appear brutal. In the first two pieces, overbearing refrains interrupt and overwhelm more pliant and dependent episodes; in this third, therefore, a listener may, similarly, hear the first episode as a victim of the refrain, and the convulsive second as a symptom of the tension between that refrain and the sensibility of the first episode. The refrain, of course, has the last word, and this time the vamp that ends the coda crescendos (bars 245-8) to a bathetic forte low D♭, two beats of silence, and a peremptory $6^4$ tonic chord: an ending whose inconclusive abruptness seems ironic or even cynical.

It is a peculiar psychological sequence, and seems to me one of those instances which for Schumann demanded some account of an underlying coherence.\(^{33}\) Again, I can only suggest associations: the music is not fettered to particular identities or events. In summer 1839 Schumann himself was oppressed and made ill by ‘an evil spirit which frightened me lest it would not let me go’: ‘what crushed me was this relentless coarseness’, the ‘naked bourgeois vulgarity’ of Friedrich Wieck’s campaign against him. In April, Eduard’s death had appeared to him a ‘Fieberphantasie’; Wieck’s attacks had then made him ‘ill’, ‘devastating his sense and balance’, so that he ‘lost his creative imagination’; in December an ‘evil foe had him in thrall’.\(^{34}\) Figures in literature were often described as oppressed by forces such as disease, society or male power. Gretchen in Goethe’s Faust is a prime example. Heinse’s 1785 Ardinghello has a woman wasted by frustrated love, and confined like Shakespeare’s Ophelia to a nunnery, where she eats nothing, wrings her hands, sighs and stares. In Bonaventura’s Nachtwachen, brutal forces crush pairs of lovers: ‘Nachtwache X’ evokes Ophelia, her songs turning into the dissonance of lonely death, while ‘XIV’ juxtaposes dance music with a nun interred alive as punishment for giving birth. Moritz’ Anton Reiser sees individuals as repeatedly ‘crushed by social constraints’.

In Das Majorat from Hoffmann’s Nachtstücke, the Baron, inheritor of a family curse, has arranged for ‘a proper ball’ in his haunted Baltic castle – the ‘nocturnal revels’, perhaps, of Schumann’s suppressed title. ‘The musicians had arrived with their hoarse fiddles, mistuned basses and bleating hautboys’; meanwhile in a chamber the visiting young musician Theodor sings songs of unfulfilled yearning with the vulnerable young Baroness:

\(^{33}\) GSK II 221.
\(^{34}\) Briefwechsel, II 624, 626-7, 639 (July); II 481 (13 April); 770-1 (30 October); 808 (1 December); Neue Folge 165 (‘Dein kranker Robert Schumann’, 4 August, ‘Rohheit’, 7 August).
\(^{35}\) Moritz, Werke, 1981, 300.
She had sat down close beside me at the piano; and a white ribbon that had freed itself from her delicate ball gown fell on to my shoulder and fluttered, wafted back and forth by my singing and her gentle sighs... It was charming to see how she struggled with her shyness... but she began to sing with a delicate, pure voice... I accompanied the second verse with chords in arpeggios.

Coarse and boisterous music (‘a badly tuned shriek of trumpets and horns’) announces the ball and cuts the singing short: “Alas, I must go now” said the Baroness.’ For her, the heart’s yearning is thus brushed aside. The Baron rebuked Theodor for inflaming the fevered mind of the lonely and delicate young Baroness. And in the much darker second half of the tale it emerges that Theodor was meddling in a family blighted by an institution of primogeniture designed to consolidate wealth and by a curse working itself out repeatedly across the generations, killing off every heir and his brothers. When the curse unfolded for the last time, the Baroness died, a ‘victim of evil and uncanny forces’; but by then Theodor had left, and when he eventually returned to the now ruined castle, it was all a long time ago and he had made his career elsewhere.36 The psychological trajectory resonates with Schumann’s – coarse forces brushing aside yearning, engulfing a feverish episode and issuing in an ironic end.

Schumann’s third piece, as it leads into the last, has a place in the work that could be seen as matching that of Das Majorat in Hoffmann’s book. Each of the two halves of the book contains four stories, the first three describing repetitions that seem compulsive, nightmarish, relentless or accursed; only in the last story in each half does repetition bring release. In Hoffmann’s opening tale, Der Sandmann, Nathanael is stalked by a sinister figure, and his human weakness succumbs to a chilling automaton; in Das Majorat, the Baroness is oppressed by the relentless re-appearances of hostile forces; but the closing tale, Das Steinerne Herz, brings human warmth, albeit along with a sense of waste. Likewise, after Schumann’s three successive rondos, plain, ironic, mechanical and relentless, the listener is gasping for air. These first three pieces evoke forces of death, the uncanny and oppression, partly through their repetitions, but also through means that I would not call ‘formal’; only the last brings out the pity of it all.

iv Rundgesang mit Solostimmen (roundelay with solo voices)
From the closing D♭ of the previous piece, there gradually emerges, by way of the opening diminished seventh chord, a chord on C. From the cold confinement of the first three pieces, we now seem to emerge into open and warmer air. The simple theme (marked Einfach), metrical and harmonic consonance, and softening pedal suggest a slow dance. The texture, with broken chords often moving in parallel

tenths over bass octaves, evokes a strummed instrument, which, as it is low, and accompanies a stately old-world dance, could be taken as a theorbo, as the Hoffmann connection will indeed suggest.\footnote{Appel, ‘Nachtstücke’, 2005, 131 calls it a ‘guitar’; Moraal a ‘harp or guitar’ (‘Life and Afterlife’, 1994, 192).} The semiquavers in the accompaniment in bars 2 and 3 suggest a slight shuffle:

Example 9.10: Schumann, Nachtstücke iv, bars 1-10

The theme’s rhythm, with its quavers, rests and trochees, is a memory of the rhythm of the march that opened the first piece; and the cadence at bars 8-9 recalls those of 34 and 40 of the second (in turn developed from bar 8 of the first). But the descending scales and discordant notes are absent; and the intervention of the third piece makes the memories seem distant, and remote from the emotions that originally surrounded them. The contrasts of material, style and texture of the first three pieces are softened, as are the tonal wrenches and disorientations.

This last piece too is a rondo (as its rejected title, ‘Rundgesang’, may imply) – the more obviously so after the removal of a repetition of bars 2-13, as discussed by Clara in January 1840.\footnote{Briefwechsel, III 845.} But there is a mutuality previously missing. Before, the returning refrains had abruptly dismissed the episodes; here there is more overt continuity, and contrast between the rondo theme and the episodes is less striking. Bars 9-13 retain the strumming accompaniment and the opening dotted leap of a
sixth, but the dance of bars 2-9 gives way to intertwining ‘solo’ voices (‘Solostimmen’). The rhythm, with a rest in each voice after its leap in bars 10-11, suggests an expressive catch in the voice; the tonality moves towards A minor, suggesting more uncertainty than before; and the music, especially in bar 12, has a flow previously absent. In bars 13-21, and much more so on later returns, the refrain is varied to accommodate and be enriched by something of the style, texture, material and tonal areas of the intervening music. The first return responds to the more flowing polyphony of bars 9-13, with more voices and smoother motion in bars 17-21, a ritard, in 20, and the minor harmony of the third beat of bar 2 replaced by a poignant V/ii chord (14 and 18), giving more forward motion to the theme. In place of the shuffles and rests – the catches in the voice – of the opening, bars 21-31 show expressive ornaments and a more flowing quaver movement; a tenor and a soprano respond to and brush against one another (at the third beats of bars 23 & 24). It is as though an elderly dance were succeeded by a youthful song, or ‘Solostimmen’ again, which grows in bars 25-6 into a song of aching love as the harmony briefly suggests the darker key of D♭, with an expressive ritard. An echo of Beethoven’s Nimm sie hin, denn, diese Lieder from An die ferne Geliebte gives the music pause:39

Example 9.11: Schumann, Nachtstücke iv, bars 21-28

A repeat of the opening chords seems to start the cycle again, and the refrain returns, with its original harmony restored in bar 33; but its second half (36-40) once more prefers the V/ii chord, and has a flowing movement like that of bars 21-31 (in place of the original quavers and rests); there are poignant decorations and dissonances. At the end, however, the shadows fall. A brief coda reinterprets the tonic chord on the third beat of bars 40 and 41 as the dominant of

Bb minor, which had figured as the key of the first episode of the third piece, and
the relative minor of the D♭ major of the second and third pieces. The singing
voices are silent, and the tonal shadows that fell on the second episode deepen.
The bass once more shudders onto D♭ and G♭ and back to C and F for a return of
the cadence of bar 40, now Adagio, rhythmically augmented, and ending on 3 (41-
4). As the light finally fails, the quiet is not of fulfilment or even regret, but of
something more like waste.

As an overtly responsive, elegiac piece, it stands apart from what came
before; but all four pieces are subtly connected. Tonally the last three are united
by a pattern of contrasts between F major and D♭ major, leaving the C major of the
opening piece appearing as the dominant of F major. Looking back, the
construction of the work from minimal musical material is striking. The first three
pieces are based on a descent spanning a major seventh that shapes melodic
outline and tonal movement. The first two pieces open with phrases built on
descending scales, both sliding at the bottom by a semitone, and both re-
ascending to end with a semitone slide up to 5, with similar semitone slides in the
bass that acts as counterpoint. Similar material infects bars 9ff, 48ff and (in
truncated form) 89ff in the first piece, and the first and second episodes in the
second (where there are semitone slides in bars 30, 35, 46-7, 74 etc.). In the third
piece, the descending scale, with a semitone slide at the end, forms the bass of the
opening bars (1-8, climbing back up at 26-28); a semitone slide up is the main
material of the fanfares (2-3 etc.); and the second episode has variants of the
descending and ascending scale. Though the melodic material of the last piece is
different, it too contains echoes of descending scales and semitone slides, and its
dotted rhythm is a transformation of the dotted march of the opening piece.40

Moreover, in the first three pieces, transitions between refrain and episode
sometimes exploit a semitone slide for the work’s most dramatic tonal shifts. The
first slides from C to D♭, a major seventh below to lurch from C major to G♭ major
(bars 48-50); the second uses three emphatic Cs and a bass D♭ to slip from F major
to A♭ major (22-3); the third exploits loud octaves on E and A and an even louder
E♭ and A♭ for the abrupt switch from A major to D♭ major (211-13). Only as the last
piece opens (bars 1-2) are these flatward lurches reversed, as a forte bass D♭, at
the end of the third blossoms into a piano bass C, repeated at 31-2. The close link
between these tonal developments and the limited thematic material contributes

40 The accompaniments to the first and second episodes sink down scales (bars
10-12, 22-23 etc.), and there are semitone slides in bars 2-4, etc.. The rhythmic
both to the tightness of the work’s musical form and to the sense of release in the last piece.

Hoffmann’s Das Steinerne Herz is likewise an awakening from the chill of previous stories. In his garden Max had constructed a shrine for a stone icon of his heart, and now holds a party, choreographed like a Gesamtkunstwerk accompanied by music. The ‘astonishingly convoluted arabesques’ of his house ‘express the bitterest irony of earthly existence’, and his garden is characterised as ‘old-world French’, its ‘serious solemnity’ contrasted with the ‘empty-headed triviality’ of English gardens. The shrine, music and garden are all images of Hoffmann’s exuberant arabesque with its darkly lyrical story.

As the party begins, Max’s old flame Julie rebukes his attachment to rare visions that made their love impossible; Max claims that he had to ‘live alone,… as anything that love, that friendship can do falls uselessly away from this stone heart’. ‘The sun sank below the horizon’, and

[Julie] began a great Italian scene by Anfossi, singing with unusual expressiveness. Her voice was old, shaky and uneven… In Max’s transfigured look shone the enchantment of youth long passed… Max encouraged the company to dance. Four theorbos … played a sarabande full of pathos. The old danced; the young looked on.

Max had long ago become estranged from his nephew, the young Max, who falls in love with Julie’s daughter, also called Julie: the older generation witness in the younger generation the love they never achieved. The old Max encounters his double, young Max, in the garden:

I heard a softly lamenting voice… I went closer, and saw – myself! – myself! but as I was thirty years ago, clothed as I was that fateful day when in despair I wanted to end my miserable life, when Julie appeared before me like an angel of light in her bridal dress.

