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## Tonal and topical coherence in Brahms's op.10 ballades

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# TONAL AND TOPICAL COHERENCE IN BRAHMS'S OP. 10 BALLADES

A Thesis

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Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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in

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by

Jacob J. Gran

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To my parents

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## ABSTRACT

Johannes Brahms composed the op. 10 ballades in the summer of 1854 while living at the Schumann household in Düsseldorf. These pieces are unique within the instrumental ballade repertoire in that they form a collection of ballades published as a single opus. How did Brahms intend the four ballades to cohere as a group, as opposed to a collection of independent pieces? The problem in identifying coherence lies as much within the genre of the instrumental ballade as it does within the musical features of op. 10. These pieces demonstrate a wide range of musical topics, some of which appear diametrically opposed to the epic, ancient associations of the ballade genre. The work's tonal coherence is also not easy to identify, since the opus stymies monotonal readings by beginning and ending in radically distant tonic regions.

Brahms presents the topics of op. 10 sequentially along a spectrum, beginning with the ancient epic topics commonly associated with balladry and ending, in op. 10 no. 4, with fully modern Romantic instrumentalism. This progression forms a topical plot that is consistent with the Romantic trend towards generic fusion that Goethe identifies as a primary feature of the modern ballad. The topical opposition, then, between ancient and modern elements should not be viewed as a challenge to the genre of the op. 10 ballades or as a source of disunity within them, but instead as a necessary component of the genre of the Romantic ballade, as Brahms likely understood it. Likewise, the tonality of op. 10 forms a coherent picture when viewed from the perspective of Schoenberg's theory of monotonicity and the tonal problem.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Johannes Brahms's op. 10 ballades have proven to be problematic for recent scholarship. The problem stems from Brahms's title – "ballades."<sup>1</sup> James Parakilas, in his book "Ballades Without Words," entertains the possibility that three of the four ballades are mislabeled, and are really simply Romantic character pieces with little relation to the piano ballade as a well-defined genre.<sup>2</sup> The solo piano ballade was a recent musical invention in 1854, when Brahms composed op. 10, and the features of its genre were not yet firmly settled. Giving the title "ballade" to a solo piano piece obligated the composer to only very vague requirements of style and tone, and not to any specific form or set of musical features. Even with this looseness of genre in mind, the op. 10 ballades exhibit such a wide range of styles, forms, and musical features that one is tempted to question whether or not Brahms himself had a stable and consistent conception of the genre. If meaningful coherence is to be demonstrated within the diversity of op. 10, it is first necessary to investigate the genre of the ballade as Brahms conceived it.

It is the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate that such coherence does exist in the op. 10 ballades. Op. 10 is not simply a collection of discrete ballades, each evoking the ancient epic narrative associated with the title "ballade." The ballades connect coherently through their relation to a topical plot that forms a single coherent narrative based on the German worldview of deteriorationism (to be discussed in Chapter 1.3). This plot, rather than being arbitrary, is in fact central to Brahms's understanding of the Romantic ballade genre and the *Kunst-Ballade*

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis will observe the convention that refers to the musical setting as a "ballade" and to the text itself as a "ballad." Brahms's use of the term is unproblematic, since the German language has only one version of the word.

<sup>2</sup> "Brahms may have been using the title that properly belonged to the first piece as a solution to the problem of what to call the whole set, even at the price of mislabeling the others to a greater or lesser extent." James Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade*, (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1992), 139.

(Chapter 1.2). From this point of view, the stylistic and topical path from ancient Ossianic balladry found in op. 10 no. 1 to modern instrumentalism found in the third and fourth ballades is entirely coherent. This topical plot informs the criticism of op.10 by relating many of its most diverse features, especially those seemingly at odds with the genre of the ballade, to the genre of the Romantic *Kunst-Ballade*. In addition, the tonal planning of the ballades forms a logical coherence when treated with a diverse collection of analytical tools, including triadic transformations and Schoenberg's theory of tonal music and the tonal problem. The tonal planning of the op. 10 ballades also coincides with important events of the topical plot, leading to the conclusion that op. 10 is a dynamically integrated whole.

Chapter one is an introduction, and is divided into four parts. Chapter 1.1 describes the composition history of the op. 10 ballades. Chapter 1.2 is an investigation into the genre of the instrumental ballade as Brahms inherited it (primarily from Chopin) as well as the generic features of the literary art ballade. Chapter 1.3 is a summary of the relevant aspects of the widespread worldview of historical deteriorationism as expressed in the writings of Johann Gottfried Herder, Emmanuel Kant, and Friedrich Schiller. This worldview is essential background information for understanding the intertextual coherence of topics within the ballades. Chapter 1.4 is a brief introduction to the theoretical tools used in the analysis of op. 10, including musical semiotics, triadic transformational theory and Steven Rings's S-space, and Arnold Schoenberg's theory of tonal music and the tonal problem. Chapter two gives an explanation of the primary topics found in op. 10, and relates them to the genre of the art ballade discussed in Chapter 1.2 and describes their significance within the deteriorationist worldview from Chapter 1.3. Chapter 2 is a close analysis of each of the four ballades, taken in sequence.



The final Chapter is a concluding argument for the topical plot described above and for the tonal coherence of the op. 10 ballades.

## 1.1 COMPOSITION HISTORY

In February 1854, Robert Schumann attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine and was subsequently committed to the Endenich sanatorium in Bonn. Shortly thereafter Brahms came to live in the Schumann household in Düsseldorf in order to help manage Robert's financial estate, help care for the many Schumann children, and allow Clara the opportunity to make additional earnings through concert tours.<sup>3</sup> Brahms was joined in Düsseldorf by two other family friends of the Schumanns who wished to demonstrate their solidarity; the violinist Joseph Joachim and the composer Julius Otto Grimm, the dedicatee of op. 10. Over the summer of 1854, Brahms produced three works, all for piano: his *Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann*, op. 9; the Ballades op. 10; and a lost work, the *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines Musikers: Herausgegeben vom jungen Kreisler* ("Pages from the Diary of a Musician: edited by the young Kreisler").<sup>4</sup>

Brahms planned to arrange the pieces of the *Blätter* into two parts. The first part consisted of four miniatures for piano, about which little is known except through descriptions in the correspondence between Brahms and Joachim, and the second part was to be the *Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann*. Brahms published the variations in November 1854 as op. 9, and many Brahms scholars believed that the pieces of the first part of the *Blätter* were suppressed from publication by the composer, and are lost. However, William Horne

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<sup>3</sup> John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age,"* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 459.

<sup>4</sup> George Bozarth, "Paths not Taken: The 'Lost' Works of Johannes Brahms," *The Music Review* L (1989): 193.

convincingly argues that Brahms did publish two of the four pieces from the *Blätter* as the third and fourth ballades of op. 10.<sup>5</sup>

Horne bases his argument on three observations. First, the op. 10 ballades are not mentioned by Clara Schumann in her diary or by Brahms or Joachim in their correspondences until the autumn of 1854, when they are apparently already finished. Other contemporaneous pieces such as the variations and the *Blätter*, however, are discussed at length during the summer while Brahms was composing and editing them. The ballades are first mentioned by Brahms in a letter to Clara dated October 21, 1854, when he mentions having performed them for his Hamburg teacher Eduard Marxsen. Moreover, Brahms presumes that Clara is already familiar with the ballades at the time of his writing, allowing for the possibility that the *Blätter* pieces had simply undergone a change of title. Second, an *Abschrift* partly in Brahms's handwriting indicates that op. 10 no. 3, in B minor, was originally subtitled "Scherzino" before this was struck out and replaced with the published subtitle, "Intermezzo." Horne claims that op. 10 no. 3 is therefore, at the least, a reworking of the missing B minor Scherzino from part one of the *Blätter*. Last, one of the missing pieces is described by Brahms as a "Menuett or ? in a-flat minor," and by Joachim as a saraband with trio.<sup>6</sup> Any piece that could be construed in two such different ways would necessarily have very peculiar features, and indeed Horne points out both the minuet-like and saraband-like features of op. 10 no. 4 in B major, leading Horne to the conclusion that it is a reworking of the missing piece.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> William Horne, "Brahms's Op. 10 Ballades and the *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines Musikers*," *The Journal of Musicology* 15 no. 1 (Winter 1997): 98-115.

<sup>6</sup> Andreas Moser, ed., *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Joseph Joachim*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1908), 43; 46-47.

<sup>7</sup> Horne, "Brahms's Op. 10 Ballades," 108.

To summarize, Brahms began the summer of 1854 with the intention of composing a work he conceived as the *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines Musikers*. As part of this set of pieces, Brahms composed the works that would eventually be known as the ballades op. 10 no. 3 and op. 10 no. 4. At some point, partly due to Joachim's friendly criticism, Brahms decided to publish the variation set separately and to rework these two pieces into what would become the op. 10 ballades. According to Horne then, the first and second ballades were composed after the third and fourth, and all four of them were in a performable version as a group by October 1854. This necessarily complicates the problem of justifying the title of "ballade" for op. 10 nos. 3 & 4, since according to this claim they were composed as character pieces and their title was only added later on. How then could these two pieces serve as examples of the ballade genre, and does the assignment of the title "ballade" contribute to the music in any appreciable way? Chapter 1.2 deals with the genre of the ballade as Brahms likely understood it, providing background information that will be useful in understanding the argument put forth in Chapter 4 that attempts to answer exactly this question.

## 1.2: THE INSTRUMENTAL BALLADE

The piano ballade genre was first established by Frédéric Chopin's four ballades, written in the 1830s and '40s. Although Chopin's ballades have some consistency in form and style, the genre did not inherit these features as it developed in the works of subsequent composers.<sup>8</sup> For example, James Parakilas points out the compound meters of Chopin's ballades and their rhythmic acceleration over the course of each work.<sup>9</sup> Parakilas also characterizes the ballades as

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<sup>8</sup> Clara Schumann's ballade from the *Soirées musicales*, op. 6 no. 2, published in 1836, seems to display all the characteristic features of a Chopin nocturne, and Franz Liszt's two ballades of 1849 and 1854, likewise are not

<sup>9</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words*, 51-55.

having a three-stage form that features a presentation of themes, transformation of themes, and resolution, and that interacts with sonata principles but ultimately resists sonata-allegro form.<sup>10</sup>

Many later ballades, including those by Brahms, share few or none of these features with the Chopin ballades. For instance, Clara Schumann's Ballade in D minor from the *6 Soirées Musicales*, op. 6 of 1836, is in essence a short piece in the style of a Chopin nocturne, and bears little resemblance to the first ballade published earlier that year. Instead, Parakilas identifies two diverging traditions in the reception of the ballade genre. The first is the narrative tradition, which preserved the speech-like prosody and quasi-improvised transformation of themes and subjects that imbue Chopin's ballades with a sense of heightened narrativity and drama. This tradition is felt most strongly in Franz Liszt's Ballade no. 2 in B minor, S. 171, of 1853. The second is the lyrical tradition, which Parakilas associates with shorter character pieces, typically ternary in form and significantly less virtuosic. These pieces, such as those by Robert and Clara Schumann and Edvard Grieg, are more likely to have been intended for performance in a salon setting than a concert hall, in contrast to the Chopin and Liszt ballades. Parakilas places Brahms's op. 10 ballades within the lyrical tradition. Each of the ballades of op. 10 are short, both in terms of measure numbers and performance time, in comparison with the Chopin ballades, and none require the same technical demands that would endear them to the repertoire of virtuoso concert pieces. The fact that Brahms chose to publish the four ballades as a set was also a novelty, and this again brings op. 10 into closer contact with the Romantic character piece than the stand-alone concert pieces written by Chopin and Liszt.

Another important issue for the consistency of the Ballade genre is the issue of programmaticism. Some German editions of Chopin's first Ballade op. 23, published in 1836,

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<sup>10</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words*, 72-87.

bore the title “*Ballade ohne Worte*” (“Ballade without Words”), clearly indicating the perceived kinship between this new genre and the “*Lieder ohne Worte*” (“Songs without Words”) of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Both lieder and ballads are texted works, and the instrumental works based on them necessarily come into contact with the program of the text. The piano ballade, like Mendelssohn’s pieces, allows for the possibility of a program that can be explicitly stated, concealed, or non-existent. In whichever case, the instrumental ballade can be seen as part of the Romantic trend towards programmaticism in the 1830’s, and the hidden programs of Chopin’s ballades have been the subject of extensive speculation.<sup>11</sup>

In this respect, Brahms’s op. 10 ballades take seemingly inconsistent approaches to programmaticism. The first ballade, op. 10 no. 1, bears the subtitle *Nach der schottischen Ballade “Edward” (in Herders “Stimmen der Völker”)*,<sup>12</sup> apparently providing an unambiguous program for this piece (in fact a balladic program). The other three ballades, however, do not have associated texts. Of all the writers who discuss op. 10, only Max Kalbeck, the earliest Brahms biographer, has ventured to suggest that programs exist for the other pieces, although even he does not submit anything specific.