The young Julie’s love reconciles him, and he approves the marriage of the two young people, as though it were the marriage he himself had never had. After his death, the young couple wept at the stone below which lay his heart; and ‘with his own hand Max engraved in the stone’ because ‘he found there the whole story of

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the life-path and pain of his uncle, the words: “‘Rest and peace’”. 42 The tale is full of the artistry of quotation from previous works; those concluding words allude to the garden, tomb and dark shadows that mark the end of Jean Paul’s Hesperus.

Schumann too echoes a great predecessor, and in the context of his piece, Beethoven’s melody might suggest a young man casting forward to a time when he will look back at the wasted love of youth, as the old Max does in Hoffmann’s tale while Julie sings and a theorbo sounds. The words Beethoven set express something consonant with this: ‘Take then these songs that I once sang for you, and sing them again at evening to the sweet sounds of the lute’. If Schumann’s music creates an emotional world similar to that of Hoffmann’s tale, it is not I think to allude to it, recreate its narrative, or muse on it. Instead it is to open cultural and psychological spaces in which the music reverberates. For this final rondo caps the previous three, bringing to the fore the waste – Schumann’s ‘one ball’ – implicit behind their overbearing deadness.

In summer 1839 Schumann felt ‘cut off from every poetic dimension’. 43 His concentrated, stark and disturbing Nachtstücke of that time lie at an opposite pole from the kaleidoscopic, comic and lyrical Carnaval. With their mechanical rondo forms, thematic plainness, major keys and (in the first three pieces) hard-edged phrases, these pieces are the anti-matter of the ‘Romantic’ or ‘poetic’. Though lit by a flat even light, without shimmering recession or suggestive twilight, they conceal abysses. The conception of Schumann’s nocturnes, permeating form, material, image and idea, remains bafflingly idiosyncratic.

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42 Hoffmann, Nachtstücke, 589, 597, 602, 604, 609. Compare Tieck’s Der Pokal, of a few years earlier, for a similar recreation of lost love.
43 Briefwechsel, II 659, 23 July.
CHAPTER 10

‘THE CLOSED BOOK’

Chapters 3-4 argued that literary associations in Schumann’s ‘poetic’ music need not be taken just as idle decoration, programmatic reproduction of external material, or the adoption of formal strategies from literature; instead, or in addition, each work can be taken as creating a ‘poetic’ world of its own, shaped by its ‘Geist’, and resonating with literature. Chapters 5-9 offered interpretations of each work in that spirit: they treated each as an aesthetic entity shaped and energised by patterns of expressive musical features, some of which may coalesce in a listener’s mind as the music flows on to become symbols resonating with aspects of a broader culture, including Hoffmann. I selected aesthetically significant patterns not on the basis of an analytical theory, but through seeking to balance and integrate analysis with synthesis of each work, observation with intuition about style and idiom, historical evidence about Schumann and his culture with sympathetic imagination, and precision with acceptance of the music’s elusiveness. To describe musical features and their expressiveness, my interpretations sometimes used metaphors, which also facilitated juxtapositions between the music and literature intended to bring out resonances. The aim was to present each work both as it had always appeared and at the same time as illuminated anew to reveal fresh aspects.

This concluding chapter now reflects on those methodological choices in the light of wider musicological and other trends in Schumann’s day and since. That may seem overdue. But the choices were not deductive derivations from a theoretical system, or even from Schumann’s own aesthetics, but offshoots of general stances to which reasoning, experience and intuition all contribute. (If a
label helps locate these stances, the least misleading might be ‘sub-Aristotelian’). They purport to represent not absolute hermeneutical principles valid for all music, but what may illuminate Schumann’s. As such, my choices are best justified not by a priori argument but by their fruits in understanding the music in practice, and so only now am I ready to review them.

Works of art can, of course, be treated not as works of art but in other ways – for instance as objects of or exemplars in analytical, stylistic, musicological, documentary, scientific or sociological studies. From an aesthetic perspective, however, a work presents itself as issuing from a sensibility, to be received by other sensibilities; and from a stream of multi-dimensional and multivalent musical features, an interesting analysis selects some (including those less amenable to traditional analytical theories) which, under convincing descriptions and in well-judged groupings, can be seen as contributing to significant aesthetic patterns or effects in the work. Which patterns are significant, and how to describe them, are matters not of fact but of judgment: the decision rests on intuitions and inferences about how a work can be synthesised as an individual whole, but it also modifies those inferences, in an evolving iterative process. Likewise, one cannot deduce from a score which features to select from the myriad possibilities, nor in which groupings, nor how to describe them and their contribution to aesthetic patterns. These are acts of imaginative interpretation, implicated in an indefinite range of conscious and unconscious assumptions, including about the nature of for instance harmony, metre, melody and sonority in the work and its culture.¹

The idea of a ‘work’, while essential here, is culturally-dependent; and how far works form wholes, and in what sense, resists generalized formulation.² Schumann and his contemporaries often described a work as ‘organic’, as though it were a natural kind. For Goethe, Hamlet is not to be artificially dismembered: it is a tree whose trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit are all organically related. Similarly, Jean Paul contrasted the ‘anatomical demonstration’ performed by Goethe the critic with the living creation of character by Goethe the novelist; and Hoffmann juxtaposed organic life and the composer’s aversion to anatomical dissection.³ Schumann too described the best music as ‘organic’, ‘breathing one

life’: different aspects participate in and enliven others, and may lose their meaning if isolated, for what counts is the way they hang together as a whole. He wondered whether his ‘dismembering critique’ of the Berlioz Symphony served the reader, remarking that the composer, who studied medicine in his youth, ‘could scarcely have dissected the head of a handsome murderer with more reluctance than I have his first movement’.4

I would not conclude, however, that a Schumann work is necessarily organic in the sense of stemming from the implications of its basic material, stated at the outset, worked out through the form, and driving to a logical and resolving conclusion, as proposed for other music by A.B. Marx.5 Nor, more particularly, should it be assumed that relationships of pitch level and tonality are prime drivers of the shape and energy of Schumann’s piano works, or as important as in say Beethoven. Within Schumann’s oeuvre, moreover, they may be less important in works consisting of many short pieces, and in general less again in the ‘literary’ works (Kreisleriana perhaps excepted), where tonal patterns seem to reinforce a shape rather than drive it. Other musical dimensions – such as rhythm, sonority and texture (as in the Fantasiestücke), and expressive quality and associations – may play equally important parts as sources of shape and energy of the whole and as embodiments of a specific conception.6

Sources of shape and energy may, moreover, be unexpected, elusive or even paradoxical. In his criticism, Schumann praised music whose threads, musical and poetic, are not ‘coarse’ or ‘blatant’, but ‘fine’, ‘light’, ‘hidden’ or ‘arcane’.7 He admired works in which form, melody, harmony and rhythm are obscured, so as to draw attention to some ‘deeper’ psychological progression, or ‘more poetic’ or ‘dramatic’ development; a superficial absence, peculiarity or grotesqueness of form, as in Beethoven or Berlioz, may point to an underlying conceptual coherence, or to unusual connections of thought.8 Indeed, in each of the four ‘literary’ works, musical peculiarities seem to embody an antinomian or paradoxical conception, re-

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6 How far might Schenkerian approaches illuminate these works? Marston, Schumann Fantasie, 1992, xii-xiii and 43-60, applies such techniques to op. 17; Kaminsky, Principles of Formal Structure, 1989, discusses pitch level and tonal relationships in parts of opp. 9 and 6.
7 GSK I 155, 233, 143, 251, 72 (‘Spuren’), 400, II 221. Goethe (Wilhelm Meister, V 4, in Werke, vol. 4, 1973, 263-4) described Hamlet as held together by threads that ‘are tenuous and loose, but run through the whole’. Compare Hoffmann, Die Serapions-Brüder, 1963, 842.
8 GSK I 73 on metre, and on Beethoven’s ‘idiosyncratic’ forms; 77, 78 on Berlioz’s thematic development; 251 on harmony; compare 73, 74 (‘geistigen Zusammenhang’), 347.
inventing a worn genre or creating a new one. *Carnaval* builds a shape out of mirages, *Fantasiestücke* from vivid inconsequence; *Kreisleriana* generates a finished masterpiece, rich in human significance and in complex layers of musical argument, from quasi-improvisations on melodic patterns featuring in the *Goldbergs* and in popular melody; and *Nachtstücke* draws disturbance out of bright major keys and plain rondo forms.

Reflecting Schumann’s admiration for the elusive in music, my analyses are sometimes less than categorical. The debates over opp. 17 and 20 demonstrate that large-scale form in Schumann can elude definite, agreed description. So perhaps does large-scale tonal movement. In the *Fantasy* (first movement) and *Davidsbündlertänze* the final key can be interpreted as suggesting both belonging and displacement, perhaps, and in *Kreisleriana* both resolution and alienation; and these tonal effects may be inseparable from persisting ambiguity as to each work’s tonic. Thematic relationships, and other more local musical features may also be elusive. The time signature of ‘Des Abends’ does not reveal a ‘true’ metre so much as ensure the constant self-assertion of duple time against an otherwise dominant triple time; in ‘Warum?’, alternative phrase structures are equally valid. States of key may be clouded, or ‘intermediate’ as has recently been argued. This may be related to Brendel’s 1845 claim that some passages of Schumann’s piano music ‘lose themselves in fluidly dissolving outlines’; he added that Schumann’s use of the pedal in his own playing ‘often prevented the harmonies from standing out distinctly’. (Characteristically, in the first three pieces of the *Nachtstücke*, Schumann took on a paradoxically inverted challenge, rendering the absence of the elusive more baffling than its presence.) There is a doctrine that ambiguities in musical features are always decidable within a theoretical framework; but any such decision may represent the music as an aesthetic entity less adequately than ‘pre-theoretical’ indecision.

Arguably, moreover, any such theoretical framework will be less than absolute, complete or adequate. Particular aspects of music, such as classical tonality, encourage a hope that they might be reducible to a combination of hard empirical fact and deductive argument from articulated theoretical systems. Such systems can be fascinating, and sometimes of compelling grandeur. I do not, however, believe it possible to specify a system adequate in itself to a rich

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understanding of complex and expressive aesthetic entities like most art-works. Adherence to a system can appear to confine understanding to what can be inferred from the theory, to dismiss higher-level qualities emerging from a synthetic view of a work, to downplay the role of culture, associations and the imagination, or to subordinate or misrepresent individual works as mere instantiations of theory. Music would be duller (though musicology easier) if its aesthetic nature were indeed governed solely by such systems.

Something similar was often said in Schumann’s culture. Wackenroder contrasted ‘dry’ or ‘everyday’ verbal systems with the fineness and fluidity of music, a ‘sounding sea’ or streaming river, and Tieck made similar points; Novalis has a character contrast natural scientists ‘seeking to examine the internal structure through precise incisions’ with poets ‘pursuing the fluid and the fleeting with agile minds’. ‘The crude discursive thinker’ builds an artificial nature from atomic propositions, in quest of ‘an infinite automaton’ (‘unendliches Automat’) – a mechanically deductive model of the universe. But such a deductive system cannot explain nature, and negates its life, Novalis thought, and it is better to hover between analysis and an intuitive grasp of the whole. Schumann rebuked critics for always wanting to pin down what cannot be said, and denounced slavish adherence to theoretical systems. As he said, ‘beauty mocks all aesthetic theory’; give yourself a box, and you may have to live in it. He may not have known Friedrich Schlegel’s fragment, ‘Intellectually, it is equally lethal to have a system and to have none’; but in December 1838 he copied out C.F.D. Schubart’s similar sayings. Accordingly, Schumann offered no theoretical systems, and his contribution to the controversy of the early 1830s over comedy in music is unusual in simply proffering insights into instances of comic music in Beethoven, rather than starting from abstract theoretical definitions in order to generate inevitably inadequate specifications as to how comedy arises in music in general.