Another crucial distinction between the Brahms ballades and those of Chopin is the treatment of the closing section or coda. For Chopin, the coda of the ballade is often the climactic focal point of the entire work, a moment of apotheosis that transforms the preceding material and that is treated as an opportunity for virtuosic display. In contrast, all four of the

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<sup>11</sup> A recent and intriguing example is Jonathon Bellman, *Chopin’s Polish Ballade: Op. 38 as Narrative of National Martyrdom*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> After the Scottish ballad “Edward,” (from Herder’s *The Voices of the People*).

Brahms ballades, as Matthew Gelbart has pointed out, close with soft dynamics and sinking gestures, and are often the moments of least dramatic tension in the work.<sup>13</sup>

In total, the op. 10 ballades resist the structures of the genre that Parakilas has constructed more often than they conform to them.<sup>14</sup> I would like to propose instead that although Chopin and Brahms shared a common context through which they came to understand the literary and folk ballad, Brahms did not use Chopin's ballades as a model for his compositions, and that the dichotomy between lyrical and narrative traditions is only useful in the ways already discussed by Parakilas. Brahms, as a native German speaker and an avid reader of the German Romantics, attached a larger number of commitments to the title "ballade" than did Chopin, and his op. 10 ballades (as well as the only other instrumental ballade Brahms wrote, op. 118 no. 3) reflect the obligations he perceived within the genre.

One place to begin to discover Brahms's understanding of this genre is in Goethe's essay, "*Ballade: Betrachtung und Auslegung*," (Ballade: Definition and Reflection) of 1821.<sup>15</sup> Here Goethe invokes an idea in direct association with the genre of the ballade that will become a "romantic cliché" by the end of the century: the fusion of the genres of poetry.<sup>16</sup> He states:

The mysteriousness of a ballade arises from the manner in which it is performed. The poet has his distinctive subject matter, his characters, and their actions and movements so deeply engrained in his mind that he is uncertain how best to bring them all to light. He therefore makes use of all three natural forms of poetry, in order to immediately express that which excites the imagination and engages the mind. He may begin in a lyric, epic,

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew Gelbart, "Layers of Representation in Nineteenth-Century Genres: The Case of One Brahms Ballade," in *Representation in Western Music* (2013), 26.

<sup>14</sup> This is not necessarily a shortfall of Parakilas's book, but might instead be seen as a testament to the uniqueness of the op. 10 set. Parakilas's book is nevertheless the most incisive analysis of the op. 10 ballades in the literature.

<sup>15</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "*Ballade: Betrachtung und Auslegung*," in *Goethes-Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe* vol. 1, ed. Erich Trunz (Hamburg: Wegner, 1949), 400.

<sup>16</sup> Gelbart, "Layers of Representation in Nineteenth-Century Genres," 25.

or dramatic genre, and manipulate these forms as he wishes, either rushing immediately to the close or postponing it for some time.<sup>17</sup>

For Goethe, the defining feature of the ballade is the peculiarity of its performance, which involves a blending of the three kinds of poetic genres.<sup>18</sup> He explains these genres in greater detail in another essay, “*Über Epische und Dramatische Dichtung*” (On Epic and Dramatic Poetry, 1827). These genres are primarily distinguished by the relationship between the artist and audience. Goethe states that “the epic writer is by nature a rhapsodist and the dramatic writer an actor.”<sup>19</sup> Epic poetry, such as Homer’s *Odyssey* and Virgil’s *Iliad*, is rhapsodic in that the reciter performs from an oral tradition to a “quiet group of attentive listeners.” Most importantly, however, the artist is retelling an ancient story, one whose events have taken place long ago. Dramas such as those by Shakespeare or Schiller, on the other hand, are performed on stage by a host of actors under the fiction that the events are unfolding in real time. Goethe states that “the fundamental difference between [the genres] is that the epic writer narrates an event as having happened in the past, while the dramatist represents an event as happening in the present.”<sup>20</sup> The last genre, lyric poetry, is poetry written primarily in the first person, not expressing events as such but instead emphasizing the poet’s inner life and reflections on poetic topics. The sonnets of Shakespeare are well-known examples, and unlike the epic and dramatic genres, lyric poetry is dependent upon the written word as a medium.

An authentic folk ballad recited in the oral tradition would naturally belong to the epic genre. The genre described by Goethe, however, is not authentic ballad but art ballad, or *Kunst-*

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<sup>17</sup> Goethe, “*Ballade: Betrachtung und Auslegung*,” 400.

<sup>18</sup> Charise Hastings discusses the Chopin Ballade op. 23 and the Brahms Ballade op. 10 no. 1 with specific focus on issues of performance in her dissertation. Charise Hastings, “The Performer’s Role: Storytelling in Ballades of Chopin and Brahms,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Goethe, “*Ballade: Betrachtung und Auslegung*,” 192.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

*Ballade*. The unique problem of the art ballad is the issue of narrative frame. Goethe seems to be advocating that an art ballade's epic content be framed from a lyric perspective, while also at times engaging the events directly, dramatically. These shifts between narrative frames can be thought of as shifts between narratives in the past tense (epic, in which the narrator is foregrounded) and present tense (dramatic, in which action is foregrounded). The generic blending Goethe mentions in his essay is therefore brought about by obscuring and at times puncturing the narrative frame.

Max Kalbeck was the first to mention this kind of generic mixing with respect to Brahms's conception of the ballade genre and to the op. 10 ballades specifically. He writes that "The composer [of op. 10 no. 1] in no way oversteps the boundaries set forth for a musical narrator, but he may also, as a painter of the soul, ... unite the Lyricist and Dramatist with the epic poet."<sup>21</sup> It is telling that Kalbeck uses these terms in relation to a ballade, exactly fitting Goethe's definition. However, it should not be overstated that he thought of this as a feature unique to balladry. In the same passage he cites as an example of this kind of mixture Beethoven's *Leonore* Overture, a work that has no direct connection to the ballade genre. Goethe's essay on the ballade and his many writings on the poetic genres were by the time of Kalbeck deeply assimilated into the fabric of German thought, and his association of generic mixture with the ballade genre is still noteworthy.

If this is how Brahms viewed his responsibilities as the composer of a Romantic ballade – to relate epic narrative in the manner of the ancients, to relate dramatic narrative through direct action, and to foreground those narratives with modern lyrical commentary – then how could he go about composing these obligations into his music? One tangible feature of epic poetry is its

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<sup>21</sup> Max Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, vol. 1 ( Berlin: *Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft*, 1912), 198.



dependence on myth and antiquity. Only certain subjects, such as the Trojan War of the *Iliad*, the mythic hero in *Beowulf*, or the fall from paradise in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, are appropriate for epic poetry, and all involve an allegorical or historical distance in time between the events of the narrative and the narrator himself. Epic poetry is necessarily about the mythic or ancient past. Brahms's op. 10 ballades are greatly illuminated when one considers the composer's task not to be to naively depict the ancient past associated with balladry, but also to establish a narrative frame that articulates the composer's distance from the ancient past. Matthew Gelbart says much the same thing with relation to the narrative frame of op. 10 no. 1:

The distancing that emerges in Brahms's ballades (not just the first, as we shall see) is different from the bardic 'strumming' frames in some nineteenth-century works (even including some Schumann Lieder). That strumming implies a narrator as human character, and one who is probably historically distant from us as well, himself a relic of the past. In Brahms's ballades, however, I would argue that the framing device reinscribes the *modern* and the instrumental, creating discursive distance from the action by drawing attention to the power of organic romantic piano music itself.<sup>22</sup>

It is precisely the "discursive distance" between the ancient epic topics of the op. 10 ballades and the modern instrumental topics that completes the fusion of genres central to the ballade genre. This clarifies James Parakilas's misperception when he suggests that Brahms used the title "Ballade" as a "catch-all term for pieces varied in character."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the first ballade fits the expectations of an epic ballad perfectly, while the third and fourth seem to frustrate those expectations in almost every way. But the frustration is intentional, and the op. 10 set would not be examples of the *Kunst-Ballade* if they did not display this variation. Op. 10 traces a path from epic narrative in the first ballade to modern instrumentalism in the fourth, and this transition is accomplished by the arrangement of musical topics over the course of the work.

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew Gelbart, "Layers of Representation in Nineteenth-Century Genres: The Case of One Brahms Ballade," in *Representation in Western Music* (2013), 25.

<sup>23</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words*, 139.

The final design will be discussed in Chapter 4.1. Since this transition is also primarily one based on historical change, Chapter 1.3 will provide background information on the aesthetic relationships between Brahms's signals of the ancient past and modernity.

### 1.3: DETERIORATIONISM IN BRAHMS'S GERMANY

In order to grasp one of the main arguments made in later chapters of this thesis, it is necessary to first become familiar with the 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century German deteriorationist worldview. Deteriorationism is the belief that the current state of the world has been brought about by decline from a more perfect initial state, and that this deterioration is the chief agent of historical change at the largest scale.<sup>24</sup> Deteriorationism is most evident in the paradise myths of various cultures, and specifically in Western culture through the Genesis allegory. This allegory features in the writings of several of the most important German thinkers of that time, including Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). In each case, the authors repurpose the genesis allegory for philosophical or aesthetical ends. It is important to point out from the beginning that these authors did not concern themselves with the archeological issues of early human history and prehistory. Instead they sought to illuminate the moral and aesthetical condition of modern humanity through allegory, especially allegory founded upon, or at the least consistent with, the Christian paradise myth. The conclusions they reached can be more easily demonstrated than summarized. An early example of this view can be found in the opening sentences of Johann Gottfried Herder's essay, "On Diligence of Several Learned Languages" of 1764:

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<sup>24</sup> Whether or not the romantics believed this trend would continue is a fascinating question. See for instance Heinrich von Kleist's essay "On the Marionette Theater" in *An Abyss Deep Enough: Letters of Heinrich von Kleist*, translated by Philip B. Miller (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1982).

That flourishing age is gone when the small circle of our earliest ancestors dwelt round the patriarchs like children round their parents; that age in which, in the simple and noble message of our revelation, all the world was of one tongue and one language. Instead of the burden of our learning and the mask of our virtues, there reigned rough, simple contentment. But why do I sketch a lost portrait of irreplaceable charms? It is no more, this golden age. –

As the children of dusk undertook that edifice that threatened the clouds, the chalice of confusion was poured over them: their families and dialects were transplanted to various points of the compass; and a thousand languages were created in tune with the climes and mores of a thousand nations.<sup>25</sup>

Herder begins his essay on the origin of languages with a retelling of the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, the “edifice that threatened the clouds,” found in Genesis 11: 1-9. The Babel story is one instance of a fall narrative. These narratives consist of two parts. First, they begin in a state of perfection, in this case the universality of human language. Second, they contain a fall, usually a morally transgressive act that precipitates the decay of the original perfect state, in this case; the hubris of mankind that resulted in God’s fracturing of human languages. Whether they are taken to be historically factual or allegorical, these fall narratives serve to explain current imperfections in human nature and the world by placing the origins of these imperfections in the mythic space of the ancient past.

The prototypical example of a fall narrative is the expulsion from paradise, used as a Judeo-Christian explanation for multiple human afflictions as enumerated by God in his punishments for Adam and Eve and their descendants in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis. Another important fall narrative in Western Culture is the Greek Golden Age, described by Hesiod and Ovid. According to this myth, earth was once populated by an ideally peaceful and contented version of humanity known as the Golden Race, and their age came to an

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<sup>25</sup> Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Johann Gottfried Herder: Selected Early Works, 1764-1767*, edited by Ernest A. Menze and Karl Menges, translated by Ernest A. Menze and Michael Palma (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 29.

end with the opening of Pandora's Box.<sup>26</sup> Marjorie W. Hirsch, in her book, *Romantic Lied and the Search for Lost Paradise*, points out several instances in which Romantic composers have set poetry expressing nostalgia for the Greek Golden Age. Well-known examples of this include Schubert's *Die Götter Griechenlands*, D. 677, with text by Schiller, several of the Mayrhofer settings, and *Ganymed*, D. 544, with text by Goethe; Brahms's *Die Mainacht*, op. 47 no. 2, with text by Hölderlin; and Hugo Wolf's *Anakreon's Grab* (1888), with text by Goethe.<sup>27</sup> Myths of an initial paradise or age of innocence are not exclusive to Western Culture, and the same deteriorationist archetype of a lost golden age can be found in the myths of the Cheyenne and Hopi cultures of North America, the Dreamtime myth of the Indigenous Australians, the *Krita Yuga* or "Perfect Age" in India, and the Taoist belief in the initial perfection and harmony of nature in China.<sup>28</sup>

Herder's text also characterizes the ancient past as the "childhood of humanity." In this view, the biological stages of an individual's life are mapped onto the various stages of human history. Herder describes the ancients in his essay as "children of dusk," who "dwelt round the patriarchs like children round their parents." He most likely did not intend his reader to interpret the ancients as actual children, but as people of all ages who possessed the comparative innocence of children owing to their historical placement before the fall event. In keeping with their belief in the principle of organicism, the German writers contemporary to Brahms viewed

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Heinberg, *Memories and Visions of Paradise: Exploring the Universal Myth of a Lost Golden Age*, (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher Inc, 1989), 46-50.