In that essay, he typically isolates musical features and interprets their expressiveness by describing them metaphorically, for instance as ‘breaking off’,

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14 *GSK* I 422; 499, 22; *Mottosammlung*, III 61-2 and 73 (compare IV 10, 13 and 18).
‘threatening’, ‘interrogative’ or ‘pert’. Elsewhere, he stressed the value of using musical means for expressive purposes. Similarly, I have often used a metaphor both to describe an aspect of harmony, metre, melody, sonority, form, character, style, or genre, and at the same time to intimate how that aspect can embody for instance a manner (funereal, rustic), a pattern of speech, movement or gesture (even of immobility), a characteristic or state (awkwardness, convulsiveness, conflict, dream, the robotic), or even a process (disappearance). As these categories, in any permutations, may combine, overlap, or fuse inextricably, I have not tried to demarcate them rigorously either in theory or in practical interpretation. Thus the Nachtstücke open with a march that I metaphorically called ‘deathly’ in style and ‘hollow’ in texture: and that connects with the ‘robotic’ dance, ‘coarse’ waltz and ‘stately’ dance in the remaining three Nachtstücke, to create a flow of music expressive of wider human concerns. (‘Expressive’ is intended here to point to the aesthetic nature of a work without insisting that it ‘expresses’ a composer’s feelings, for instance). Indeed, it is hard to make sense of any of the ‘literary’ works if expressive qualities in musical threads are discounted.

To appreciate such poetic threads is not to be distracted from the music but to attend to it all the more closely. This fits with what Schumann implied in writing of the complementarity of analytic and poetic approaches to music. His works are, in Kaminsky’s words, a ‘union of structure and symbol’. Indeed over the 1830s, Schumann’s poetic threads came increasingly to arise from dominant musical processes, rather than from incidental musical features or added words, and content need not be seen as an entity separable from the music.

But nor would I describe significant aesthetic patterns as purely formal, or form as the only legitimate object of musical understanding. That is to stretch ‘form’ to cover all that music is and does – a stretching which in one sense simply reflects the difficulty in knowing where to stop once one starts moving away from seeing ‘form’ as a template (static, abstract, standard) thrust in vain upon music’s fluid stream; for how then can any aspects of that stream – melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, sonority – be seen as isolated from ‘form’? The stretching is an old gambit, used by Schiller and A.B. Marx; more recently, Newcomb claims that ‘form’ is ‘the seat of musical expression’. But if ‘form’ reassuringly suggests the

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narrowly technical and objective, it constitutes only one seat of musical expression, while in a broader sense, it is redundant, leaving only a truism, ‘music is the seat of musical expression’. To exploit this slide in the meaning of ‘form’ is to eat your expressive cake and have its technical ‘objectivity’. I have therefore left ‘form’ in a narrower sense, as Schumann did in reviewing Berlioz’s symphony, content to make provisional use of it as a tool without worrying here about its ontology. Clearly the *Nachtstücke* can and should be understood as four rondos; but they are rondos of particular kinds, with particular relationships in other dimensions too, including expressive qualities.

My choices of metaphorical description were guided by Schumann’s titles and the literary associations they suggest, so as to draw out connections between different musical features. I described the melody in ‘Aufschwung’ as becoming ‘airborne’ in bar 4, and the metaphor may both characterise a musical feature, and make sense of its connections with other features (such as in bars 5-8 and 71-4) and with Schumann’s title. Reflection on literary associations may then guide, inspire, inflect, challenge or confirm musical understanding; it may repeatedly enrich interpretation anew, as on fresh hearings a listener is struck by different musical threads or details.\(^{19}\) In a virtuous circle, attention to the music suggests associations with literary culture, while literary associations enrich appreciation of the music.

Literary associations may involve not Hoffmann alone but the wider culture as well. Of the four works’ titles, only ‘*Kreisleriana*’ must point to Hoffmann, the others being more broadly suggestive. In *Carnaval*, a context is suggested by an overall and many individual titles, and if interpretation benefits from access to how carnival was understood in Schumann’s culture, Hoffmann’s *Prinzessin Brambilla* is not the only way in, if arguably the best. In *Fantasiestücke*, musical images captured in titles resonate with symbols from the culture in general, such as serpentine lines, or dreaming, while Hoffmann’s fiction can enrich those images and clarify the trajectory of the work as a whole. In *Kreisleriana*, the music embodies and resonates with musical symbols referred to in words in Hoffmann’s essays: knowledge of the essays, though not indispensable, aids interpretation. Meanwhile, the *Nachtstücke* creates an alien world, its peculiar psychological sequences expressed in plain music; but relationships in the first three rondos between the hard-edged melodies and rhythms of the repeated refrains and the more pliable

episodes can be understood through ideas from the wider culture such as the mechanical and the human, or the overbearing and the sensitive. Where the second piece, for instance, deploys musical features that are markedly and bafflingly mechanical, the literary culture, including Hoffmann, can help by showing how ideas like those of the mechanical automaton and the robotic puppet acted as symbols in musical criticism and psychological fictions, and such lines of thought help to make sense of connections between musical features across the four pieces.

Such literary connections are suggestive, reciprocal and open-ended – less like references or allusions to external objects than what I called ‘resonances’. In acoustic resonance, given effective coupling between a source and a resonator, a driving frequency that matches a resonator’s natural frequencies will be amplified, and its overtones drawn out; the more degrees of freedom possessed by the source and resonator, each as a system in itself, the more frequencies that can thus resonate. I intend this not as theory but merely as a simile, easily replaced by some other, and without pretensions to rigour, but perhaps suggestive; and I would draw out by analogy some ways in which aesthetic resonance between music and literature may work.

Thus ‘coupling’ will be more convincing where Schumann knew the literature in question, expected an audience, however small or putative, to know it too and be ready to engage with it, gave some indication, perhaps through a title, of its relevance, and ideally left evidence that it touched on his concerns of the time. (Schumann’s expectations of his audience’s cultural understanding were often disappointed, of course; and the evidence for his concerns is less abundant before 1838-39, when his correspondence with Clara Wieck became more voluminous and revealing). Musical and literary features need to match well under descriptions convincing in their own terms; descriptions that seem contrived to manufacture a match will yield no resonance. The more the music and literature, as systems in their own right, are each rich in their own independent features (‘degrees of freedom’) with a wealth of potential internal relationships (‘overtones’), the larger resonances their juxtaposition will yield. Where music needs a book to dictate or explain its course, resonance is weaker. (Perhaps this apparent paradox reflects that of the sentence from the Berlioz review, discussed in Chapter 3, where Schumann seemed to claim that the more that music works in its own right, the more poetic it can be).

On this basis – of convincing ‘coupling’ and good matching between music and literature that are each poetic in their own right – resonance emphasises and enriches what the music already is. The resonance-chamber of the wider culture, that is, amplifies musical features in their own nature; it elicits their implicit
relationships (‘overtones’); and it enlarges the space in which they reverberate to an indefinite extent. (Since the music can perform the same function for the literature, the process is reciprocal). Reference by contrast points away from the music, and normally to something particular.

It is worth pausing on the passages which sit least comfortably within this sort of approach – where a listener has of necessity to hold a particular literary content in mind to make sense of the music, or where the composer proffered a programme implying as much. It is hard to find a reason why dances 6-10 in Papillons appear in that sequence except through a narrative which the composer invites us to trace; and the literary relationship risks seeming a cipher, or Rellstab’s ‘missing key’ – and an ill-fitting key at that. With In der Nacht, five years later, a puzzling musical sequence is accompanied by apparently specific images (distorted reflections, fruitless scurrying, perhaps); and a particular narrative (whether Veronika’s equinoctial sorcery or Leander’s visit to Hero) seems to be needed to make sense of those images, if not of the psychological progression. On this account, the literary relationship is not wholly successful in either of these passages, but less awkward in the second. Arguably, therefore, Schumann’s music shows progressive development across the decade. By 1839, the literary relationship in the third of the Nachtstücke, though still troubling, works better yet: while a listener may lack confidence to engage with the peculiar psychological progression of the music unless aided by the similar progression in Hoffmann’s narrative, there is no need to underlay a particular narrative to Schumann’s piece.

Indeed, I have avoided interpretations in which a literary thread of images or narrative is taken as dictating the course of the music rather than vice versa, downplayed detailed and narrative correspondences between the music and a book, and minimised the role of programmatic approaches to the music, including those that treat it as reducible to encoded autobiography. That is not to say that such approaches need be insignificant for all listeners: my aim is to open up interpretative options, not close them down.

The relationships I impute, and the associated interpretations are, however, open to challenge on musicological, literary and historical grounds, and to reasoned debate. One could question whether for instance the motivic patterns I stress in Kreisleriana occur significantly enough to justify my emphasis. One could foreground different kinds of patterns, whether of motif or of something different – texture or genre, perhaps. Or again, a pattern may be perceived, but without a wider significance as a locus of inspired improvisation on trivial song or a symbol of art and philistinism in conflict. Or the conditions for resonance may not be met by my descriptions of musical features and their match with literary features; listeners
will in any case probably find that unless they have first absorbed the literature at first hand, and internalised it, coupling is ineffective and resonance accordingly seems like dead reference.

Indeed, experience teaches that agreement on expression and resonance in a musical work may be at best patchy. On the other hand, many musical works seem to present themselves to people in many cultures as essentially expressive; Schumann for one saw the music of his culture as inherently expressive, and presented many of his own works as such. It may then be better to see expression and resonance not as purely subjective, but as relative to diverse interpretive perspectives (including different understandings of musical idiom and cultural contexts, and individual journeys through a work). These perspectives, and the associated views on expressiveness and resonances, can be partially communicated, and sometimes internalised, modified, or rejected (unlike what is purely subjective); but fully adequate verbal formulation of them may be less an attainable destination than a limit of possibility, or ever-receding horizon.

Such relativity was accepted by some in Schumann’s world. C.F. Michaelis said in 1805-6 that each musical work requires the listener to recreate it as a complete whole; its effect depends on the diverse capacities of different individuals’ imaginations; ‘the music is just the composer’s means to set the imagination in motion… The imagination works further on what he only intimated to me, or sketched’. Schumann adopted a similar view. He insisted that music can be appreciated on paper, as it sounds, and as listeners later recreate (’nachschaffen’) a work reflectively in their own individual creative imaginations. But imaginative interpretation need not exclude reasoned debate and evidence. Schumann said of his criticism that ‘it seemed not inappropriate to invent contrasting figures to give voice to diverse approaches to views of art’, in the shape of ‘Eusebius’, ‘Florestan’ and ‘Raro’, who debate between themselves. Koßmaly, in his 1844 review of Schumann’s piano compositions, thought ‘several different interpretations of one and the same work’ imaginable, and cited Novalis’ claim that a work is the better ‘the more ways it has of being understood’. Such a hermeneutic approach was exemplified in the dialogue form of art-criticism developed around 1800. August Wilhelm Schlegel’s ‘Die Gemälde. Gespräch’, concerns the reciprocal relationship between visual art and words, the dependence

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of the individual work on the historical and cultural tradition, the hermeneutics of analysis and interpretation, and above all the possibility of reasoned debate.\footnote{GSK I 2; Koßmaly, ‘Schumann’s Claviercompositionen’, 35; Novalis, \textit{Schriften}, V, 1988, 236 (281); \textit{Athenaeum}, II.1, Berlin 1799. Compare colloquies in Novalis’ \textit{Die Lehrlinge zu Sais}, Tieck’s \textit{Der Phantasus}, and Hoffmann’s \textit{Die Serapions-Brüder}. See also Ziolkowski, \textit{German Romanticism}, 1990, 355-72.}

Schumann often said that a broad culture is essential to musical understanding; the implication is that associations will depend on the cultural riches available to the listener, and interpretation of purely musical features will alter with musical tastes over the centuries. (His colleague, Keferstein, expressed a similar view about the nature of comedy in music).\footnote{GSK I 143, 422, II 115 (broad culture), 221 (insufficient understanding), 31, I 371 (changing musical tastes); ‘K.Stein’, ‘Versuch über das Komische’, 1833, 240-1.} In this view, then, historical information is neither unavailable nor irrelevant to imaginative interpretation. Works of art, I would argue, are inherently cultural and historical constructs that cannot be interpreted or even analysed from an inaccessible position outside all cultural assumptions; and the culture in which Schumann’s work is rooted is still partially accessible, and fruitful for its understanding. Accepting the richest possible cultural stock from the composer’s world, I take musical symbols described through ideas from that culture as potentially belonging to the works as culturally understood, not simply to ‘poetic reflection stimulated by the musical form’ in Tadday’s words (unless that is to split hairs).\footnote{Tadday, \textit{Das Schöne Unendliche}, 1999, 143. Compare Hatten, \textit{Interpreting Musical Gestures}, 2004, 33-34.} As a result, extreme versions of ‘aesthetic autonomy’ or ‘de-contextualisation’ seem to me neither necessary nor helpful here.\footnote{If Hoeckner’s reading of Schumann’s review of Schubert’s ‘Great’ C major Symphony (\textit{Programming the Absolute}, 2002, 63-71) turns Schumann’s admiration of that Symphony’s uniqueness (see Appendix 3(d)) into an assertion of the wholly de-contextualised autonomy of music in general, it underplays cultural and historical understanding in Schumann’s hermeneutics.} Post-modernism, in upholding diverse rights, risks exaggerating the extent to which awareness of past cultures is unnecessary or impossible.

No-one, of course, can wholly inhabit a past culture, and it is neither possible nor desirable wholly to escape the presumptions of one’s own time. But it does not follow that the only course is to weave aspects of Schumann into a re-creation of more modern ideas, of Walter Benjamin or Julia Kristeva, for instance. Nor is a listener dependent solely on arbitrary association of ideas. Nor, though, is it right to insist that the works be interpreted solely through ideas from Schumann’s time. For past works can also be re-interpreted in more modern frameworks, and consciousness of both affinities and differences between modern ideas and nineteenth-century conceptions can cast a revealing raking light on
Schumann’s music. One can see something of the post-modernist revolt against modernism, for instance, in the Romantic rebellion against Enlightenment claims to universal, rational, systematic objectivity, championing the partial, instinctive, non-axiomatic and subjective. Modern semiotic theories of the arbitrariness of signs may seem pre-figured in Novalis’ *Monolog*, where the play of mathematical and verbal signs is for its own sake. The Romantics’ fascination with the psychology of outsiders and their plight in the face of bourgeois social interests resonates with concerns of the Frankfurt school. Highly self-conscious in their hermeneutics, the early Romantics including Friedrich Schlegel explored non-classical aesthetic ideas such as fragmentation, self-reflexiveness, alienation and de-familiarisation; and so did early twentieth-century thinkers in Russia and Germany. It is not surprising then that there have been interpretations of Schumann’s aesthetics through Kristeva, or Benjamin, or the Russian Formalists, or current ideas akin to those of Schlegel.

It would be interesting to explore the works further in that light. Even though to do so might exceed historical evidence, it need not, if handled with sensitivity to Schumann’s culture, conflict with it. (It could bear in mind for instance that Schumann appears not to have read Schlegel’s philosophy or aesthetics, and gave every sign of agreeing with Jean Paul’s disdain for the latter – or that the attempts of the Russian Formalists to reduce art to the mechanical would presumably have been unsympathetic to him – or that the Novalis he read in Tieck’s coherent and Idealist version diverges from the disjointed fragments and almost post-modern semiotics that sometimes appears from modern versions.) In Chapter 9, for instance, I drew out features like compulsion, trauma, oscillation, alienation and hollowness in the *Nachtstücke* rondos, relating them to early Romantic culture; but modern perspectives might also be illuminating. Ideas from Freud might enrich interpretation not just of the first rondo, but the other three as well; and so might the ‘Ostranenie’ or de-familiarisation described by Russian formalists, Brecht’s ‘Verfremdung’, and similar concepts in Barthes. Adorno’s description of the Brecht / Weill ‘Moritat’, highlighting ‘unrelated juxtaposition[s]’, banal sonorities, ‘wrong notes’ and ‘glibness’ in the rhythm, resonates with


27 For de-familiarisation, see for instance Novalis, *Schriften*, V, 1988, 267 (482), and Hoffmann, *Fantasiestücke*, 12 (‘etwas fremdartig Bekanntes’ of Callot’s representations).

Schumann’s work. The rondos could be seen also through ideas in Deleuze about refrains and machines, through Calasso’s post-modern Marxist interpretations of fetishism and of sacrificial repetition in myth, or through the instinct of Kleist, Tolstoy and Thomas Mann that music can induce a loss of identity bordering on automatism. Žižek’s interpretation of Carnaval links Deleuze and Lacan to Schelling’s Idealism and Hoffmann’s puppets. It would be interesting to explore similarly how far images of carnival from Schumann’s culture can be related to Lacan’s specularity, modern equivalents of magic lanterns, or to Kramer’s interpretation of the work in terms of a late nineteenth-century view of mirrors, Bakhtin’s understanding of Rabelais, and Terry Castle’s of English masquerade. Kreisleriana could be seen in terms of Kristeva’s concept of the ‘abject’, relating it to Romantic notions including the isolation of the artist. Or the Fantasiestücke could be viewed in terms of modern ideas of dreaming, or of the yearning for a primal undifferentiated state, such as Kristeva’s (or Plato’s) ‘chora’, and how these might relate to ancient mythological images of serpent and water, or to the Romantics’ concept of ‘das Flüssige’ (to which I will shortly return). To emphasise history is not, therefore, to reject such interpretations.

Nor is it to suggest a final court of appeal in for instance historically documented authorial intention. For even where an author’s intentions for a work are stated in words, that is relevant information, but not a touchstone; intention is primarily discernible, even for the author, not in separate words, not as a pre-determined programme or schema, but in the work as it emerges from the compositional process. (This often crucially includes the very latest stages, as with Fantasiestücke and Nachtstücke, and in a sense Carnaval, where Schumann in April 1836 offered a publisher not the twenty-odd pieces published the next year but only a dozen). As Schumann said, ‘an “intention” often sends the creative process astray’, and I have normally preferred to talk instead of the work’s ‘Geist’. In his youth Schumann had copied from the Kunstblatt:

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34 Erler, 83 (13 April 1836); Neue Folge 60 (28 November 1834).
What has been taken really deeply out of nature is more deep and universal than the artist himself knows; for it also awakens responses in such spheres he could not know: it opens for everyone different perspectives on life.

His claim that 'the poetry of the imagination lies in its darkness or its unconsciousness', though a youthful protest against learning music theory, may rest on a similar view. Of the way his own works expressed remote interests, he said, several years later, 'I am not aware of all of this while I'm composing; it only emerges later'.

This was a common view in Schumann’s culture. For Jean Paul, 'genius is in more senses than one a sleepwalker', and 'the most powerful element in the poet is exactly the unconscious... An ineradicable feeling imbues us with something obscure, not so much our creation as our creator'; and 'associations from life would be better reflected in images than in lifeless abstractions – but different images for each person, as nothing shows up people’s idiosyncrasy as much as the effect of poetry on us’. And for Novalis ‘the true reader must be an extended author’, as the author is to an extent only one reader.

The nature of this relativity provides one reason for preferring to understand musical features in the works as expressive rather than signifying. Analogies between music and linguistics have been tempting and habitual for centuries; but they bring familiar problems. ‘Meaning’, for instance, has a normal linguistic sense, in which one asks the meaning of a foreign, new, complex or ambiguous word or sentence or passage, or discusses that of empirical statements ('It is snowing in Newark'), of logical deductions, and of the words and statements in this paragraph. If music has ‘meaning’, it is barely analogous to meaning in that narrow linguistic sense; it is perhaps closer to the broader sense in which one might talk of a poem’s ‘meaning’, or expressive drift, as distinct from the meaning of its constituent sentences. It is probably better to say that music generally is meaningful, than the contrary, but to say that a particular piece has ‘a meaning’ risks entangling a narrower sense with a broader. It also risks imputing to music the property of pointing to something more or less separable from it, and adequately specifiable in words: imputations that must be at least partially withdrawn again if the nature of music is not to be falsified. Thus Fisk describes

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35 Tagebücher, I 390 (compare GSK I 462-3); I 350; Briefwechsel, I 146 (13 April 1838).
36 Jean Paul, Vorschule, §§12-13, 1; Novalis, Schriften, V, 1988, 232-3 (260) (in Hoffmann, Serapions-Brüder, 644, a performance may enlighten an author about his own play).
how ‘musical experience ... thrives on loss of meaning ... that is, on forgetting what might have been meant while at the same time drawing energy from, or even, in a sublimated way, resolving conflicts within, that lost or forgotten meaning’. As Schumann pointed out, music is not merely a means of signifying, or a ‘translation’ of content that can be separately articulated verbally; and the signifier cannot be dispensed with once we grasp what is signified. Thus although Schumann’s ‘literary’ works may be meaningful, they are not best seen as containing meanings in the same way as sentences do.

Similarly, I used metaphors as part of analysis, and used Jean Paul’s discussion of metaphor to illuminate a concept of symbolism in which music can be seen as a quasi-symbolic medium; but I prefer not to see music as metaphor, or claim that it is metaphorical. Such claims are sometimes made, perhaps playing on the idea that music, like metaphor, may neither declare nor conceal but intimate. But metaphor is a figure of speech in which a term (or sign) with a literal sense in one context is transferred to another context in which that literal sense both applies and does not. How that might apply to music is obscure: in music, unlike language, there are no terms, no literal senses and so no transferred metaphorical senses. To see music as metaphorical must then be to use ‘metaphor’ in a remote, metaphorical sense. I prefer more straightforward ways to make the same point.

Again, instrumental music by itself could conceivably contain vestigial narratives, but the more developed the narrative the worse the music is likely to be. ‘Narrative’ and ‘narrativity’ in some often unclarified broader sense are however sometimes applied to instrumental music. This risks confusion with the narrower (literal) senses of the terms. For my purposes, where interpretations that relate somehow to actual narratives are possible and occasionally – but not often – compelling, it is better not to invite that confusion. Again, Schumann and his contemporaries sometimes imputed not just images to music, but scenarios or narratives as well, as one way of expressing the trajectory or drama of a work. Today too, music’s import is sometimes conjecturally recovered through imputed narratives; but definite figures and coherent narrative connections, once

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introduced, must, like meanings, be withdrawn again if they are not to straitjacket and falsify the music.\textsuperscript{42}

What these linguistic terms, ‘meaning’, ‘metaphor’ and ‘narrative’, offer musical hermeneutics is perhaps not so much coherent theory as suggestive paradox: meaningfulness without meanings, metaphor without contexts between which to transfer, dramatic shape without story. Such informal usage is one thing, but it is quite another to use the terms as implicit or explicit components of a hermeneutic system. Much as they seem familiar enough to enter any field without their credentials being checked – as they routinely do in modern work – meaning and metaphor are radically contentious in the philosophy of language; and pending some unlikely triumph of clarification, their application to music will remain doubly obscure. Worse, they may portray music misleadingly as composed of discrete items in a one-dimensional sequence ordered by rules like those of syntax and semantics. They risk putting a gulf between configurations of musical features and their expressive nature (as between sign and signified), and misrepresenting the latter as verbally determinate and invariant to context. When the aim is aesthetic interpretation of particular works, it seems better to make informal use of a variety of broad unifying terms such as ‘expressive qualities’, ‘gesture’, ‘drama’, ‘symbol’ and ‘resonance’, however incompletely theorised.\textsuperscript{43}

Schumann’s culture wrestled with the idea that music is expressive and resonant without taking language’s path through semantics and reference, and without reducing to an externally specifiable schema of form or content.\textsuperscript{44} In doing so, it created some fruitful images, if impressionistic or even mythopoeic. Some Romantics – writing at a time when the instrumental music of the great composers in the German tradition was beginning to be viewed as supreme among art-forms – saw music as communicating, not as language does, but more viscerally, indefinitely, and fluidly. For Wackenroder, music’s communication, its ‘unnamable import’, is not reducible to the ‘alien medium’ of verbal formulations. For Tieck, music speaks ‘the ancient language that our minds once understood’, its ‘thoughts’ inaccessible to coarse post-lapsarian language.\textsuperscript{45} Novalis exploited the same image of the primal, non-verbal language:


43 Compare Scruton, Aesthetics of Music, 1999, 140-70 and 344-6, on expression.


The language of music is universal. It arouses the mind in free and uncircumscribed [unbestimmt] ways, but feels to it so right, so familiar, so ancestral [vaterländisch] that for brief moments the mind is in its Indian home.

‘Indian’ plays on the recent discovery of an Indo-European family of languages, with ancient Sanskrit near its origin, but for Novalis Sanskrit evokes not only an ancestral language but also a primal form of direct, universal communication prior to all languages. Though Tieck’s edition omitted ‘Indian’ before ‘home’, obscuring the allusion, Hoffmann both echoed the words and adopted the underlying thought. ‘In each language’, he wrote, ‘there is so intrinsic a link between sound and word that no thought is produced in us unaccompanied by its signifying script’, but ‘music remains a universal language of Nature’. For him, Bach’s music with its ‘numerical relationships’ and mysterious patterns are quintessentially primal communication, ‘Nature’s Sanskrit’. Schumann too noted Novalis’ words, and imitated them closely: ‘Music speaks the most universal language, and through it the soul is stimulated in a free and uncircumscribed way; but it feels itself at home’. This is perhaps what he meant by comparing music’s speech to that of flowers, which Jean Paul had used as an image of the primal speech form that is metaphor.