<sup>27</sup> For more complete lists, see Marjorie W. Hirsch, *Romantic Lieder and the Search for Lost Paradise*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35, 64.

<sup>28</sup> For much more on the universality of paradise myths, see Heinberg, *Memories and Visions of Paradise*.

this transitional process from innocence to maturity to operate as much on history as on the lives of the individuals who have populated it.<sup>29</sup>

The “childhood of humanity” metaphor can in fact be found in the Eden myth itself, which involves the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The text of Genesis suggests that the nature of this knowledge is allegorically similar to the biological transition through puberty – a paradigm of the passage from innocence to maturity. Prior to eating the fruit, Adam and Eve are naively unaware of their own sexuality (“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed,” Gen 2:25). After their transgression, however, they gain a heightened self-consciousness (“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons,” Gen 3:7). It is exactly this transition from innocence to self-consciousness that is a hallmark of the deteriorationist worldview.

To summarize, the opening of Herder’s essay diagrams a deteriorationist understanding of human history, one that began in an initial perfection and that has been subsequently degraded by human transgressions. Herder also makes clear use of the “paradise as childhood” metaphor. This metaphor is taken up by later writers, including Immanuel Kant, Heinrich von Kleist, and Friedrich Schiller. Kant in particular gives the most explicit account of the “paradise as childhood” metaphor in his essay, *Conjectural Beginnings of Human History*, of 1786. Kant describes the first era of humanity as a pre-reflective stage governed by instinct, and uses the

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<sup>29</sup> For more on Herder’s understanding of human prehistory, see Karl J. Fink, “Herder’s Theory of Origins: From Poly- to Palingenesis,” in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Innovator Through the Ages*, Modern German Studies vol. 10, edited by Wulf Koepke (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1982), 85-101; and Michael Morton, *Herder and the Poetics of Thought: Unity and Diversity in ‘On Diligence in Several Learned Languages’* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 30-31.

transition from paradise into modernity as allegory for the birth of consciousness, reason, and free will. He states:

This [first] stage is therefore coupled with [Man's] being released from the womb of nature, a change which is at once honorable and perilous, insofar as it drives him out from the harmless and secure condition of childcare, from out of a garden, as it were, that took care of him without any effort from him ([Gen] 3:23) and thrust him into the wide world, where so many worries, troubles, and unknown ills awaited him... Thus the first step out of this state was, on the moral side, a fall. On the physical side, a series of never-before-known afflictions of life, hence punishment, resulted from this fall.<sup>30</sup>

For Kant then, the transition out of paradise has both positive and negative consequences. This is in fact a prerequisite of Kant's goals, since his allegory is an attempted explanation of the advent of free will and moral responsibility, whose consequences are inherently both potentially positive and potentially negative. Although it is not mentioned explicitly, Kant's conception of the fall event is clearly based on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil from Genesis. The moment that Humanity ate of this fruit, it assumed knowledge of good and evil and gained the ability to distinguish between the two. For Kant, and likely many Judeo-Christian theologians and exegetes, this event necessarily marked the birth of moral responsibility.

By describing paradise as "the womb of nature," Kant characterizes paradise as a specifically maternal force, capable of providing "childcare" for the undeveloped, instinctual infant humanity. This characterization is actually quite widespread even today, in the form of commonplace phrases such as "mother nature" and "mother earth." The weaning of humanity from its natural origins is for Kant the primary distinction between humanity and the other members of the animal kingdom. This allegory for the formation of consciousness can be seen

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<sup>30</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Conjectural Beginnings of Human History" in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, Rethinking the Western Tradition, edited by Pauline Kleingold, translated by David L. Colclasure (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 28-29, 29.

as a precedent for the views on infant psychological development of 20<sup>th</sup>-century psychoanalysis, to be discussed more in Chapter 2.2 on the *Wiegenlied* topic.

The last work of interest is Friedrich Schiller's "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" (1795). Whereas so far we have discussed the features of the fall myth as a narrative of lost innocence, Schiller's essay describes humanity's post-fall condition and the consequences of its separation from nature. The main paradigm adopted by Schiller is the distinction between naïve and sentimental poetics. In his own words, "the poet *is* nature or he *seeks* nature. In the former case, he is a [naïve] poet, in the second case, a sentimental poet."<sup>31</sup> A naïve artist is one who is unselfconscious about his relationship to nature, and who creates works in response to his natural genius. A sentimental artist, by contrast, is one who is constantly aware of his distance from nature and the divine, and who creates works in response to this lack. Whereas the naïve artist is instinctual, the sentimental artist is reflective. To be a sentimental artist is to be a spectator of one's own emotion, while to be a naïve artist is to be moved directly.

For Schiller, the difference between these two categories has an historical component. Writers of the distant past, such as Homer, Ossian, and Shakespeare, exemplified the naïve type, while modern poets, such as Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Voltaire (in his satires), and Schiller himself exemplified the sentimental type.<sup>32</sup> This is not a historical coincidence, since much of

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<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Schiller, "On Simple and Sentimental Poetry," *Aesthetical Essays of Friedrich Schiller* (F.A. Nichols & Compnay, 1902), 154.

<sup>32</sup> This historical mapping does not hold up in every case. For instance, Shakespeare is described as naïve, although his work is much more recent than either Ossian or the ancient Greeks. Paradoxically, Schiller also identifies Goethe as a naïve artist and Goethe's most famous character, Werther, as a prototype of sentimentality.

this aesthetic paradigm relies upon deteriorationism.<sup>33</sup> Just as with Herder and Kant, Schiller viewed the ancient past as a time of greater innocence and greater proximity to nature and the divine. The moral deterioration of mankind increasingly precludes naïve communion with nature and necessitates sentimentality. Schiller's view of human history can be broken into three stages:

- 1) In Schiller's words, the first stage of mankind is the "infancy of humanity before the beginning of culture." This is the golden age or initial paradise of the deteriorationist myths. Schiller associates this stage with the naïve artistic impulse. The emergence from this naïve state is initiated by mankind's inevitable development of self-awareness and loss of innocence.
- 2) The second stage is the modern era, which possesses both negative and positive traits. The negative traits are mankind's separation from nature and the divine, while the positive traits are the advances of culture, art, and science.
- 3) Although mankind in the second stage is nostalgic for the lost innocence of the first stage, it is neither possible nor beneficial to return to such a state. Instead, Schiller advocates for a dialectical union of sentimental and naïve traits aimed at reaching the third stage of humanity; a utopian second paradise.

In addition, in Schiller's formulation a history of poetic genres runs parallel to the history of artistic types. The ancient epic poets were historically representative of the naïve type, and Schiller associates the genres of Tragedy and Comedy with the ancient poets. For Schiller, the modern genres include satire, elegy, and idyll, and each in their own way expresses the sentimental type. The difference between these types depends upon the artist's reaction to his separation from the ideal. A satirist mocks the present condition by comparing it unfavorably to the ideal. An elegiac poet is one who mourns the loss of nature or the inability to attain the ideal. Finally, the Idyllic poet is one who idealizes the naïve and celebrates it.

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<sup>33</sup> "It was quite different with the Greeks in antiquity. Civilization with them did not degenerate, nor was it carried to such an excess that it was necessary to break with nature." Schiller, "On Simple and Sentimental Poetry," 151.



The aesthetic structures Schiller describes are useful in understanding the underpinnings of early German Romanticism. His essay corrals together a number of diverse ideas and arranges them into a system of dichotomies, shown in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1: A system of dichotomies established in Schiller’s writing.

Nature	Civilization
Intuition	Reflection
Antiquity	Modernity
Childhood	Adulthood
Naïve	Sentimental
Folk	Art

Each of the concepts in the left column is viewed in opposition to the corresponding concept to the left and vice versa. Likewise the concepts within a column share a metaphorical structuring and are often used as symbolic substitutes for one another in German Romantic literature and artwork. Marjorie W. Hirsch describes the lieder repertoire of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in great detail as a cultural field in which the opposition of these dichotomies plays out. The instrumental music of Johannes Brahms is also such a cultural field, and the topics of the op. 10 ballades bring this work into contact with this dialectical opposition. Brahms is known to have read the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller “almost to pieces,”<sup>34</sup> and the diary of

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<sup>34</sup> Karl Geiringer, *On Brahms and His Circle: Essays and Documentary Studies*, revised and enlarged by George S. Bozarth, (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonic Park Press, 2006), 11.

aphorisms Brahms kept at this time contains dozens of quotations from these two writers, as well as Novalis, Jean Paul, the Schlegels, and many other essential German Romantics.<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that Brahms was well-read in Romantic literature and philosophy, and the suggestion that the various ideologies he was exposed to may have affected his awareness of his own historical placement, and even directly influenced his compositional practice, is founded on solid ground.

#### 1.4 ANALYTICAL TOOLS

This section is an overview of the important analytical tools that will be used in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. The tools are eclectic, reflecting the variety of commitments required by the analyses. The three tools are, in no particular order: musical semiotics and topic theory, drawing primarily on the work of Kofi Agawu; neo-Riemannian triadic transformations and transformation theory, with a discussion of Steven Rings's (sd,pc) ordered pairs; and Arnold Schoenberg's concept of the tonal problem. All of these analytical concepts will be important for the later analyses, and this section is intended to function as a kind of index or reference resource for the discussions in later chapters.

**SEMIOTICS AND TOPIC THEORY:** Leonard Ratner was the first to introduce the concept of the musical topic, which he defined as a "subject for musical discourse."<sup>36</sup> This concept has been subsequently developed by musical semioticians. Semiotics is the study of signs, and musical semiotics is the investigation into the ways in which music can function as a pseudo-language. The metaphor of music and language is quite old, but in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it has seen a revival of scholarly attention from writers such as Eero Tarasti, Kofi Agawu, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Raymond Monelle, and Robert Hatten. Following the semiotician

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<sup>35</sup> Johannes Brahms, *The Brahms Notebooks: The Little Treasure Chest of the Young Kreisler*, edited by Carl Krebs, translated by Agnes Eisenberger (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), 9.

Roman Jakobson, Kofi Agawu classifies topics within a category known as extroversive signs – signs that refer or signify a referent outside of the work at hand. This is in distinction to introversive signs, which refer to elements within the work.

The topic, as a “subject for musical discourse,” is a deceptively simple concept. Topical discourse presupposes a well-informed audience who can quickly and easily recognize topics and call to mind their associations. Topics may be dance types or styles, or any other associable set of musical characteristics. Topical analyses, starting with Ratner, have concentrated on the classical era regarding topics such as the minuet, learned style, horn calls, galant style, singing style, march, pastoral, Turkish music, etc. Less attention has been given to the Romantic era, although Janice Dickensheets provides a preliminary list of Romantic topics shown below in Table 1.2.<sup>37</sup> A single work or movement from these eras can contain any number of different topics, and the succession and juxtaposition of topics can provide important interpretive information for the performer as well as the analyst.

Several of these topics have overlap with those that will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The important topics of op. 10 are the Ossianic manner, the chivalric style, the *Wiegenlied*, the scherzo, and the *Mündigkeit*. The chivalric style, for instance is listed as number 7 in Dickensheet’s list. The Ossianic manner can be seen as a blend of the first topic in the list, “archaizing styles,” and the third, the “bardic style.” This list is necessarily incomplete, since the gamut of possible topics functions as a continuous resource for subtle musical signification.

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<sup>37</sup> Janice Dickensheets, “Nineteenth-Century Topical Analysis: A Lexicon of Romantic *Topoi*,” *Pendragon Review* 2 (1) (2003): 5-19.

TABLE 1.2: A partial list of musical topics of the Romantic era.

1. Archaizing styles	10. Fairy music	17. Pastoral style
2. Aria style	11. Folk style	18. Singing style
3. Bardic style	12. Gypsy music	19. Spanish style
4. Bolero	13. Heroic style	20. Style hongrois
5. Biedermeier style	14. Indianist style	21. Stile appassionata
6. Chinoiserie	15. Italian style	22. Tempest style
7. Chivalric style	16. Lied style or song style (including lullaby, Kriegslied, and Winterlied)	23. Virtuoso style
8. Declamatory style (recitative style)		24. Waltz (Ländler)
9. Demonic style		

Kofi Agawu also points out the possibility that topics within a work may cohere to form a topical plot. He states:

In some cases, the combination of topical sequences and essences enables the analyst to construct a plot for the work or movement. By “plot,” I mean a coherent verbal narrative that is offered as an analogy or metaphor for the piece at hand. It may be based on specific historical events, it may yield interesting and persuasive analogies with social situations, or it may be suggestive of a more generalized discourse. These are not programs in the sense in which the *Symphonie Fantastique*, for example, has a program; nor are they necessarily literal representations of extramusical events. Plots arise as a result of sheer indulgence: they are the historically minded analyst’s engagement with one aspect of a work’s possible meaning.<sup>38</sup>

This text is taken from a discussion of topics within the classical repertoire, but Agawu’s conception of a topical plot also extends into the Romantic era and the music of Brahms. With respect to Romantic music, he states:

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<sup>38</sup> Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 33-34.

Interpretation [of topics] can be confined to meanings set in motion within a piece or include those that are made possible in intertextual space. The analyst might assess the work done by individual topics in a composition and, if s/he so desires, fashion a narrative that reflects their disposition. In some contexts, a plot will emerge for the individual composition...<sup>39</sup>

Agawu's definition of a topical plot as a verbal narrative that is offered as a metaphor for the work is applicable to Brahms's op. 10 ballades. The verbal narrative would go something like this: the op. 10 ballades trace a topical trajectory from a stance that imitates ancient epic narrativity to the modern stance of sentimental distance and lyricism. This trajectory is informed by an understanding of the deteriorationist historical views of early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany, and this transition from epic to lyrical narrative stances can equally be viewed as an historical progression. The individual topics of op. 10 will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, and the argument for their coherence as a topical plot will be put forward in Chapter 4.1.

TRIADIC TRANSFORMATIONS: Transformation theory is the approach to musical phenomena that seeks to model characteristic gestures that transform musical entities into related entities. The theory has its roots in the dualist theories of Mortiz Hauptmann (1792-1868) and Hugo Riemann (1849-1919) that were subsequently brought back into popularity by David Lewin (1933-2003), who initiated "neo-Riemannian" theory by expanding the theory's scope and mathematical underpinnings.<sup>40</sup> Although a transformational approach may be taken to any number of musical features, the most well-known applications of transformation theory deal with triadic transformations. Figure 1.1 shows three of the basic triadic transformations. Each of the transformations shown in Figure 1.1 maps one triad onto another while preserving two common tones between triads. These transformations embody parsimonious voice-leading, since the two

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<sup>39</sup> Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 50.

<sup>40</sup> David Lewin, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

triads are related by the maximum number of common tones, and the voices that do move do so by a minimal amount.

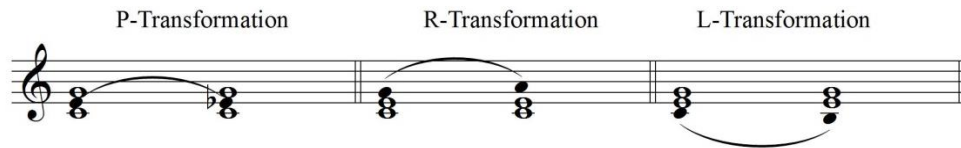


FIGURE 1.1: The P,R, and L triadic transformations.<sup>41</sup>

When one of these transformations is applied to a major triad, the result will be a minor triad, and vice versa. In addition, if the same transformation is repeated, it forms a cycle of length two – an involution. For instance, a C major triad can be transformed into a C minor triad via the P-transformation, and the C minor triad can be transformed back into a C major triad via the same P-transformation procedure. These transformations also demonstrate contextual inversion, such that each transformation can be thought of as an inversive mapping around an axis of symmetry (which in each case is also one or more of the common tones between triads).

The P-transformation relates a major and minor triad that share a common root and fifth, as seen between the C major and C minor triads in Figure 1.1. The R-transformation relates major and minor triads such that the voice containing the fifth of the major triad moves by whole-step to the root of the minor triad and vice versa, as seen between the C major and A minor triads in Figure 1.1. Finally, the L-transformation relates major and minor triads such that the voice containing the root of the major triad moves by half-step to the fifth of the minor triad and vice versa, seen between the C major and E minor triads in Example 1.1.

These transformations are analytically useful for the repertoire of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century music that resists conventional harmonic analysis, as well as in post-tonal triadic music of the 20<sup>th</sup>-

<sup>41</sup> Adapted from Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), Figure 4-10, 161.

century. In the case of the op. 10 ballades, the language still prioritizes functional harmonic progressions, even in the most chromatic moments. However these transformations are important to the analysis because they are foregrounded in a motivic way, such that they can be treated as thematic to the work. The ballades feature all three of the triadic transformations at both the local and global levels, and both moment-to-moment chord progressions and the tonal pathway between pieces are best understood from a perspective of parsimonious voice-leading and triadic transformations.

Steven Rings, in his book, *Tonality and Transformation*, describes what he terms a tonal S-space.<sup>42</sup> This concept is not primarily transformational, but instead is a systematic way of conceiving pitch space that also has its origins in the work of David Lewin, and so it will be discussed within this section. The S-space is a conceptual space of 84 ordered pairs of the form (sd, pc), in which sd stands for scale-degree quale and pc represents pitch class. Rings's S-space is shown in Figure 1.2.

The vertical axis of the grid in Figure 1.2 represents the eleven familiar pitch-classes. The horizontal axis represents the seven possible scale-degree qualia. Because it represents both aspects of pitch experience, the S-space is capable of diagramming a greater number of pitch phenomena than either the relative pitch experience (scale-degree quale) or absolute pitch experience (pitch class) could on their own. .

Pitch events in this space are assigned an ordered pair, of the form (sd, pc), that designates their coordinates on the S-space. Because the S-space does not capture aspects of

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<sup>42</sup> Steven Rings, *Tonality and Transformation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

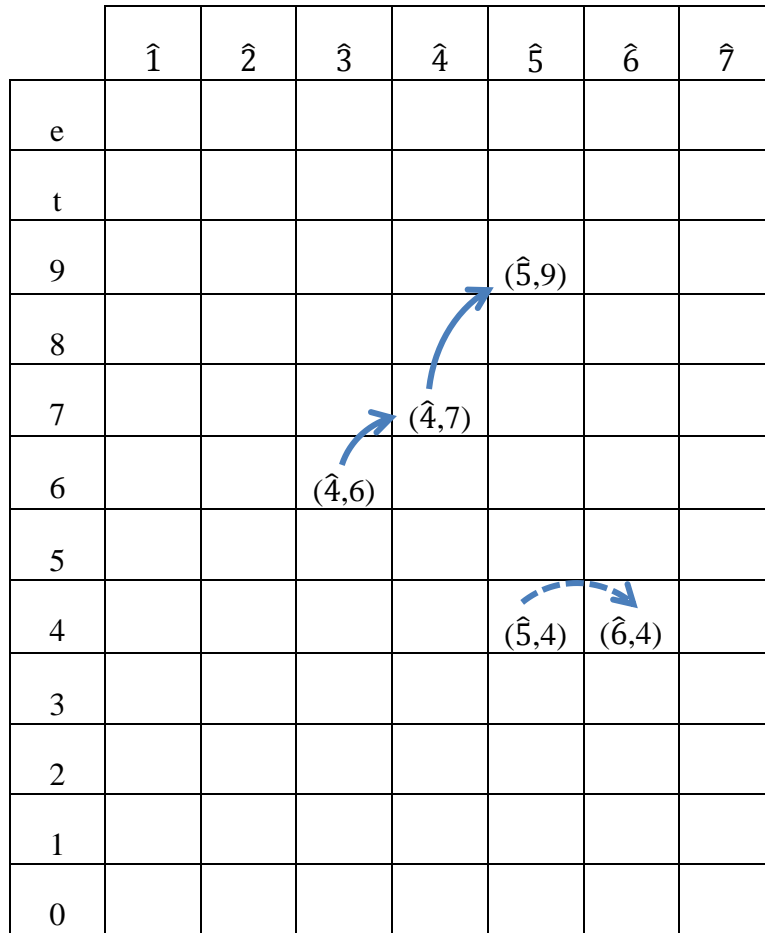


Figure 1.2: Steven Rings's S-space, where the vertical axis represents pitch class values and the horizontal axis represents scale-degree qualia.<sup>43</sup>

time, arrows are often drawn between successive pitch events to designate the order in which they occur. The succession of pitch events indicated by the solid arrows in Figure 1.2, for example, represents the first few notes of the Ode to Joy theme from Beethoven's Symphony no. 9, op. 125.

In addition to the standard (sd, pc) ordered pair, Rings also describes an ordered pair of the form (sdint, pcint).<sup>44</sup> The designation sdint stands for scale-degree interval, and pcint stands for pitch-class interval. Each of the arrows in Figure 1.2 can be assigned an (sdint, pcint)

<sup>43</sup> Adapted from Rings, *Tonality and Transformation*, Figure 2.3, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Rings, *Tonality and Transformation*, 44.



ordered pair that can be imagined as coordinates on their own coordinate plane. The first solid arrow, from  $(\hat{3}, 6)$  to  $(\hat{4}, 7)$ , would be notated as  $(2^{\text{nd}}, 1)$ , indicating that the melody moves a  $2^{\text{nd}}$  (i.e., stepwise) in scale degree space and a minor second in pitch-class space. The second solid arrow would be notated as  $(2^{\text{nd}}, 2)$ , indicating that the melody also moves stepwise in scale degree space but by a major second in pitch-class space.

Another implication of the S-space is the pivot interval. This is a succession of pitch events that retains the same pitch-class but affects a change in scale-degree space.<sup>45</sup> This is shown as the dotted arrow in Figure 1.2. Because pivot intervals by definition retain the same pitch-class, they are represented by a horizontal arrow on the S-space coordinates. The example of the pivot interval from Figure 1.2 is shown in Figure 1.3 with (sdint, pcint) ordered pair of the arrow labeled.

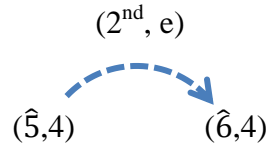


FIGURE 1.3: An ordered pair diagram of the chromatic pivot interval from Schubert's *Moment Musicale*, op. 94 no. 6

These ordered pairs are taken from the opening measures of Schubert's *Moment Musicale* in A $\flat$  major, op. 94 no. 6.<sup>46</sup> In this passage, although pitch class 4 is notated as note E $\natural$  ( $\natural\hat{5}$  in A $\flat$  major) its voice-leading problematically behaves as if it has been enharmonically reinterpreted as F $\flat$  ( $\flat\hat{6}$ ). In this case, the (sdint, pcint) of the two pitch events is  $(2^{\text{nd}}, e)$ ,

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 58-66.

<sup>46</sup> Edward T. Cone analyzes this piece in terms of its "problem note," pitch-class 4, and highlights the cross-relation as the primary source of voice-leading instability in his article "Schubert's Promissory Note: An Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics," *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 5 no. 3 (Spring 1982): 233-241.

meaning that the events take place a step apart in scale-degree space and at the same pitch-class in pitch-class space (e designates the term “identity”). Not all pivot intervals involve chromatic notes, but when a chromatic pivot interval is rhetorically emphasized it can lead to problematic voice-leading within the piece, and to what Schoenberg calls the “tonal problem.” The S-space, the concept of the scale-degree interval, and the two ordered pairs concepts, (sd,pc) and (sdint, pcint), will be important for the argument for a tonal problem in Chapter 4.2.

**SCHOENBERG’S TONAL PROBLEM:** Arnold Schoenberg is best known as an atonal composer, in fact as the composer who pioneered atonality and systematized it with the 12-tone row. Schoenberg’s theory of tonal music is less well-known than his compositions, and even less well-known than other theories of tonal music, such as that of Heinrich Schenker.

Schoenberg’s conception of tonal music can be described as radical organicism: he believed that a composition unfolded from a basic structure, or *Grundgestalt*, in much the same way that a plant grows from a seed. All parts of the artwork relate to the whole through the *Grundgestalt*, and the *Grundgestalt* gives coherence to the ensuing development of the rest of the work.