Music communicates, Romantics thought, by playing directly upon properties embedded in nature, including human nature. Wackenroder saw an ‘inexplicable sympathy between mathematical relations of music’ and ‘the fibres of the human heart’; and for him as for Tieck, music, while nothing but a web of numerical relationships represented on wood, gut-strings and wire, can seem the speech of angels. Novalis described nature as an Aeolian harp, whose notes are also the hammers that strike strings in our own higher natures. Similarly, Hoffmann pictured the apparently random play of an Aeolian harp as revealing ‘profound acoustic secrets hidden everywhere in nature’; and ‘the music dwelling within us is none other than that hidden like a profound ... secret in nature’; his ‘butterfly in the strings’, which in creating barely audible tones, was wounded to death by stronger resonances, is an emblem of the story in which it occurs: a story

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47 *Mottosammlung* IX 190 (1832-4); GSK I 19 (1832), 344; Jean Paul, *Vorschule*, §49 (Appendix 4 (c)). Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 2011, 100-03, adduces floral images from Herder, Hegel, Hoffmann and Heine.
of music’s ability to pluck at our heart-strings, universally, uncontrollably and
ultimately inexplicably.\textsuperscript{48}

Novalis, like Hoffmann, pictured this sympathy between humanity and
nature as a residue of a primal state, a ‘golden age’ or ‘paradise’, in which all
human capacities – including speech, scientific thought and music, and the senses
now only reunited in synaesthesia – were undifferentiated, and attuned to Mother
Nature; sign and object were one, and communication was absolute.\textsuperscript{49} In \textit{Die
Lehrlinge zu Sais}, several voices explore from different angles the idea that that
state, though now vanished, can still be glimpsed. The play of mathematical,
poetic, musical or natural signs, if enjoyed for its own sake (‘the true Sanskrit
would speak for the joy of speaking’), can give intimations of Nature’s truth as it
was once visible. Other voices are skeptical, and modern critics, accustomed to a
post-modern semiotics, detect ambivalence.\textsuperscript{50} But in Tieck’s versions of Novalis,
something like Platonism seems reinforced in the prose fragments he placed
immediately after. These describe how poetry, fable and true philosophy, on which
‘all sciences’ converge, give ‘intimations’ and ‘dreams of that world, lying
everywhere and nowhere, where we would be at home’. It would be a ‘regeneration
of Paradise’, a ‘marriage of nature and mind’, in which ‘magic words’ provided ‘real
definitions’, not mere ciphers only arbitrarily linked to things, and the analytical and
synthetic sides of our being, reasoning and instinct, were re-united. But it is a
‘Protean’ ideal that always eludes our grasp. In its absence, we can only ‘divine’
‘analogies’, ‘affinities’, ‘kinships’ and symbolic relationships between different areas
of thought, whether philosophy, natural and human sciences, politics, ethics and
religion, or art, music and poetry. In a comment which Schumann excerpted,
Novalis unites music, mathematics, creativity and philosophy as vehicles of truth in
this fallen state: ‘In music, mathematics appears really as revelation, as creative
Idealism, and is accredited as heaven’s ambassador to humanity’.\textsuperscript{51} Jean Paul

\textsuperscript{48} Wackenroder, ‘Wesen der Tonkunst’ and ‘Die Wunder der Tonkunst’ in
Novalis \textit{Schriften} V, 1988, 230 (239); Hoffmann, ‘Die Automate’, \textit{Serapions-Brüder},
347-50; \textit{Fantasiestücke}, 441-2 (Appendix 10).

\textsuperscript{49} Compare Watkins, \textit{Metaphors of Depth}, 2011, 96-98.

\textsuperscript{50} Novalis, \textit{Die Lehrlinge zu Sais}, \textit{Schriften}, I, 1960, \textit{passim} and 79; O’Brien,

\textsuperscript{51} Novalis, \textit{Schriften}, V, 1988, 269 (494, 496: fable and dream of a primal
home; compare 207 (28)); 209-10 (47: paradise); 210 (52) and 222 (152)
(marriage of mind and nature); 211 (61), 217 (95) (magic and signs); 209 (43:
converging sciences; compare 249 (335), I, 1960, 84 and IV, 1975, 252); 217 (92)
(instinct); 206 (18: Proteus); 207 (23-6), 212 (69), 236 (281), 258 (405) and 275
(531) (divination and analogy); 248-9 (330: ambassador; \textit{Mottosammlung} IX 183).
reflects similar presumptions when he insists that we must depend on ‘intimations’,
that divine ‘arm of love’, to reach out ‘into an unknown sea’ and re-integrate ‘sign’
and ‘thing’, long sundered in this world.\(^{52}\)

Novalis’ \textit{Die Lehrlinge zu Sais} hymns the pre-lapsarian state as ‘that unseen
universal ocean’, or primal fluidity (‘Urfüssige’), in a cluster of notions with strong
connections with music:

How many stand by those entrancing waters and do not hear the lullaby of that
maternal liquid, nor enjoy the delightful play of its unending waves! Like those
waves, we lived in the golden age... and generations of men loved and
procreated in eternal play.

Wie viele Menschen stehn an den berauschenden Flüssen und hören nicht das
Wiegenlied dieser mütterlichen Gewasser, und geniessen nicht das entzückende
Spiel ihrer unendlichen Wellen! Wie diese Wellen, lebten wir in der goldenen
Zeit,... liebten und erzeugten sich die Geschlechter der Menschen in ewigen
Spielen.\(^{53}\)

The terms ‘das Flüssige’ and ‘das Unendliche’ naturally convey the fluid, elusive,
indeterminate, infinite and ineffable; Novalis here added connotations of the
synaesthesic, cosmic and primal, and even maternal or placental. Moreover, he
associated fluidity with the poetic. He thought ‘only poets should deal with the
fluid’, as ‘a true poet is all-knowing’, ‘poetry is by nature fluid’, and ‘Unendlichkeit’
is inherent in poetry.\(^{54}\)

Such indefinite fluidity was widely seen as quintessential to ‘the Romantic’.
In a ringing phrase, which Schumann copied out, Jean Paul said: ‘the Romantic is
the beautiful without limits, or the beautiful “Unendliche”’. He was talking not only
of spatial and temporal infinity, but of the indeterminate, undifferentiated and
indefinite, in contrast to what is susceptible of verbal definition. Moonlight, in which
the objective world loses its definition, is for Jean Paul ‘both image and example of
the Romantic’; so is the resonance of a bell that lives in the memory after its sound
dies away.\(^{55}\) Schiller had pointed out that poetry and painting have an indefinite
(‘unendlich’) ‘possible content’ alongside their more specific (‘endlich’) ‘express
meaning’. Novalis brought out two implications of this ‘Unendlichkeit’: an art-work
‘brought to perfection expresses not only itself but an entire associated world’; but

\(^{52}\) Jean Paul, \textit{Vorschule}, §49 (Appendix 4 (c)).


\(^{54}\) Novalis, \textit{Schriften}, I, 1960, 105; V, 1988, 265 (463) and 264 (456); and IV,
1975, 246.

\(^{55}\) Jean Paul, \textit{Vorschule}, §22 (\textit{Mottosammlung} IX 29), 25, 31 (‘Wir haben der
romantischen Poesie im Gegensatz der plastischen die Unendlichkeit des Subjekts
des Spielraum gegeben, worin die Objektenwelt wie in einem Mondlicht ihre
Grenzen verliert’); \textit{Nachschule}, 7.
the veil of Isis that hovers around it will ‘dissolve at the slightest touch, leaving a
magical fragrance’.

Music in particular was seen as embodying ‘Das Flüssige’ and ‘das Unendliche’, which were thus integral to Schumann’s aesthetic. Schumann copied out Novalis’ aphorism that ‘music [is] the fluid given shape’, and ‘Pater’ Kircher’s description of music as ‘an inexhaustible ocean’. He probably knew Tieck’s comparison of music to ‘a fine, fluid element’, and himself contrasted it as a ‘fluid, indeterminate element’ (‘flüssigen, unendlichen Element’) with the fixity of words; in music ‘otherwise solid objects appear strange’.

Obscurity, exaggeration and mythology may linger in this cluster of notions; but music can indeed be seen as replacing the discrete, rule-bound and arbitrary signifiers of linguistic meaning with fluidly interacting features whose expressiveness is inherent but allergic to definitive specifications of either ‘sign’ or ‘signified’. As the music flows on, streams of expressive features coalesce into symbols that can be labelled, but not captured, through words. In the Nachstücken, one might think of something like the tramp of death, for instance, and later of the mechanical; and in imaginative recreation of the work as a whole, symbols like those merge into an overall symbolic penumbra, an overbearing deadness, perhaps, that gives the first three pieces their unapproachable character.

Music can then benefit from analytical, theoretical and verbal exploration; but its expressive beauty is more varied and subtle than words or theoretical structures can articulate. Schumann came increasingly to acknowledge the point, talking rather of shapes behind veils, or firm shapes receding in ‘a seductive twilight’ that words cannot nail down. Indeed, verbal interpretation can be damaging as well as inadequate: it risks giving words primacy over music, setting barriers of thought between music and listener, or neglecting or negating music’s elusive ‘fluidity’, ‘indefinable yearning’ (in Hoffmann’s phase), ‘Charme’ or ‘infinite plenitude of meaning’.

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Elusive fluidity is found not only in Schumann’s music, of course; but in his ‘poetic’ and ‘literary’ works he may have sought to heighten those characteristics. His generation had inherited an already outmoded classical ideal of drama, irony or tension held within the symmetry, clarity and resolution of a whole, but the balance was shifting in favour of the indeterminate, elusive and unresolved. His works of the 1830s embody a particular aspiration to ‘fluidity’, to a liminal world of suggestiveness, shading into half-lights and dream, or fading into the recession of distance, memory or the play of ideas. Their overall shape, including their tonal shape, might be captured in images such as waves, torrents or subterranean streams, as well as in more conventional musicological metaphors from architecture or engineering such as structure, shape and line; evocations in his works of the suspension of causality and the irruption of the unbidden or subliminal may suggest dreams as soon as planned or teleological constructions. Their musical features, form, coherence, expressiveness and resonances are sometimes elusive, dependent on affinities and kinships rather than logical and structural developments; and they are best understood by divining analogies between different areas of thought. In all of this they resemble truth as described by Novalis. Schumann, of his time and an original genius, perhaps found innovative and sometimes radical ways to carry these aspects through in his composition (though not necessarily consciously), and as a result his works set peculiar challenges to analysts and interpreters.

An aesthetic understanding of musical works of this sort – if it is not to resort to a wordless ‘drastic’ alternative, or a ‘body that beats’ – depends on analysis and theory, synthetic imagination and history. But any of these alone will drain the life out of it, leaving a lifeless shell. Music cannot be reduced through analytical techniques deduced from a theoretical model to an ‘infinite automaton’. Nor is it a blank screen onto which the interpreter projects his own arbitrary imaginings: that is to treat art-works as Hoffmann’s Nathanael treated the puppet Olimpia, who rewarded him, whatever he said, with her indifferent, soulful ‘Ach!’. Both undervalue music’s inherent expressiveness. On the other hand, to extract what is expressed as a meaning, allegory, narrative or programme betrays music’s nature – or, in Rellstab’s picture, isolates the spirit as external to the music, leaving music as dead as ‘a corpse on a bier’.

A better image than these lifeless simulacra is that of Proteus, a primal divinity of the sea, embodying the fluid and indefinite. He was capable of endless elusive self-metamorphosis; but he might, if wrestled into a transient stasis, adopt

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a definite shape and speak to his captor in ways that seemed oracular.60 He became an image for many people of the sea, of art and of the unconscious, for Novalis of elusive truth – and for a correspondent of Schumann’s Neue Zeitschrift, of Beethoven’s musical humour.61 Like Proteus, and like truth, an art-work both invites and eludes understanding; wrestled into stasis, it seems to speak oracles; but each interpretation is only one possible shape, and only temporarily fixed. Faced with myriad possibilities, that is, each interpretation fixes on just a few formal patterns, features contributing to those patterns, and associations; and there is always more to find. The process, while tied to palpable features, is complex, intuitive and unfinished, iterating between different dimensions: it too takes on aspects of ‘the fluid’ and ‘the indeterminate’. Its aim is to use the demonstrable in order to point beyond it, ‘out into an unknown sea’, in Jean Paul’s words, seeking not to compel assent or exclude alternatives, but to invite others to engage with protean works in pursuit of richer understanding.