Patricia Carpenter, a former student of Schoenberg’s, writes:

The function of the *Grundgestalt* in effecting a coherent tonality in a work is to make manifest that process by which instability is brought about in a work and stability finally restored. When we comprehend a work, we understand that process, following it in the developing harmonic, as well as thematic, aspects of the *Grundgestalt*.<sup>47</sup>

Musical events unfold over the course of the work as a consequence of the *Grundgestalt* and in response to the tonal imbalance it generates. Schoenberg came to call this side of the *Grundgestalt* the tonal problem. Schoenberg used the ideas of centrifugal, or center-fleeing, and

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<sup>47</sup> Patricia Carpenter, “*Grundgestalt* as Tonal Function,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 5 (Spring 1983): 16.

centripetal, or center-seeking, forces as metaphors for the struggle between tonal balance and imbalance. He writes:

Every tone which is added to a beginning tone makes the meaning of that tone doubtful. If, for instance, G follows after C, the ear may not be sure whether this expresses C major or G major, or even F major or E minor; and the addition of other tones may or may not clarify this problem. In this manner there is produced a state of unrest, of imbalance which grows throughout most of the piece, and is enforced further by similar functions of the rhythm. The method by which balance is restored seems to me the real idea of the composition.<sup>48</sup>

Schoenberg believed that tonal relationships existed naturally between all twelve tones, some having greater affinity to each other than others. Tonal relationships exist between individual notes, as Schoenberg describes in the quotation above, but also between harmonies and entire key areas, what Schoenberg refers to as “tonal regions.” Tonal forces that confirm the centrality of a tonic operate as centripetal forces and tonal forces that call the centrality of the tonic into question are centrifugal. The tonal problem is the way in which these forces contend with one another over the course of the piece and eventually find resolution in the tonic at the end of the piece. Patricia Carpenter summarizes the tonal problem nicely:

In each work the particular way in which the presentation and resolution of the problem is carried out is the musical idea of the work. If, as [Schoenberg] says more generally, the totality of the piece is the idea, he would seem to mean the process by which the challenge to the tonic is concretely manifested and coherently sustained across the work, and by which its conflicting elements are finally assimilated into the tonic.<sup>49</sup>

There are many potential sources of centrifugal energy that can be incorporated as part of a work’s tonal problem, but Carpenter points out one in particular:

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<sup>48</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 47.

<sup>49</sup> Patricia Carpenter, “Schoenberg’s Theory of Composition,” *The Arnold Schoenberg Companion*, ed., Walter B. Bailey (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), 217.

Consider the cross-relation – and by that I mean simply more than one form of the same scale-degree. If such a cross-relation occurred in an initial theme (and one often does), Schoenberg looked to it for the source of imbalance.<sup>50</sup>

The relationships between tonal regions in the op. 10 ballades can be thought of in terms of a Schoenbergian tonal problem that plays out over the course of the opus (to be discussed more fully in Chapter 4.2). This tonal problem is predicated, exactly as Carpenter describes, on a chromatic cross-relation that is presented most laconically in the main theme of op. 10 no. 4. The elements of the cross-relation also play out globally over the course of the four ballades, and a clear discussion of this tonal problem requires the technologies of triadic transformation theory and Steven Rings’s S-space. The kind of cross-relation described by Carpenter has a direct analog in S-space, shown in Figure 1.4.

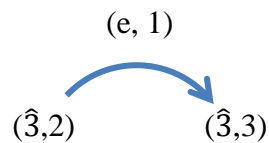


FIGURE 1.4: A diagram of the cross-relation in op. 10 no. 4 notated as ordered pairs.

In comparison to the pivot interval shown in Figure 1.3, Figure 1.4 shows a succession of pitch events that share the same scale-degree quale but are located at different positions in pitch-class space. Such a relationship would be notated as a vertical arrow in the S-space. This relationship will be described in greater detail in Chapter 3.4 and in Chapter 4.2.

Schoenberg’s tonal problem is a framework for organic analysis. Its aim is to describe musical process, as opposed to static relationships. Before leaving the discussion of Schoenberg’s theories, it is important to point out that it is not a coincidence that Schoenberg’s *Grundgestalt* concept and theory of tonal problems are both congenial to the analysis of

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<sup>50</sup> Patricia Carpenter, “Schoenberg’s Tonal Body,” *Theory and Practice: Journal of The Music Theory Society of New York State* 30 (2005): 43.

Brahms's music. In fact many of Schoenberg's views on tonal music were directly shaped by his analysis of Brahms, as is evidenced when he designates Brahms as one of his own most important predecessors in his essay "Brahms the Progressive," of 1933.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (1950), 52-101.

## CHAPTER 2: THE TOPICS OF OP. 10

Chapter 2 will focus on the four important topics of the op. 10 ballades. These topics, discussed in the order in which they arise in op. 10, are 1) the Ossianic manner (and the related Chivalric Style); 2) the *Wiegenlied* topic; 3) the Scherzo; and 4) the *Mündigkeit* topic. These are likely not the only topics to be found in op. 10, and there are also large patches of the opus that are topically neutral. These are, however, the four most rhetorically salient topics. Each one of them functions as an extroversive sign that brings the music into contact with extra-musical concepts and ideas. It is the particular design and arrangement of these concepts that I will argue establishes a plot of deteriorationism in the op. 10 ballades. This chapter will therefore be organized around a discussion of each of the four topics in turn, with the aim of illuminating their relationship to the deteriorationist worldview.

### 2.1: THE OSSIANIC MANNER AND THE CHIVALRIC STYLE

The “Edward” ballade, op. 10 no. 1, contains two primary topics. These topics, rather than being presented one after another, are presented concurrently as a homogenous blend. This is possible because the extra-musical associations of both topics mutually converge on the programmatic title of the piece; the Scottish “Edward” ballad from Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), through the German translation by Johann Gottfried Herder in *Der Stimmen der Völker in ihren Liedern* (The Voice of the Peoples in their Songs, 1773). The

first topic is what John Daverio calls the “Ossianic manner,” and the second is Jonathon Bellman’s “Chivalric style.”<sup>52</sup>

Daverio describes the Ossianic manner as the expression, within Romantic music, of the wider literary and artistic trend known as Ossianism. Ossian was a Gaelic poet from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, whose oral tradition of epic poetry was preserved in the highlands of Scotland until they were transcribed by James Macpherson in two important publications: *Temora: An Ancient Epic Poem*, of 1763; and *The Works of Ossian*, of 1765. That, at least, is the fiction surrounding Ossian. In fact, modern scholarship agrees that Ossian was an entirely mythical poet, based on the character “Oschin” from Irish Gaelic poems composed in the later middle ages, and his Highland Gaelic counterpart “Oisín.”<sup>53</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, in his book, “The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History,” identifies James Macpherson and Lauchlan Macpherson, laird of Strathmashie, as the unwitting forgers. Macpherson’s publications were partly transcriptions of oral poetry, partly translations of the remaining poems of “Oisín” (whom Macpherson mistook for a real poet), and partly Macpherson’s own proto-Romantic writings.

In England and elsewhere Macpherson was suspected for forgery almost as soon as his works were published, but in Scotland, where a demand for an ancient Gaelic literary inheritance had been mounting for many decades, Ossian’s works were taken as basically authentic.<sup>54</sup> Another nation that took a keen interest in Ossian, and who also due to wishful thinking believed his works to be authentic, was Germany. Ossian captured the imagination of the German public

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<sup>52</sup> John Daverio, “Schumann’s Ossianic Manner,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 21 no. 3, (Spring 1998): 247-273; Jonathon Bellman, “*Aus Alten Märchen*: The Chivalric Style of Schumann and Brahms,” *The Journal of Musicology* 13 no. 1, (Winter 1995): 117-135.

<sup>53</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 108-110.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

and satisfied a desire of the German literati, especially Herder, to discover the authentic *Stimmen der Völker*, or voice of the people, arising from folk inheritance.

Ossian also represented a kind of northern exoticism and an alternative cultural inheritance to the Greek classics. For many German thinkers, Ossian was an example of the naïve genius rivalling and even in some estimations surpassing the “natural” genius of Homer and Shakespeare.<sup>55</sup> Ossian’s style and content greatly influenced the poetry and literature of early Romanticism, most acutely in the genre of the ballad. Friedrich Schiller, encountered earlier in Chapter 1.3, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote several poems in imitation of Ossianic ballads.<sup>56</sup> In fact, Goethe’s conception of the genre of the ballade, described in Chapter 1.2, may well have been influenced by his familiarity with Ossian’s ballads. For Schiller, Ossian represented a prototype of the naïve poet. It is important to stress the direct association of Schiller’s conception of the naïve poet with Ossian. As Rudolf Trombo puts it:

In Shakspeare [sic] the Germans believed they had discovered a true original genius, and he came to be regarded as the perfect type of natural poet... But when they came to Ossian, they discovered a man that really stood in much closer union with nature than even Shakspeare...<sup>57</sup>

For the Germans of the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Ossian represented a “savage genius,” a bard uniquely capable of articulating a northern literary heritage. Herder in particular took interest in Ossian for his expression of Gaelic folk culture. The essay “On Diligence in Several Learned Languages,” encountered earlier in chapter 1.3, explicitly concerns itself with the origins of national identity, which for Herder arose from the natural folk element of each nationality.

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<sup>55</sup> Rudolf Trombo, *Ossian in Germany*, Columbia University Germanic Studies vol. I no. II (NY: Columbia University Press, 1901), 72.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.



Ossian was especially appealing to Herder as a point of departure for a Nordic national identity specifically because he was unspoiled by modern civilization.

The view that Ossian represented the naïve artistic impulse is difficult to square away with the actual content of his poetry.<sup>58</sup> Schiller in fact specifically mentions Ossian as an example of sentimental elegy, "...when Ossian speaks to us of the days that are no more, and of the heroes that have disappeared."<sup>59</sup> The explanation for this, of course, is that Macpherson's modern forgeries necessarily reflected and were contaminated by his nostalgic response to his subject. The Ossian of Macpherson's poems was apparently melancholic; he expressed nostalgia for the days of his youth, when his father, Fingal, ruled their Gaelic kingdom, before the wars with the Roman invaders. This same nostalgia would have been palpable for the Scottish readers of MacPherson's publications, whose Highland society and way of life was forcibly suppressed by the British after the failed Jacobite Rising of 1745-46.<sup>60</sup> The Scots, like the ancient Celts of Ossian's poems, resigned themselves to the historical warrant of the forces of modernity, and they objectified their longing for the days of pre-British domination in the same way as Ossian in relation to the ancient Roman invaders. Paradoxically, Ossian was naïve by historical placement and sentimental by disposition.

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<sup>58</sup> "Foreigners, who saw the Highlands of Scotland only through a romantic mist, were bowled over by Ossian. To Herder, the founder of German romanticism, the Highlanders of Scotland were the very type of those 'primitive' peoples whose authentic culture was being trampled underfoot by an arrogant and complacent modern 'civilisation'; and the sublime poems of Ossian were their authentic voice." Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Scotland*, 204.

<sup>59</sup> Schiller, "On Simple and Sentimental Poetry," 161.

<sup>60</sup> "That was a poetical reflection of the prevailing mood of Highlanders following the catastrophic defeat of 1746, and the enforced undoing of the old structures and habits of Highland society in its aftermath." Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Scotland*, 174.

John Daverio mentions “intentional archaisms” as a feature of the Ossianic manner, as well as folk elements, “gloomy” minor keys, and an “archaic ballad tone.”<sup>61</sup> Daverio singles out four composers who repeatedly sample the Ossianic manner in their music: Niels Gade, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and Felix Mendelssohn. Gade’s Overture *Nachklänge von Ossian*, op. 1, was the work that won him international fame and the enthusiasm of Robert Schumann. Mendelssohn’s Overture *Die Hebriden (Fingalshöhle)*, op. 26, and the “Scottish” Symphony no. 3, op. 56, are likely the two most well-known examples of the Ossianic manner for modern audiences. Table 2.1 shows the compositions by Brahms that Daverio identifies as examples of the Ossianic manner.

TABLE 2.1: Brahms’s compositions in the Ossianic Manner.<sup>62</sup>

Composition	Year
Ballade, op. 10 no. 1, “Edward”	1854
<i>Murrays Ermordung</i> , for voice and piano, op. 14 no. 3	1858
<i>Gesang aus Fingal: Wein an’ den Felsen</i> , for women’s chorus, 2 horns, and harp, op. 17 no. 4 <sup>63</sup>	1859-60
<i>Darthulas Grabgesang</i> , for mixed chorus, op. 42 no. 3	1861
<i>Dein Schwert ist, wie ists</i> , for alto, tenor, and piano, op. 75 no. 1	1877

The dates of the works listed in Table 2.1 show that Brahms concentrated his enthusiasm for Ossianism at the beginning of his career. After 1861, the only work Brahms composed

<sup>61</sup> Daverio, “Schumann’s Ossianic Manner,” 257-258.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Beller-McKenna discusses the use of horns and harp as a representation of musical distance. In op. 17 no. 4, Brahms orchestrates the text of Ossian with exactly these instruments as a means of representing the distance between the ancient times of Ossian to the modern concert hall. The harp has a long history in association with the character of Ossian, and Daverio also singles it out as a tell-tale orchestrational element of the Ossianic Manner. Daniel Beller-McKenna, “Distance and Disembodiment: Harps, Horns, and the Requiem Idea in Schumann and Brahms,” *The Journal of Musicology* 22 no.1 (Winter 2005): 47-89.

featuring the Ossianic manner was a duet for alto and tenor, op. 75 no. 1 from 1877, that sets the same text alluded to at the beginning of op. 10 no. 1 – Herder’s translation of the “Edward” ballad. The ballade op. 10 no. 1 is the first time Brahms turned his attention to the Ossianic topic.

The second topic is what Jonathon Bellman calls the “Chivalric style,” or what he describes as a “heroic medieval topos.”<sup>64</sup> This topic also consists of deliberate archaisms, in addition to horn fifths, fanfare figures, galloping rhythms, and cross-rhythms. Most significantly in the case of Brahms, Bellman singles out a simplified harmonic surface, where non-harmonic tones such as anticipations, suspensions, and appoggiaturas are absent, to be a key signal of a medieval sound-world. This also includes the unprepared use of chromatic triads. In his words, “to the Romantic sensibility [this freely-triadic texture] implied modality, and signified the music of an uncorrupted past.”<sup>65</sup> It is exactly this “uncorrupted past” that gives the Chivalric style its aesthetic significance and ties it directly to the deteriorationist perspective. As Marjorie W. Hirsch states:

[The] Romantics turned to [the Middle Ages] with newfound enthusiasm, championing its societal cohesion and close relations they believed had then existed between man, nature, and God. For many Romantic writers and artists, the medieval era, which fed German national pride, was the Golden Age that most fired the imagination.<sup>66</sup>

Brahms’s use of these two topics in op. 10 no. 1 is entirely appropriate. The “Edward” ballad, although it is not a text by Ossian, nevertheless evokes associations of the Scottish highland and Nordic myth that would be appropriate for the Ossianic manner,<sup>67</sup> while the events

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<sup>64</sup> Bellman, “The Chivalric Style of Schumann and Brahms,” 135.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>66</sup> Hirsch, *Romantic Lieder and the Search for Lost Paradise*, 18.

<sup>67</sup> The poems of Percy’s collection would likely have been received in Germany within the aesthetic context of Ossianism. As Rudolf Trombo states, “The influence exercised in

described in the text itself are ostensibly medieval, appropriate for the Chivalric Style. The features of op. 10 no. 1 include the “gloomy” key of d minor, the archaic open fifths and octaves, and the ballad-like narrative tone from the Ossianic manner, as well as subtle allusions to the Phrygian mode, and in the middle section the propulsive cross-rhythms of the Chivalric Style. These features will be highlighted further in the analysis of op. 10 no. 1 in Chapter 3.1.

## 2.2 THE *WIEGENLIED*

Childhood held special significance for the Romantics. As was mentioned earlier in Chapter 1.3, the progression from childhood to maturity was an important metaphor for the direction of history according to the deteriorationist view held by many of the early Romantics. In other words, one way the Romantics established the arrow of time in the narratives of their art and in the historiography of their philosophy was through the irreversibility of innocence lost. The *Wiegenlied*, or cradle song, flourished as a poetic subject in the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century, and was from its earliest stages coded with the metaphors of deteriorationism. Romantic composers found this genre of poetry to be a rich resource for well over a century; from the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century lieder of Reichardt and Schubert to those of Mahler and Reger.<sup>68</sup> The Ballade op. 10 no. 2 is an instrumental piano piece that also participates in the “*Wiegenlied*” topic.

Romantic composers found many diverse outlets to express their nostalgia for lost innocence. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of children’s-themed music in both vocal and instrumental domains, and in both music *intended for* and music *about* children. Robert Schumann’s *Kinderszenen*, op. 15; *Album für die Jugend*, op. 68; and *Drei Sonaten für die*

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Germany... by Bishop Percy’s *Reliques* in particular goes hand in hand with that of Ossian.” Trombo, *Ossian in Germany*, 71.

<sup>68</sup> Hirsch, *Romantic Lieder and the Search for Lost Paradise*, 145.

*Jugend*, op. 118, are early examples of instrumental music intended as didactic pieces for children.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, Marjorie W. Hirsch describes what she calls the *Kunst-Kinderlieder*, or art songs about children, written by and for adults. Even when the texts of these lieder take the form of a parent addressing a child, as is often the case with a lullaby or cradle-song, the adult audience members at a concert performance are in one sense spectators to the fictional dialogue and in another sense the true intended audience. As Hirsch points out, “While a sleeping child might represent the ostensible focus of the song, the true subject is often the adult speaker who yearns for comparable serenity...”<sup>70</sup> Brahms wrote many such art songs, listed chronologically in Table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2: Brahms lieder expressing nostalgia for childhood.<sup>71</sup>

Title	Text	Year
<i>Geistliches Wiegenlied</i> , op. 91 no. 2	Emmanuel Geibel (after Lope Felix de Vega Carpio)	1863-4
<i>Abenddämmerung</i> , op. 49 no. 5	Adolf Friedrich von Schack	1867
<i>Ruhe, Süßliebchen</i> , op. 33 no. 9	Johann Ludwig Tieck	1868
<i>Wiegenlied</i> , op. 49 no. 4	<i>Des knaben Wunderhorn</i>	1868
<i>Regenlied</i> , op. 59 no. 3	Klaus Groth	1873
<i>Heimweh I</i> , op. 63 no. 7	Klaus Groth	c. 1873
<i>Heimweh II</i> , op. 63 no. 8	Klaus Groth	1874
<i>Heimweh III</i> , op. 63 no. 9	Klaus Groth	c. 1873
<i>Mit vierzig Jahren</i> , op. 94 no. 1	Friedrich Rückert	c. 1883
<i>Gestillte Sehnsucht</i> , op. 91, no. 1	Friedrich Rückert	1884

The most famous lied in Table 2.2, and in all likelihood the most recognizable melody Brahms ever composed, is the *Wiegenlied*, op. 49 no. 4. This melody has exceeded its role as a concert lied and is today in widespread use as a functional lullaby. An incipit of the melody is

<sup>69</sup> Roe-min Kok, “Negotiating Children’s Music: New Evidence for Schumann’s ‘Charming’ Late Style,” *Acta Musicologica* 80 fasc. 1 (2008): 99-128.

<sup>70</sup> Hirsch, *Romantic Lieder and the Search for Lost Paradise*, 119.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-148.

shown in Figure 2.1, with the text from Archim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano's *Des knaben Wunderhorn*.



FIGURE 2.1: Brahms: *Wiegenlied*, op. 49 no. 4, incipit.

The melody exemplifies “*der Schein des bekannten*,” the “appearance of familiarity” that Herder claims is necessary for successful imitations of the naïve *volkstön*, or folk tone. The *volkstön* is common to many of Brahms’s lieder but might at first be surprising to find in a *Wiegenlied*. Georges Starobinski has suggested that Brahms’s familiarity with the writings of Herder and Thibaut lead him to associate the folk element with childhood and the artful element with adulthood.<sup>72</sup> In other words, Brahms subscribed to the same deteriorationist metaphor (paradise-as-childhood) encountered in Chapter 1.3, where childhood represents a pre-fall innocence and adulthood represents post-fall alienation and maturity. From this perspective Brahms’s use of the *volkstön* is entirely appropriate for a cradle-song – it is the natural mode of representation for the naïve element that is common to both childhood and folk music.

Karen M. Bottge, in her article, “Brahms’s ‘Wiegenlied’ and the Maternal Voice,” renders an intriguing analysis of the famous lullaby that has implications that are generalizable to the *Wiegenlied* topic as a whole and that will become important for our discussion of the op. 10 ballades.<sup>73</sup> She bases her analysis in the psychoanalytical concept of “*la voix maternelle*,” or the

<sup>72</sup> Georges Starobinski, “Brahms et la nostalgie de l’enfance. ‘Volks-Kinderlieder,’ berceuses, et ‘Klaus-Groth-lieder,’” *Acta Musicologica* 74 fasc. 2 (2002): 145-147.

<sup>73</sup> Karen M. Bottge, “Brahms’s ‘Wiegenlied’ and the Maternal Voice,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 28 no. 3 (Spring 2005): 185-213.

maternal voice. This voice is viewed as a benevolent force that envelopes the infant, physically and psychologically, on all sides. It is a benign refuge that is also the original source of auditory pleasure. In Jungian psychoanalytical thought, the moment of individuation for the infant (the recognition of the mother as a separate being) is a crucial milestone in the development of the infant's consciousness. As Karin Barnaby points out, Jung was heavily indebted to the train of thought laid out by Schiller and Kant discussed previously in Chapter 1.3.<sup>74</sup> Kant's description of the Garden of Eden as a maternal caretaker, the weaning from which marks the birth of morality and consciousness, is an evident point of overlap with Jung's thought. Barnaby states that,

Schiller's view of a three-stage human development corresponds to Jung's process of individuation in which man emerges from an initial state of unconsciousness and becomes conscious. Subsequently, individuation demands that man become aware of and integrate as many of his unconscious aspects as possible, in an ongoing expansion of consciousness.

As was argued earlier, the social/historical development described by Schiller was brought into contact with an individual's biological development long before Jung's description of personal individuation. The childhood-as-paradise metaphor can be found in the writings of Schiller, Kant, Herder, and even the book of Genesis. As Marjorie Hirsch writes, "Childhood, an idealized personal past, brings the object of longing closer to home, the nostalgic adult remembers but feels disengaged from the blissfulness of his youth."<sup>75</sup> This personal past represented by childhood operates as an analog to the historical past represented by a lost Golden Age. This similarity was not lost on Schiller, who wrote: "Our childhood is all that remains of

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<sup>74</sup> Karin Barnaby, "A Poet's Intuition: Schiller's Anticipation of C.G. Jung's Psychology in 'Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung,'" in *Friedrich von Schiller and the Drama of Human Existence*, edited by Alexej Ugrinsky (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1988): 119-128.

<sup>75</sup> Hirsch, *Romantic Lieder and the Search for Lost Paradise*, 19-21.

nature in humanity, such as civilization has made of it, of untouched, unmutilated nature.”<sup>76</sup> The *Wiegenlied* topic can therefore be seen as a vehicle for nostalgia, ostensibly about childhood but also coded with nostalgia for the state of naiveté and innocence that childhood represents. This association of childhood and the naïve is prevalent in Brahms’s music, and his compositions in this topic were highly influential. As Marjorie W. Hirsch states:

Of the many composers who produced such [*Kunst-Kinderlieder*] settings, Brahms figures most prominently. His nostalgic *Kunst-Kinderlieder* established the yearning for lost childhood as a powerful topos for art song.<sup>77</sup>

The topos Hirsch mentions figures just as prominently in Brahms’s instrumental music as in his art song settings. Two such examples are the Intermezzo op. 117 no. 1, and the relevant piece of music for this thesis; the Ballade op. 10 no. 2.

## 2.3 THE SCHERZO

The scherzo is likely the most well-established of the topics discussed in this chapter. Although the title can be found in music dating from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, this discussion concerns itself with the modern instrumental scherzo, as developed specifically by Haydn and Beethoven. Starting with Haydn’s op. 33 quartets, composers used the scherzo as an optional substitution for the minuet and trio movement in quartets and other multi-movement works. The scherzo becomes, in Beethoven’s symphonies and quartets, in effect the default third movement.

The scherzo can operate as a topic within a larger work, or it may operate as a genre at the level of a movement within a multi-movement work, or as a stand-alone piece such as the four scherzos of Chopin or Brahms’s Scherzo op. 4. The boundary between topic and genre is

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<sup>76</sup> Schiller, “On Simple and Sentimental Poetry,” 151.

<sup>77</sup> Hirsch, *Romantic Lieder and the Search for Lost Paradise*, 146.



often porous, but at times the distinction is useful, as in the case of op. 10 no. 3. Here, Brahms has composed a piece whose genre is ballade, whose title is “intermezzo,” and whose topic is (primarily) scherzo. There are pieces whose genre is scherzo but that do not demonstrate the scherzo topic that this chapter seeks to construct. Examples include, as described by Francesca Brittan, the various *Scherzo fantastique* pieces composed by Felix Mendelssohn and Hector Berlioz that operate within a kind of “fairy” topic, which is among the topics listed by Agawu in Table 1.2.<sup>78</sup> At the most general level, scherzos are characterized by fast tempi and rhythmic play, although Beethoven sampled many different meters for his scherzos, both simple and compound. The feature of the scherzo that is relevant for our discussion is its capacity as a vehicle for musical irony.