If Schumann’s works speak directly, but remain in some senses a ‘closed book’, in Schubring’s words, many factors may contribute.62 The literature, images and ideas on which the works trade have receded from the common stock of today’s culture, so that living resonance is taken as dead reference; and a tendency to see a polarisation between ‘absolute’ and ‘programme music’ may still hamper understanding. But if Schumann’s music connects with ‘remote interests’ through expressive features, elusive symbols and suggestive resonances, rather than through definite meanings or programmes, then that above all may erect barriers. From within an academic tradition, it is one thing to anatomise ‘the poetic’ in music in general, but quite another to attempt a ‘poetic’ or aesthetic interpretation of a work. Even where such interpretations aspire to a protean fluidity, they all too easily ossify into one of those lifeless automata, corpses and puppets, as mine too, for all their disclaimers, may seem to do. If more prudent critics give these dangers a wider berth than I have, that may be a reason why the closed book remains closed.

60 Virgil, Georgics, IV 387-414 (after Homer, Odyssey, IV 382ff).
61 Griepenkerl, ‘Musikalisches Leben in Braunschweig’, 1837, 70.
62 Schubring, ‘Schumanniana No. 4’, Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, LIV 25, 1861, 213.
## Appendix 1

### Concordance of citations from Novalis

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<td>Ist nicht alles voll von Bedeutung</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Der Mensch ist eine Analogie-Quell für das Weltall</td>
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<td>II 610 (401)</td>
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<td>Der echte Divinationssinn</td>
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Appendices 2-10

Extracts from selected original German texts

Section numbers relate to the chapter in which the extract is first discussed.

2 Novalis and the Schumann of 1828

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schumann</th>
<th>Novalis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophie ist Musik des Geistes, Musik</td>
<td>Die Poesie ist der Held der Philosophie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophie des Gemüthes.</td>
<td>Poesie ist Darstellung des Gemüths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musik ist die höhere Potenz der Poesie.</td>
<td>Sprache in der zweiten Potenz, z.B. Fabel, ist Ausdruck eines ganzen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gedankens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ton ist überhaupt componirtes Wort.</td>
<td>Der Ton scheint nichts als eine gebrochene Bewegung zu seyn, in dem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sinn, wie die Farbe gebrochenes Licht ist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Tanzmusik ist verkörperte, bewegliche Musick; jede Bewegung muß</td>
<td>Die Sculptur ist das gebildete Starre. Die Musik das gebildete Flüssige.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonie seyn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanz ist gefrorne Musik.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ein zufälliger, unberechneter Strich führt den Maler oft auf ein schönes</td>
<td>Die Hand wird beim Maler Sitz eines Instinkts, so auch beim Musiker,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesicht, so auch beim Musiker ein falscher Griff u. beym Dichter ein zufälliger Reim auf einen hohen Gedanken.</td>
<td>der Fuß beim Tänzer, das Gesicht beim Schauspieler.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Tagebücher I 96.
5 Tagebücher I 96; Schumann began writing 'Philosophy', which is even nearer Novalis, but wisely changed his mind.
6 Tagebücher I 96.
7 Tagebücher I 96.
8 Tagebücher I 105.
9 Tagebücher I 97.
10 Novalis, Schriften, V, 266 (466), II 590, Reimer 1837 II 222, Werke, 1967, 442.
13 Novalis, Schriften, V, 231 (250); III 561 (43), Reimer 1837 II 177, Werke, 1967, 408; Mottosammlung IX 192.
14 Novalis, Schriften, V, 229 (232), III 259 (102), Reimer 1837 II 172, Werke, 1967, 405; Mottosammlung IX 188.
15 Novalis, Schriften, V, 228 (227), III 276 (204), Reimer 1837 II 170; Mottosammlung IX 184.
Der vielfache Stoff, den diese Sinfonie zum Nachdenken bietet, könnte sich in der Folge leicht zu sehr verwickeln, daher ich es vorziehe, sie in einzelnen Teilen, so oft auch einer von dem andern zur Erklärung borgen muß, durchzugehen, nämlich nach den vier Gesichtspunkten, unter denen man ein Musikwerk betrachten kann, d.i. je nach der Form (des Ganzen, der einzelnen Teile, der Periode, der Phrase), je nach der musikalischen Komposition (Harmonie, Melodie, Satz, Arbeit, Stil), nach der besonderen Idee, die der Künstler darstellen wollte, und nach dem Geiste, der über Form, Stoff und Idee waltet.

Die Form ist das Gefäß des Geistes. Größere Räume fordern, sie zu füllen, gröberm Geist.

Wir schließen mit einigen Worten über Idee und Geist.

Berlioz selbst hat in einem Programme niedergeschrieben, was er wünscht, daß man sich bei seiner Sinfonie denken soll. Wir teilen es in Kürze mit.

Der Komponist wollte einige Momente aus dem Leben eines Künstlers durch Musik schildern. Es scheint nötig, daß der Plan zu einem Instrumentaldrama vorher durch Worte erläutert werde. Man sehe das folgende Programm wie den die Musiksätze einleitenden Text in der Oper an. Erste Abteilung...

Soweit das Programm. Ganz Deutschland schenkt es ihm: solche Wegweiser haben immer etwas Unwürdiges und Charlatanmäßiges. Jedenfalls hätten die fünf Hauptüberschriften genügt; die genaueren Umstände, die allerdings der Person des Komponisten halber, der die Sinfonie selbst durchlebt, interessieren müssen, würden sich schon durch mündliche Tradition fortgepflanzt haben. Mit einem Worte, der zärtssinnige, aller Persönlichkeit abholde Deutsche will in seinen Gedanken nicht so grob geleitet sein; schon bei der Pastoralsinfonie beleidigte es ihn, daß ihm Beethoven nicht zutraute, ihren Charakter ohne sein Zutun zu erraten...

Erinnerung an eine selig verlebte Zeit? Oder wollen wir undankbar sein gegen Shakespeare, daß er aus der Brust eines jungen Tondichters ein seiner würdiges Werk hervorrief, – undankbar gegen die Natur und leugnen, daß wir von ihrer Schönheit und Erhabenheit zu unseren Werken borgten? Italien, die Alpen, das Bild des Meeres, eine Frühlingsdämmerung – hätte uns die Musik noch nichts von allem diesem erzählt? Ja selbst kleinere, speziellere Bilder können der Musik eine so reizend festen Charakter verleihen, daß man überrascht wird, wie sie solche Züge auszudrücken vermag...

Ob nun in dem Programm zur Berliozschen Sinfonie viele poetische Momente liegen, lassen wir dahingestellt. Die Hauptsache bleibt, ob die Musik ohne Text und Erläuterung an sich etwas ist, und vorzüglich, ob ihr Geist inwohnt.16

3 (b) C.F. Michaelis on music

Die Musik wirkt, weil sie nicht bestimmte Gegenstände der äußern oder innern Anschauung unmittelbar darstellt, sondern in den Tönen und Melodien nur Zeichen, nur Andeutungen von möglichen Gegenständen (besonders von inneren Empfindungen, Affekten, Leidenschaften und überhaupt Gemüthsstimmungen) giebt, ganz vorzüglich auf die Reproduktionsfähigkeit und auf das Dichtungsvermögen der Seele, welche das Angedeutete aus eigener Kraft ausführt und vollendet. Ihr Effekt ist daher so zauberreich groß, größer als gewöhnlich in den bildenden Künsten, in wiefern diese mehr die Objekte für die Sinne selbst, als die bloßen Zeichen für die Einbildungskraft darstellen, und selten ihre Darstellungsmittel symbolisch gebrauchen...

Die Tonkunst ... giebt den aus der Natur abstahirten Lauten und Tönen in der musikalischen Composition eine gewisse Selbständigkeit, schafft und bildet aus den Tönen eine unsichtbare geistige Welt.17

3 (c) Hoffmann on Beethoven’s instrumental music

Sollte, wenn von der Musik als einer selbstständigen Kunst die Rede ist, nicht immer nur die Instrumental-Musik gemeint sein, welche jede Hülfe, jede Einmischung einer anderen Kunst (der Poesie) verschmäht, das eigentümliche, nur in ihr zu erkennende Wesen dieser Kunst rein ausspricht? Sie ist die romantischste aller Künste, beinahe möchte man sagen, allein echt romantisch, denn nur das Unendliche ist ihr Vorwurf. – Orpheus’ Lyra öffnete die Tore des Orkus. Die Musik schließt dem Menschen ein unbekanntes Reich auf, eine Welt, die nichts gemein mit dem äußern Sinnenwelt, die ihn umgibt, und in der er aller bestimmten Gefühle zurückläßt, um sich einer unaussprechlichen Sehnsucht hinzugeben.


In dem Gesange, wo die Poesie bestimmte Affekt durch Worte andeutet, wirkt die magische Kraft der Musik, wie das wunderbare Elixier der Weisen, von dem etliche Tropfen jeden Trank köstlicher und herrlicher machen. Jede Leidenschaft – Liebe – Haß – Zorn – Verzweiflung und so weiter, wie die Oper sie uns gibt, kleidert die Musik in

16 GSK I 69-84.
17 C.F. Michaelis, 'Vermischte Bemerkungen', 1805, 21-2.
den Purpurschimmer der Romantik, und selbst das im Leben Empfundene führt uns hinaus aus dem Leben in das Reich des Unendlichen. So stark ist der Zauber der Musik, und, immer mächtiger wirkend, müßte er jede Fessel einer andern Kunst zerreiß...

Mozart und Haydn, die Schöpfer der jetzigen Instrumental-Musik, zeigten uns zuerst die Kunst in ihrer vollen Glorie; wer sie da mit voller Liebe anschaut und eindrang in ihr innigstes Wesen ist – Beethoven! – Die Instrumentalkompositionen aller drei Meister atmen einen gleichen romantischen Geist...

So öffnet uns auch Beethovens Instrumental-Musik das Reich des Ungeheuern und Unermesslichen. Glühende Strahlen schießen durch dieses Reiches tiefe Nacht, und wir werden Riesenschatten gewahr, die auf- und abwogen, enger und enger uns einschließen und uns vernichten, aber nicht den Schmerz der unendlichen Sehnsucht, in welcher jede Lust, die schnell in jauzenden Tönen emporgestiegen, hinsinkt und untergeht, und nur in diesem Schmerz, der Liebe, Hoffnung, Freude, in sich verzehrend, aber nicht zerstörend, unsere Brust mit einem vollstimmigen Zusammenklange aller Leidenschaften zersprengen will, leben wir fort und sind entzückte Geisterseher!