The question of whether music is capable of not merely representing irony, but actually *being* ironic, has an interesting history. Eddy Zemach and Tamara Balter, two philosophers writing on the topic of musical irony, agree that it is a real phenomenon. They write:

[Irony’s] essence lies in projecting a situation that makes reality look deformed, and such a situation need not be prompted by verbal means. It may be evoked by certain real-life situations, too.<sup>79</sup>

The word scherzo in Italian literally means “joke,” and the genre has been associated with musical wit, comedy, and irony since its inception.<sup>80</sup> Although many scherzo movements in Haydn and Beethoven can be considered comical, such as the finale of Haydn’s String Quartet op. 33 no. 2 or the third movement of Beethoven’s Symphony no. 6, op. 68, many of the scherzo

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<sup>78</sup> Francesca Brittan, “On Microscopic Hearing: Fairy Magic, Natural Science, and the *Scherzo fantastique*,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64 no. 3 (Fall 2011): 527-600.

<sup>79</sup> Eddy Zemach and Tamara Balter, “The Structure of Irony and How it Functions in Music,” *Philosophers on Music: Experience, Meaning, and Work*, ed., Kathleen Stock (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 182.

<sup>80</sup> Tilden A. Russell and Hugh MacDonald, “Scherzo” Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, Web, May 15 2014.

movements of middle and late-period Beethoven demonstrate sublime irony, such as the second movement of the Symphony no. 9, op. 125, or the second movement of the String Quartet no. 13, op. 130.<sup>81</sup> Movements like these would only rarely be described as comical. Instead they emphasize Romantic irony, a kind of self-contradiction and self-parody that has its roots in the writings of Friedrich Schlegel.<sup>82</sup>

Robert Hatten writes that one of musical irony's prominent features is its ability to effect a shift in the level of discourse within the music.<sup>83</sup> These discursive shifts evince compositional self-awareness by foregrounding compositional decision-making. As Mark Evan Bonds writes, ironic pieces of music are those that "call attention to their own techniques of artifice."<sup>84</sup> The Romantic irony described above fits neatly into this description, since self-parody necessarily calls attention to the composer outside of the work. Romantic irony can only operate at a discursive level that includes the artist as well as the work. As an example, Rey M. Longyear argues that the scherzo from Beethoven's String Quartet op. 131 parodies its own performers by problematizing the coordination of their parts, drawing the listener's attention to a meta-musical discourse between musicians in the quartet.<sup>85</sup>

It is through the irony that is implicated by its title that the scherzo topic comes into contact with the deteriorationist model described in Chapter 1.3. Recall that Schiller's

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<sup>81</sup> Rey M. Longyear, "Beethoven and Romantic Irony," *The Musical Quarterly* 56 no. 4 (October 1970): 647-664.

<sup>82</sup> Longyear argues that Beethoven did not receive the concept of romantic irony from Schlegel's writings, but instead the two converged on it through similar personality types and artistic inclinations. Zemach and Balter, "The Structure of Irony and How it Functions in Music," 199.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 172-188.

<sup>84</sup> Mark Evan Bonds, "Haydn, Laurence Sterne, and the Origins of Musical Irony," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 44 no. 1 (Spring 1991): 68.

<sup>85</sup> Longyear, "Beethoven and Romantic Irony," 658.

sentimental artistic impulse is reflective and self-aware. Schiller considers the genre of satire to be a sentimental genre particularly because it represents modern irony. Schiller lists Johnathon Swift, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Albrecht von Haller as examples of modern satirical poets, although he also includes the Latin writers Juvenal and Tacitus. Nevertheless, irony is seen as associated with sentimentality and the modern condition. The Romantic irony found in many of the scherzo movements of Beethoven, Brahms, and Mahler would not be possible from a naïve artistic stance, and can be taken as emblems of musical modernity.

## 2.4 THE *MÜNDIGKEIT*

The *Mündigkeit* topic is a term of my own coinage. *Mündigkeit* is a German word that can be variously translated as “maturity,” “coming of age,” or “responsibility.” The term is associated with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who uses this word in his definition of the Enlightenment from “Answering the Question: What is the Enlightenment?” of 1784. Recall from the discussion of “Conjectural Beginnings of Human History” from Chapter 1.3 that Kant believed moral responsibility to have been a necessary result of mankind’s historical loss of innocence. The positive aspects of modernity, then, are purchased at the cost of a separation from nature, leading to the unsatisfied modern condition. *Mündigkeit* represents the modern condition as understood from the deteriorationist worldview – not simply as a chronological moment measured by a date, but as the product of a historical development.

Musically, the *Mündigkeit* topic is evidenced by *conspicuously modern* musical features, including: chromaticism (in all of its forms but especially modal mixture) instrumentalism (melodies and figuration divorced from a vocal conceptual framework), formal complexity, and irony. Very often the opposition of the *Mündigkeit* with topics associated with the musical past

can generate an affect of nostalgia or lateness. In op. 10 no. 4, the *Mündigkeit* topic is established through context. I would not argue that the *Mündigkeit* topic can be easily applied to the larger body of 19<sup>th</sup>-century music. Rather the *Mündigkeit* topic is established by contrast, when it is used by composers as a conspicuous negation of naïve elements in the same work, including the pastoral (as in Brahms's own Symphony no. 2 in D major, op. 73),<sup>86</sup> the folk element, or the topics of antiquity (including the Ossianic manner, Chivalric Style, the *stile antico*, etc.). In this way, the *Mündigkeit* topic can be seen as dependent on what Robert Hatten calls topical troping, which involves a juxtaposition of topics that gain new emergent meaning through the context they provide one another.<sup>87</sup> The troping of historical topics is part of a long musical tradition, and the opposition of Ossianic and *Mündigkeit* topics in op. 10 can be thought of as a nineteenth-century equivalent to the opposition between the *stile antico* and *stile moderno* in the seventeenth-century, and the learned style and galant style in the eighteenth.

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<sup>86</sup> For more on this work, its affect of nostalgia, and the topical conflict between naïve and sentimental elements, see Reinhold Brinkmann, *Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms*, translated by Peter Palmer, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

<sup>87</sup> Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 170.

## CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF THE OP. 10 BALLADES

Chapter 3 is a series of analyses of the op. 10 ballades, taken sequentially in the order they are arranged in publication and, when the op. 10 set is performed as a group, in performance. Each analysis will include a brief overview of the formal outline of the ballade and its most salient features. The bulk of the analysis is aimed at illuminating the topical and transformational features of the piece, and the analysis is not intended to be a thorough explanation of every feature of the work. The discussion of the tonal and topical interactions between the ballades will be reserved for Chapter 4.2, although specific intertextual references will be pointed out when appropriate.

### 3.1 OP. 10 NO. 1, “EDWARD”

The first ballade is the most widely analyzed and discussed of the Op.10 set. The lopsided attention given to this ballade may be in part because this piece has a connection to larger debates about programmaticism, since Brahms indicates at the heading of the score, *Nach der schottischen Ballade “Edward” (in Herders “Stimmen der Völker”)*.<sup>88</sup> There is general agreement that at least some of the content of the piece is designed around a dialogue between the two characters of the *Edward* ballad, though Walther Frisch and Robert Schauffler both caution against too literal of a programmatic hearing of the piece.<sup>89</sup> Max Kallbeck was the first to point out that the first line of the German text can be aligned with the melody of the first three bars, as shown in Figure 3.1. This concurrence led Paul Mies to speculate that Brahms originally conceived the piece as a vocal setting of the poem.

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<sup>88</sup> “After the Scottish ballad *Edward* (in Herder’s *Stimmen der Völker*).”

<sup>89</sup> Hastings, “The Performer’s Role,” Footnote 114.

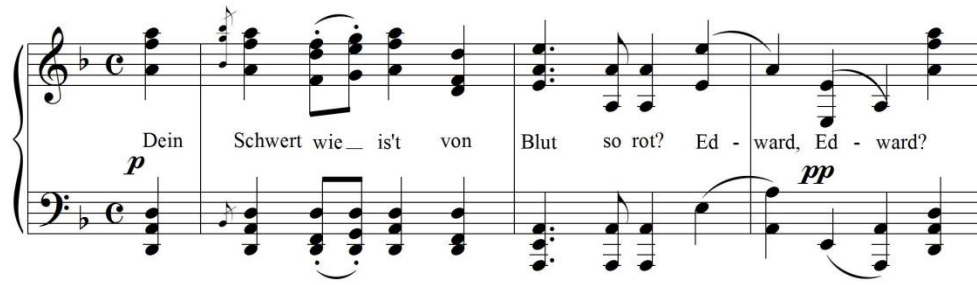


Figure 3.1: Brahms: Op. 10 no. 1, 1-3, overlaid with the text of Herder's German translation of the Scottish ballad *Edward*.<sup>90</sup>

The piece as a whole breaks down into a ternary ABA' form, whose proportions are listed in Table 3.1. The A section can be further broken down into two subsections or phrases, each repeated with alterations, shown in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.1: Formal outline of Op.10 no.1

	A	B	A'
Measures	1-26	27-59	60-70
Tempo Indication	Andante, Poco più moto	Allegro	Tempo I [Andante]
Key Areas	dm: i	I → $\flat$ II	i

TABLE 3.2: Outline of the subdivisions of the A section of op.10 no.1

Phrases	a	b	a'	b'
Tempo Indication	Andante	Poco più moto	Tempo I	Poco più moto
Measures	1-8	9-13	14-21	22-26

Those analysts who choose to interpret op.10 no.1 in terms of the *Edward* ballad hear the contrasting Andante and *Poco più moto* phrases of the A section as Brahms's setting of the dialogue between mother and son that forms the basis of the text of the poem. The dialogic structuring is common to vocal ballades, reminiscent of the dialogic forms taken by the famous lied setting of the Edward text by Carl Loewe in his op. 1 no. 1, and ballad settings generally (for instance, Schubert's *Der Erlkönig*, D. 328). The dialogue consists of the mother's questions (the

<sup>90</sup> Similar figures can be found in several discussions of op. 10 no. 1, but the first was designed by Kalbeck.

Andante and Tempo I phrases) and Edward's responses (the *Poco più moto* phrases). The text of the Edward ballad and Herder's translation can be found in the Appendix. Charise Hastings has analyzed the narrative progression of the ballad and commented on its relation to the form of the music.<sup>91</sup> She points out that the events recounted in the ballad are not presented chronologically. Instead, the story is presented out of order through the dialogue in the following way:

1. The mother questions Edward why his sword is dripping with blood.
2. Edward lies, telling his mother that he has killed his hawk.
3. The mother does not believe him, and repeats her question.
4. Again Edward lies, telling her that he has killed his horse.
5. The mother does not believe him and asks for a third time.
6. Edward reveals the truth; that he has killed his father.
7. The mother asks what he will do now.
8. Edward says he will renounce his inheritance and go into voluntary exile.
9. The mother asks what will become of her.
10. Edward curses his mother, revealing that it was she who had counseled him to murder.

There are two important revelations of the plot in the ballad. The first comes when Edward reveals the reason his sword is dripping with blood is because he has killed his father. The other revelation comes in the last couplet of the text, "The curse of hell from me shall you bear, such counsels you gave to me, O." A simplified chronological reading of the same events would look something like this:

1. Edward's mother advises him to kill his father.
2. Edward kills his father.
3. Edward has a conversation with his mother in which he admits to killing his father.
4. Edward curses his mother.
5. Edward goes into voluntary exile.

Motivically, the *poco più moto* theme (theme B) is derived from the motives of the main theme (theme A), and since it is this version of the theme that is developed in the B section, the entire piece can be seen as comprised of only two or three important motives. Theme A is

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<sup>91</sup> Hastings, "The Performer's Role," 114-151.

constructed from a neighbor note figure (motive X), a stepwise third (motive Y), and a descending fifth (motive Z). The theme of the *poco più allegro* is also constructed from these motives, but arranged differently, as seen in Figure 3.2.