Haydn faßt das Menschliche im menschlichen Leben romantisch auf; er ist kammensurabler, faßlicher für die Mehrzahl. Mozart nimmt mehr das Übermenschliche, das Wunderbare, welches im innern Geiste wohnt, in Anspruch. Beethovens Musik bewegt die Hebel der Furcht, des Schauders, des Entsetzens, des Schmerzes, und erweckt eben jene unendliche Sehnsucht, welche das Wesen der Romantik ist. Er ist daher ein rein romantischer (und deshalb ein wahrhaft musikalischer) Komponist, und daher mag es kommen, daß ihm Vokalmusik, die unbestimmtes Sehnen nicht zuläßt, sondern nur durch Worte bestimmte Affekte als in dem Reiche des Unendlichen empfunden darstellt, weniger gelingt?^{18}

3 (d) Schumann on Schubert’s C major Symphony

Aber daß die Außenwelt, wie sie heute strahlt, morgen dunkelt, oft hineingreift in das Innere des Dichters und Musikers, das wolle man nur auch glauben, und daß in dieser Sinfonie mehr als bloßer schöner Gesang, mehr als bloßer Leid und Freud, wie es die Musik schon hundertfällig ausgesprochen, verborgen liegt, ja daß sie uns in einer Region führt, wo wir vorher gewesen zu sein uns nirgends erinnern können, dies zugegeben, höre man solche Sinfonie. Hier ist außer meisterlicher musikalischer Technik der Komposition, noch Leben in aller Fasern, Kolorit bis in die feinste Abstufung, Bedeutung überall...^{19}

3 (e) Schumann on programmes and thought in music

Wir gestehen, ein Vorurteil gegen diese Art des Schaffens zu haben, und teilen dies vielleicht mit hundert gelehrtten Köpfen, die freilich oft sonderbare Vorstellungen vom Komponieren haben, und sich immer auf Mozart berufen, der sich nichts bei seiner Musik gedacht haben soll. Wie gesagt indes, das Vorurteil haben wohl manche, auch nicht-Gelehrte, und hält uns daher ein Komponist vor seiner Musik ein Programm entgegen, so sag’ ich: Vor allem laß mich hören, daß du schöne Musik gemacht, hinterher soll mir auch dein Programm angenehm sein. Es ist eben ein Unterschied, ob

^{18} Hoffmann, Kreisleriana I.4, 41-3.
^{19} GSK I 462.
ein Goethe nach aufgegebenen Endreimen einmal dichtet oder ein anderer... Über all dieses ist schon bei der Weihe der Töne hin und her geredet worden, und der Kampf fängt schon wieder an aufzulodern über das Etwas-sich-nicht-denken-sollen beim Komponieren und das Gegenteil. Die Philosophen denken sich die Sache auch schlimmer, als sie ist, gewiß, sie irren, wenn sie glauben, ein Komponist, der nach einer Idee arbeitet, setzte sich hin wie ein Prediger am Sonnabendnachmittag und schematisiere sein Thema nach den gewöhnlichen drei Teilen und arbeite es überhaupt gehörig aus; gewiß, sie irren. Das Schaffen des Musikers ist ein ganz anderes, und schwebt ihm ein Bild, eine Idee vor, so wird er sich doch nur erst dann glücklich in seiner Arbeit fühlen, wenn sie ihm in schönen Melodien entgegenkommt, von denselben unsichtbaren Händen getragen, wie die „goldenen Eimer“ von denen Goethe irgendwo spricht.20

Die Ungenbundenheit des Subjects, das schranken- und fessellose Ergehen desselben, das freie Waltenlassen des Genius ist das Characteristische der modernen Zeit, und dafür ist vorzugsweise die Instrumentalmusik geeignet. In dem Gesangswerke ist durch den Text ein bestimmter Inhalt gegeben; bestimmte Formen sind vorgezeichnet, und der Componist ist an einen bestimmten Fortgang, an eine bestimmte Entwicklung gebunden. In der Instrumentalmusik dagegen ist Alles der Eingebung des Componisten überlassen. So weit nur die künstlerischen Ausdrucksmittel ausreichen, kann er sein Inneres entfalten, und zuletzt in der freien Phantasie ganz den Launen und Eingebungen des Augenblicks huldigen. Wenn alle Kunst die Aufgabe hat, das Endliche in das Unendliche emporzuheben, wenn aber andere Künste an einer bestimmten Endlichkeit anknüpfen, und diese ins Unendliche auflösen, einen bestimmten Lebensinhalt zur Darstellung bringen, welcher von dem Unendlichen durchdrungen wird und in diesem aufgeht, so zeigt die Instrumentalmusik das Emporstreben des Subjects zum Unendlichen überhaupt, weniger eine bestimmte Endlichkeit, sondern die endliche, von einen höheren erfüllte Natur im Allgemeinen...

In Beethoven herrscht der Inhalt die Form...

Ich bin hiermit unmittelbar bei den künstlerischen Anfängen Schumann's angelangt; - die frühesten Compositionen desselben sind... Erzählungen, oder ein Cyclus von unter sich zusammenhängenden lyrischen Gedichten. Der poetische Gedanke wird der herrschende, und die Theile sind nicht mehr technisch, sondern durch einen poetischen Faden verbunden... Hin und wieder zwar werden auch Aueßerlichkeiten gezeichnet, aber es verschwimmt in Ganzen Subjectives und Objectives phantastisch zusammen.
[In den Phantasiestücken] ... Sch.'s Compositionen sind häufig landschaftlichen Gemälden, in welchen der Vordergrund in scharfbegrenzten, klaren Umrissen hervortritt, der Hintergrund dagegen verschwimmt, und in eine unbegrenzte Perspective sich verliert, sind einer von Nebeln verschleierten Landschaft zu vergleichen, aus der nur hier und da ein Gegenstand sonnenbeleuchtet hervortritt... Dieser inneren Eigenthümlichkeit entspricht die äußere, daß Sch., sehr mit aufgehebten Pedal zu spielen liebt, um die Harmonien öfter nicht ganz deutlich hervortreten zu lassen...

Hier bei Sch. ... dienen sie [Benennungen der Tonstücke] oftmals, wie z. B. in den Kinderscenen, dazu, um die letzte Bestimmtheit hinzuzufügen. Diese Benennungen haben zum Theil heftigen Widerspruch erfahren; man sah nicht ein, daß sie nur

20 GSK II 129-30.
Resultat der Reflexion über das schon vorhandene Kunstwerk waren, und hielt sie für
das vorher vorhandene Schema, nach welchem der Componist arbeitete...
Ich glaube durch das Bisherige den Punct, welcher bei der Kunstentwicklung der
Gegenwart hauptsächlich in Frage kommt, zur Sprache gebracht, eine erste
Ausführung des Programms in Nr. 1 u. 2 dies. Bl. gegeben zu haben.²¹

4 (b) Jean Paul on symbol and metaphor

Sowie es kein absolutes Zeichen gibt – denn jedes ist auch eine Sache – so gibt es im
Endlichen keine absolute Sache, sondern jede bedeutet und bezeichnet, wie im
Menschen das göttliche Ebenbild, so in der Natur das menschliche. Der Mensch wohnt
hier auf einer Geisterinsel, nichts ist leblos und unbedeutend, Stimmen ohne Gestalten,
Gestalten, welche schweigen, gehören vielleicht zusammen, und wir sollen ahnen;
denn alles zeigt über die Geisterinsel hinüber, in ein fremdes Meer hinaus.
Diesem Gürtel der Venus und diesem Arme der Liebe, welcher Geist an Natur wie ein
ungebornes Kind an die Mutter heftet, verdanken wir nicht allein Gott, sondern auch
die kleine poetische Blume, die Metapher... Wie schön, daß man nun Metaphern, diese
Brotverwandlungen des Geistes, eben den Blumen gleich findet, welche so lieblich den
Körper malen and so lieblich den Geist, gleichsam geistige Farben, blühende Geister!²²

5 Goethe on the Roman Carnival

Das Römische Karneval ist ein Fest, das dem Volke eigentlich nicht gegeben ist,
sondern das sich das Volk selbst gibt... Hier wird ... nur ein Zeichen gegeben, daß
jeder so töricht und toll sein dürfe, als er wolle, und daß außer Schlägen und
Messerstichen fast alles erlaubt sei. Der Unterschied zwischen Hohen und Niedern
scheint einen Augenblick aufgehoben: alles nähert sich einander, jeder nimmt was ihm
begegnet leicht auf, und die wechselseitige Frechheit und Freiheit wird durch eine
allgemeine gute Laune im Gleichgewicht erhalten.
Dieser Abendspazierfahrt ... lockt viele Fußgänger in den Corso; jedermann kommt,
um zu sehen oder gesehen zu werden. Das Karneval ist ... eigentlich nur eine
Fortsetzung oder vielmehr der Gipfel jener gewöhnlichen sonn- und festtägigen
Freuden; es ist nichts Neues, nichts Fremdes, nichts Einziges, sondern es schließt sich
nur an die Römische Lebensweise ganz natürlich an.
...Alle Kinder sind auf der Straße, die nun aufhört eine Straße zu sein; sie gleicht
vielmehr einem großen Festsaal, einer ungeheuren ausgeschmückten Galerie...
Nun fangen die Masken an sich zu vermehren. Junge Männer, geputzt in
Festtageskleidern der Weiber aus der untersten Klasse, mit entblößtem Busen und
frecher Selbstgenügsamkeit, lassen sich meist zuerst sehen. Sie liebkosen die ihnen
begegenenden Männer, tun gemein, und vertraut mit den Weibern als mit ihresgleichen,
treiben sonst, was ihnen Laune, Witz oder Unart eingeben.
Da die Frauen ebensoviel Lust haben, sich in Mannskleidern zu zeigen, ..., so haben die
beliebte Tracht des Pulcinells sich anzupassen nicht verfehlt, und man muß bekennen,
daß es ihnen gelingt, in dieser Zwittergestalt oft höchst reizend zu sein...
Manchmal wird eine Maske vom Theater nachgeahmt...

²¹ Brendel, ‘Robert Schumann’, 1845, 64; 67; 82-3; 89-91; 149.
²² Jean Paul, Vorschule, §49.
Ein Zauberer mischt sich unter die Menge, läßt das Volk ein Buch mit Zahlen sehn und erinnert uns an seine Leidenschaft zum Lottospiel...
Weil die Fremden Maler ... in Rom überall öffentlich sitzen und zeichnen, so werden sie auch unter der Karnevalsmenge emsig vorgestellt...
Unweit der französischen Akademie tritt in spanischer Tracht, mit Federhut, Degen und großen Handschuhen, unversehens mitten aus den von einem Gerüste zuschauenden Masken der sogenannte Capitano des italienischen Theaters auf und fängt an, seine großen Taten zu Land und Wasser in emphatischen Ton zu erzählen. Es währt nicht lange, so erhebt sich gegen ihm ein Pulcinell, bringt Zweifel und Einwendungen vor, und indem er ihm alles zuzugeben scheint, macht er die Großsprecherei jenes Helden durch Wortspiele und eingeschobene Plattheiten lächerlich.
Das entsetzliche Gedränge ... zwingt ... eine Menge Masken aus dem Corso hinaus in die benachbarten Straßen. Da gehen verliebte Paare ruhiger und vertrauter zusammen, da finden lustig Gesellen Platz, allerlei tolle Schauspiele vorzustellen...
Auf einmal entzweien sich die Männer, es entsteht ein lebhafter Wortwechsel, die Frauen mischen sich hinein, der Handel wird immer ärger, endlich ziehen die Streitenden große Messer von versilberten Pappe und fallen einander an...
Die Nacht ist eingetreten ... und ein großer Teil des Publikums eilt nach dem Theater. .. Die Theater Alberti und Argentina geben ernsthafte Opern ... Valle und Capranica Komödien und Tragödien mit komischen subordinierte Schauspiele...
Die Leidenschaft der Römer für das Theater ist groß und war ehemals in der Karnevalszeit noch heftiger, weil sie in dieser einzigen Epoche befriedigt werden konnte...
Die Tänze bei diesen Festen werden gewöhnlich in langen Reihen, nach Art der englischen, getanzt; nur unterscheiden sie sich dadurch, daß sie in ihren wenigen Touren meistenteils etwas Charakteristisches pantomimisch ausdrücken; zum Beispiel, es entzweien und versöhnen sich zwei Liebende, sie scheiden und finden sich wieder ...
Besonders wird der Menuett ganz eigentlich als ein Kunstwerk betrachtet, und nur von wenigen Paaren gleichsam aufgeführt. Ein solches Paar wird dann von der übrigen Gesellschaft in einen Kreis geschlossen, bewundert und am Ende applaudiert...
Aschermittwoch: So ist denn ein ausschweifendes Fest wie ein Traum, wie ein Märchen vorüber.

6 Schumann on Hero and Leander and on Florestan and Caecilia


24 Briefwechsel, I 154 (April 1838).
Florestan soll der Künstler seyn; rein, leichtsinnig, empfänglich, genießvoll; der Drang nach Gefallen des liebtesten Wesens soll ihn weiter treiben. Krümelchen, das Prinzip der Mechanik, stößt ihm auf; Seraphine, als Bild des Geschmacks u. Mode verdunkelt fast Caecilia; Raro, als ironisches Prinzip, erscheint zuletzt, bis ihn endlich Caecilia zur Reinheit der Kunst zurückführt.

7 Schumann on his own style


8 Hoffmann’s Kreisler

Wo ist er her? – Niemand weiß es! Wer waren seine Eltern? – Es ist unbekannt!...

Die Freunde behaupteten: die Natur habe bei seiner Organisation ein neues Rezept versucht und der Versuch sei mißlungen, indem sein überreizbaren Gemüte, seiner bis zur zerstörenden Flamme aufglühenden Fantasie zu wenig Phlegma beigemischt und so das Gleichgewicht zerstört worden, das dem Künstler durchaus nötig sei, um mit der Welt zu leben und ihr Werke dichten, wie sie dieselben, selbst in höhern Sinn, eigentlich brauchte. Dem sei wie ihm wollen – genug, Johannes wurde von seinen innern Erscheinungen und Träume, wie auf einem ewig wogenden Meer dahin-dorthin getrieben, und er schien vergebens den Port zu suchen, der ihm endlich die Ruhe und Heiterkeit geben sollte, ohne welche der Künstler nichts zu schaffen vermag...

Auf einmal war er, man wußte nicht wie und warum, verschwunden. Viele behaupteten, Spuren des Wahnsinns an ihm bemerkt zu haben...

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25 Mottosammlung, IX 26.
26 Briefwechsel, I 100 (February 1838).
27 Neue Folge 150 (15 March 1839).
28 Neue Folge 197 (28 September 1840).
29 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana I Introduction, 25-6.
Sie sind alle fortgegangen. - ...
Hab ich doch während des Spielens meinen Bleistift hervorgezogen, und Seite 63 unter dem letzten System ein paar gute Ausweichungen in Ziffern notiert mit der rechten Hand, während die Linke in Strome der Töne fortparentete! Hinten auf der leeren Seite fahr ich schreibend fort. Ich verlasse Ziffern und Töne, und mit wahrer Lust, wie der genesene Kranke, der nun nicht aufhören kann zu erzählen, was er gelitten, notiere ich hier umständlich die höllischen Qualen des heutigen Tees. Aber nicht für mich allein, sondern für alle, die sich hier zuweilen an meinem Exemplar der Johann Sebastian Bachschen Variationen für das Klavier, erschienen bei Nägeli in Zürich, ergötzen und erbauen, bei dem Schluß der 30sten Variation meine Ziffer finden, und, geleitet von dem großen lateinischen Verte (ich schreib es gleich hin, wenn meine Klageschrift zu Ende ist), das Blatt umwenden und lesen...

Da tritt der Baron ... auf mich und sagt: „O bester Herr Kapellmeister, Sie sollen ganz himmlisch fantasieren; o fantasieren Sie uns doch eins! Nur ein wenig! Ich bitte!“ Ich versetzte ganz trocken, die Fantasie sei mir heute rein ausgegangen; und indem wir so darüber sprechen, hat ein Teufel in der Gestalt eines Elégants mit zwei Westen im Nebenzimmer unter meinem Hut die Bachschen Variationen ausgewittert; der denkt, es sind so Variationen: nel cor mi non più sento – Ah vous dirai-je, maman etc. und will haben, ich soll darauf losspielen. Ich weigere mich: da fallen sie alle über mich her.

Der Zweck der Kunst überhaupt ist doch kein anderer, als dem Menschen eine angenehme Unterhaltung zu verschaffen, und ihn von den ernsten, oder vielmehr den einzigen ihm anständigen Geschäften, nämlich solchen, die ihm Brot und Ehre im Staat erwerben, auf eine angenehme Art zu zerstreuen, so daß er nachher mit gedoppelter Aufmerksamkeit und Anstrengung zu dem eigentlichen Zweck seines Daseins zurückkehren ... kann.

Was nun aber die Musik betrifft, so können nur jene heillosen Verächter dieser edlen Kunst leugnen, daß eine gelungene Komposition, d.h. eine solche, die sich gehörig in Schranken hält, und eine angenehme Melodie nach der andern folgen läßt, ohne zu toben, oder sich in allerlei kontrapunktischen Gängen und Auflösungen nárrisch zu gebärden, einen wunderbaren Reiz verursacht...

Euch, ihr heillosen Verächter der edlen Kunst, führe ich nun in den häuslichen Zirkel, wo der Vater, müde von den ernsten Geschäften des Tages, im Schlafrock und in Pantoffeln, fröhlich und guten Muts zum Murki seine sältesten Sohnes seine Pfeife raucht...

Schon lange galt der arme Johannes allgemein für wahnsinnig, und in der Tat stach auch sein ganzes Tun und Treiben, vorzüglich seine Leben in der Kunst, so grell gegen alles ab, was vernünftig and schicklich heißt, daß an den innern Zerrütung seines Geistes kaum zu zweifeln war. Immer exzentrischer, immer verwirrter wurde sein Ideengang; so z.B. sprach er, kurz vor seiner Flucht aus dem Orte, viel von der unglücklichen Liebe einer Nachtigall zu einer Purpurnelke, das Ganze sei aber (meinte er) nichts also ein Adagio, und dies nun wieder eigentlich ein einziger lang ausgehaltener Ton Julis, auf dem Romeo in den höchsten Himmel voll Liebe und Seligkeit hinaufschweb. Endlich gestand er mir, wie er seinen Tod beschlossen und sich im nächsten Walde mit einer übermäßigen Quinte erdolchen werde...
So wie übrigens Wallborn in verfehlter Liebe den Wahnsinn fand, so scheint auch Kreisler durch eine ganz fantastische Liebe zu einer Sängerin auf die höchste Spitze des Wahnsinns getrieben worden zu sein.\footnote{Hoffmann, \textit{Kreisleriana} II Introduction, 284-5.}

Ach, es geschah Euch vielleicht noch nie, daß Ihr irgend ein Lied singen wolltet vor Augen, die Euch aus Himmel herab anzublicken schienen, die Euer ganzes, besseres Sein verschön auf Euch herniederstrahlen, und daß Ihr auch wirklich anfingt, und glaubet, o Johannes, nun habe Euer Laut die geliebte Seele durchdrungen, und nun, eben nun werde des Klages höchster Schwung Tauperlen um jene zwei Sterne ziehen, milderdnd und schmückend den seligen Glanz – und die Sterne wandten sich geruhig nach irgend einer Läpperei hin, etwa nach einer gefallenen Masche, und die Engelslippen verkniffen, unhold lächelnd, ein übermächtiges Gähnen – und, Herr, es war weiter nichts, als Ihr hattet die gnädige Frau ennuiert... Und im Vertrauen, Herr, hier liegt der Grund, warum ich das geworden bin, was die Leute toll nennen. Aber ich bin selten wild dabei. Meist weine ich ganz still. ...

Sieh, Johannes, Du kommst mir mit dem, was Du gegen alle ungeniale Musik eiferst, bisweilen sehr hart vor... Ich kann dir mit voller Wahrheit sagen, daß auch der schlechtest e Klang einer verstimmt Geige mir lieber ist, als gar keine Musik... Eine solche Dudelei, heiße sie nun Tanz oder Marsch, erinnert an das Höchste, was in uns liegt.\footnote{Hoffmann, \textit{Kreisleriana} II 1, 287-8.}

Nehmen Ew. Hoch- und Wohlgeboren es aber doch ja nicht übel, wenn ich mich sehr musikalisch ausdrücken sollte, denn Sie wissen es ja wohl schon, daß die Leute behaupten, die Musik, die sonst in meinen Innern verschlossen, sei zu mächtig und stark herausgegangen, und habe mich so umspannen und eingepuppt, daß ich nicht mehr heraus könne, und alles, alles sich mir wie Musik gestalte ... Doch ... ich muß an Ew. Hoch- und Wohlgeboren schreiben, denn wie soll ich anders die Last, die sich schwer und drückend auf meine Brust gelegt, in dem Augenblick als die Gardine fiel, und Ew. Hoch- und Wohlgeboren auf unbegreifliche Weise verschwunden ware, los werden.

und kindlich freuend in allerei munteren Melodien, ergötzlichen Murkis und Walzern hervorstömte, da fielen Ew. Hoch- und Wohlgeboren überall in Takt und Tonart so richtig ein, daß ich gar keinen Zweifel hege, wie Sie mich auch als den Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler erkannt und sich nicht an den Spuk gekehrt haben werden, den heute Abend der Geist Droll nebst einigen seiner Konsorten mit mir trieb. – In solch einer Lage, wenn ich nämlich in den Kreis irgend eines Spuks geraten, pflege ich, wie ich wohl weiß, einige besondere Gesichter zu schneiden...

Ach, Baron Wallborn, auch Ihnen bin ich wohl, vom Heiligsten sprechend, was in mir glüht, zu hart, zu zornig erschienen!... – Ach, Baron Wallborn,... auch mir zerrann in Nebel die himmlische Gestalt, die in mein tiefstes Innerstes gedrungen, die geheimsten Herzensfasern des Lebens erfassend. Namenloser Schmerz zerriß meine Brust, und jeder wehmutsvolle Seufzer der ewig dürstenden Sehnsucht wurde zum tobenden Schmerz des Zorns, den die entsetzliche Qual entfammt hatte...

Du weißt, Baron Wallborn, daß ich mehrenteils über das Musiktreiben des Pöbels zornig und toll wurde, aber ich kann es dir sagen, daß wenn ich oft von heillosen Bravour-Arien, Konzerten und Sonaten ordentlich zerschlagen und zerwalkt worden, oft eine kleine unbedeutende Melodie, von mittelmäßiger Stimme gesungen, oder unsicher und stümperhaft gespielt, aber treulich und gut gemeint und recht aus dem Innern heraus empfunden, mich tröstete und heilte...

Denn sieh, Baron Wallborn! ich verspreche es Dir hiemit heilig, daß ich dann Du sein will, und ebenso voll Liebe, Milde und Frömmigkeit, wie Du. Ach, ich bin es ja wohl ohnedem! – Manches liegt bloß an dem Spuk, den oft meine eigene Noten treiben; die werde oft lebendig, und springen wie kleine schwarze vielgeschwänzte Teufelchen empor aus den weißen Blättern – sie reißen mich fort im wilden unsinnigen Dreher, und ich mache ganz ungemeine Bocksprünge und schneide umziemliche Gesichter, aber ein einziger Ton, aus heiliger Glut seinen Strahl schießend, löst diesen Wirrwarr, und ich bin fromm und gut und geduldig. – Du siehst, Baron Wallborn, daß das alles wahrhafte Terzen sind, in die alle Septime verschweben; und damit du diese Terzen recht deutlich vernehmen möchtest, deshalb schrieb ich Dir!...

Gott segne Dich und erleuche die Menschen, daß sie Dich genügsam erkennen mögen in Deinem herrlichen Tun und Treiben. Dies sei der heitere beruhigende Schluß-Akkord in der Tonika.34


9 Schumann in summer 1839

Denn in meinem Kopf sieht es unheimlich aus und ich fürchte mich bei hellem lichten Tag, daß mich alles erschrickt...

Nun bitte ich Dich, meinen Namen manchmal leise dem Höchsten auszusprechen, daß er mich beschützen möge; denn ich kann Dir sagen, ich kann kaum mehr beten, so bin

34 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana II 2, 289-292.
35 Hoffmann, Kreisleriana II 3, 296-7.
ich vom Schmerz niedergebeugt und verstokt. Ich habe doch eine große Schuld auf mir, daß ich Dich von Deinem V. Getrennt habe – und dies foltert mich oft...

10 Hoffmann’s butterfly in the strings

Ich sah einmal einen kleinen buntgefärbten Schmetterling, der sich zwischen den Saiten Eures Doppelklavichords eingefangen hatte. Das kleine Ding flatterte lustig auf und nieder und mit den glänzenden Flügelchen um sich schlagend berührte es bald die oberen bald die unteren Saiten, die dann leise nur dem schärfsten geübtesten Ohr vernhmmbare Töne und Akkorde hauchten, so daß zu zuletzt das Tierchen nur in den Schwingungen wie in sanftwogenden Wellen zu schwimmen oder vielmehr von ihnen getragen zu werden schien. Aber oft kam es, daß ein starker berührte Saite, wie erzünt in die Flügel des fröhlichen Schwimmers schlug, so daß sie wund geworden den Schmuck des bunten Blütenstaubs von sich streuten, doch dessen nicht achtdreifigen der Schmetterling fort und fort im fröhlichen Klingen und Singen bis schärfer und schärfer die Saiten ihn verwundeten, und er lautlos hinabsank in die Öffnung des Resonanzboden... Von einer besonderen Anwendung ist hier nicht die Rede ... Ihr könnet das Ganze aber auch für eine Allegorie ansehen... Ihr könnet das Ganze aber auch für eine Allegorie ansehen, und es in das Stammbuch irgend einer reisenden Virtuo sin hineinzeichnen.
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