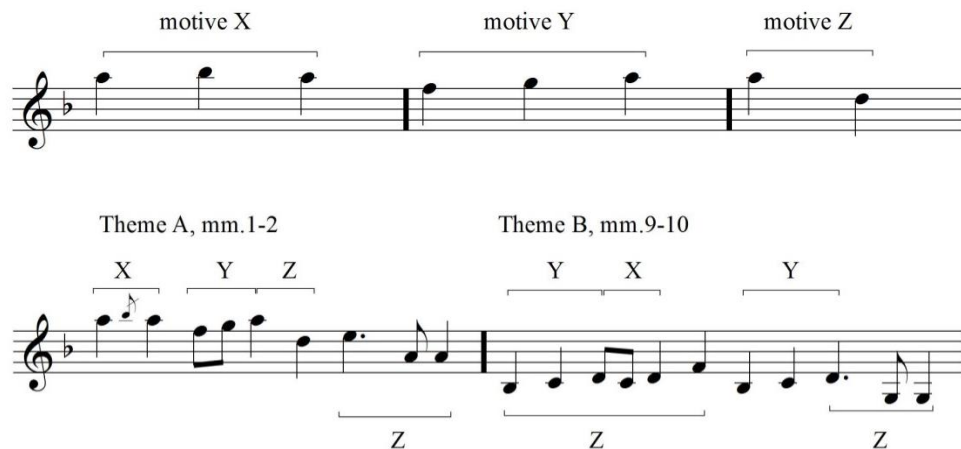


FIGURE 3.2: Motives X, Y, and Z, and their arrangement to construct the A and B themes in op. 10 no. 1.

Observing Figure 3.2, one can see that the direction of motive X in Theme B is inverted, and although it is still stepwise, the neighbor-note figure now spans a whole-step. Also noteworthy is the fact that the rhythm of the first six notes of Theme A (discounting the grace note) is identical to the first six notes of Theme B. Likewise, the last five notes of Theme A rhythmically correspond to the last five notes of Theme B. This relationship is shown in Figure 3.3. The economic use of rhythmic patterns may contribute to the sense of poetic prosody commented on by many of the writers on op. 10 no. 1. The deliberate archaisms common to both the Ossianic manner and the Chivalric Style, as discussed in Chapter 2, are evident in the first phrase, mm. 1-8, shown in Figure 3.4. This phrase traces a path from tonic to dominant, ending on the V chord in m. 8. This is typical, but the harmonic path connecting tonic and dominant is less conventional.



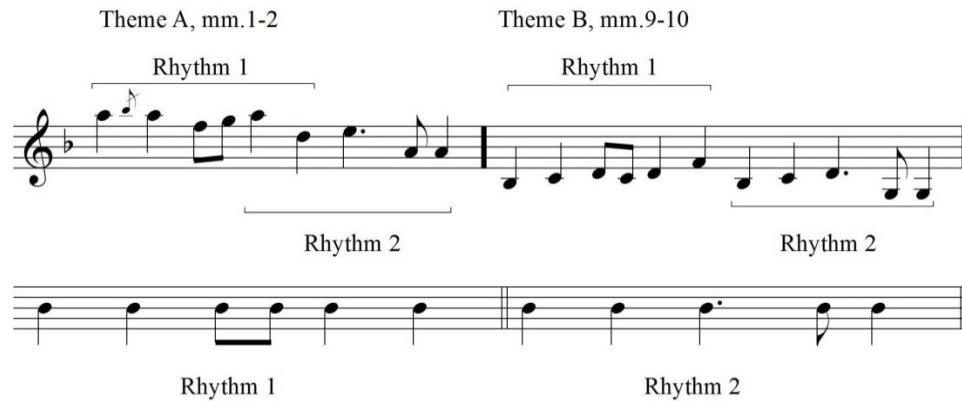


FIGURE 3.3: The rhythmic construction of themes A and B.



FIGURE 3.4: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 1, "Edward," 1-8, with relevant harmonic events boxed.

Brahms loads the phrase with a number of chromatic pre-dominants borrowed from the subdominant tonal region, most conspicuous of which is the root position  $\flat$ II chord on the fourth beat of measure 5. On the downbeat of measure 6, the note  $C\sharp$  is added, momentarily suggesting that this chord functions as an augmented sixth in the key of the subdominant, G minor. This chord resolves unconventionally, when the  $C\sharp$  resolves upwards to the third of a  $B\flat$

major triad on the downbeat of m. 7. An augmented sixth is then also added to this chord on beat 4 of m. 7, and the chord resolves with conventional augmented sixth pre-dominant voice-leading to the dominant on the downbeat of measure 8. Most importantly, however, this passage initiates the first of many voice-leading events that can be thought of in terms of triadic transformations, as shown in the boxes in Figure 3.4.

The first box in Figure 3.4 shows the first d minor chord heard, at the anacrusis to m. 1. This harmony is in play until the second box on the fourth beat of m. 4, when the opening gesture of Theme A is transposed down a fifth to g minor. The upper-neighbor grace note (Motive X from Figure 3.2) now introduces the work's first chromatic pitch – not the leading tone, which was conspicuously absent from the first dominant chord in mm. 2-3, but instead  $E\flat$ , the  $\flat II$  scale degree in d minor. The third box shows the  $E\flat$ 's first introduction as a neighbor note and the fourth box shows its arrival in the bass voice as the root of a  $\flat II$  harmony. Figure 3.5 shows a reduction of the transformational voice-leading by which  $E\flat$  is first introduced.

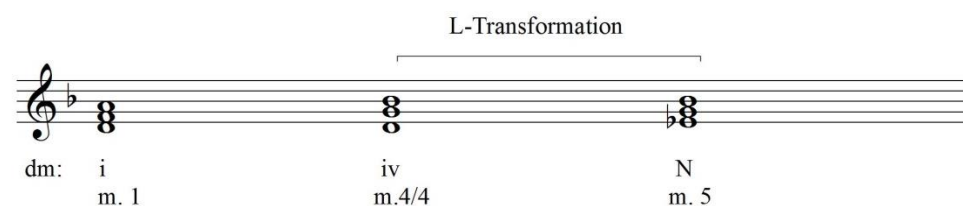


FIGURE 3.5: The L-transformation at the beginning of op. 10 no. 1.

The voice leading between g minor and  $E\flat$  major triads in Figure 3.5 is the characteristic parsimonious voice-leading of the L-transformation. This is the first of many L-transformations in this piece and in op. 10 as a whole. The result of this transformation, the root position  $\flat II$  chord, is one of the many medieval-isms of op. 10 no. 1.  $\flat II$  is the characteristic scale degree of

the Phrygian mode, and Brahms's rhetorical emphasis on this chromatic pitch can be taken as a subtle allusion to modality, and therefore also to the ancient past. This is entirely appropriate for the medieval sound world of the Ossianic manner and Chivalric style, as is the absence of C# in mm. 2-3, producing archaic open fifths and octaves. Figure 3.6 shows the ensuing *poco più moto* phrase.

The *poco più moto* phrase in Figure 3.6, as stated earlier, is often taken to represent Edward's lies told to his mother in response to her question (perhaps this is the half cadence in m. 8). The phrase is organized around four sub-phrases that Brahms indicates with phrasing slurs, each taking up five quarter-notes of time value. These sub-phrases work against the notated common time, overriding bar lines and beginning and ending partway through measures. Figure 3.6 shows the *poco più moto* section renotated into quintuple time, revealing the underlying rhythmic regularity. The regularity of five quarter notes derives directly from Rhythms 1 and 2 of Figure 3.3.

Harmonically, the first two sub-phrases begin and end in the subdominant tonal region, g minor, which was marked out previously within the first phrase of the piece. The third sub-phrase continues further down the circle of fifths to c minor, the subtonic of d minor or the subdominant of the subdominant. The last sub-phrase then begins similarly to the third sub-phrase, but ends on an A major triad, the dominant of d minor, rather than a c minor triad. Over the course of the *poco più moto* phrase, the pitch E $\flat$  is increasingly brought into the harmonic center of gravity. It begins as a peripheral scale degree in the g minor tonal region of the first two sub-phrases, and is the root of the first harmony of both the third and fourth sub-phrases. E $\flat$

as a “centrifugal,” or tonic negating, tonal force is an important element in the tonal problem argument laid out in Chapter 4.2.



FIGURE 3.6: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 1, “Edward,” 9-13, and the same passage renotated in quintuple time.

Measures 14-21 are a literal restatement of the Andante section, mm. 1-8, with the exception that the  $B\flat$  chord that, in mm. 7-8, resolved as an augmented sixth to a half cadence on the dominant, instead in mm. 20-21 does not contain the pitch  $G\sharp$  and resolves to a half cadence on an F triad, locally heard as the dominant of  $B\flat$  major. This prepares a repetition of the *poco più moto* section, this time with the two primary voices exchanged in invertible counterpoint. In addition, the fourth sub-phrase of this section ends with a half cadence on open

fifth harmony built on D. With its lack of third, it neatly prepares the parallel major key area of D major for the B section, marked Allegro.

The B section begins and ends in stable key areas, but in between the harmony is highly directional. This section demonstrates most clearly what Jonathon Bellman calls the Chivalric Style, marked by energetic 3-against-2 cross rhythms and freely-chromatic triadic harmonies. One of the harmonies encountered in this passage is B major, reached by way of b minor, and this is a triadic transformational path that will gain significance over the course of op. 10. A harmonic reduction of this passage and the relevant harmonies are shown in Figure 3.7.

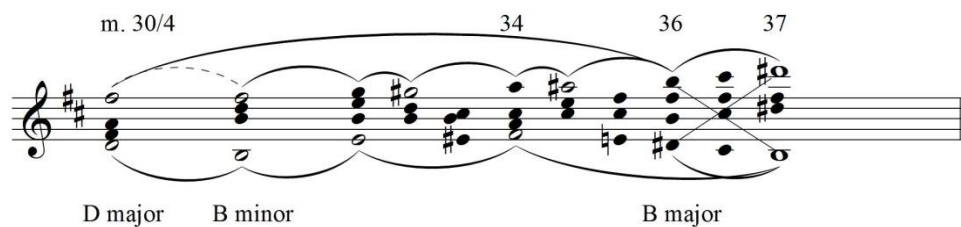


FIGURE 3.7: Harmonic reduction of mm. 30-37.

The particular path this reading emphasizes is transformational, but of course there are other approaches. What is important is that the pathway from D major to B major is accomplished primarily through chromatic voice-leading and not by way of the circle of fifths, and that this voice-leading features the R and P transformations connecting the D major, b minor, and B major triads. Figure 3.8 shows the triadic transformations that lead from D major to B major.

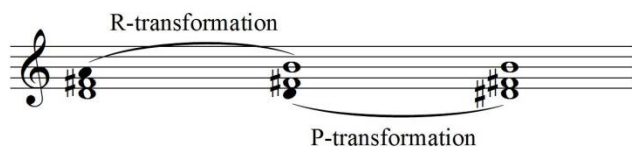


FIGURE 3.8: The R and P transformations that connect D major and B major triads.

The entire B section steadily increases in dynamic, beginning piano in m. 27 and reaching fortissimo for the first time at the arrival of the B major triad in m. 37. This dynamic indication is repeated several times, with only hairpin crescendos between indications. This sustained high point is often interpreted as the moment in the program when Edward admits his guilt in killing his father. This passage also features some of the most direct and conspicuous triadic transformations of the op. 10 set. Figure 3.9 shows the passage from mm. 40-43, with transformational events highlighted.

The D major triad that is present from mm. 39-41, undergoes a P-transformation that maps it onto a d minor triad on the fourth beat of m. 41. This triad is then mapped onto a B $\flat$  major triad on the downbeat of m. 42 via an L-transformation. The transformations are labeled below the score in Figure 3.9 while the triads themselves are boxed within the score. The outer-voice motion from A to B $\flat$  that accompanies these transformations is a recollection of the initial motive X from Theme A in the first measure of the piece (see Figure 3.2).

D maj      d min      B $\flat$  maj

P                      L

FIGURE 3.9: Brahms: Ballade, op. 10 no. 1, “Edward,” 40-43, with P and L transformations shown below.

This musical highpoint then continues immediately into a restatement of Theme B from the *poco più moto* section in mm. 44-54 (Figure 3.10). If ever Brahms's ballades approached those of Chopin's in terms of thematic apotheosis, this is the moment. Theme B now takes up a much larger registral expanse than its initial presentations, is presented fortissimo and *pesante*, and is to be performed in the same Allegro tempo of the B section.

The musical score for Brahms' Ballade op. 10 no. 1, measures 44-54, is presented in three systems. The first system shows the piano introduction with a dominant pedal point on B-flat in the bass. The second system shows the main section beginning with a fortissimo (ff) and pesante marking. The piano part has a triplet of eighth notes in the bass, and the right hand has a series of chords. The section ends with a 'poco a poco riten. e dimin.' marking. A solid blue box highlights a dominant pedal point on B-flat in the bass, measures 49-50. A dashed blue box highlights a tonic pedal point on E-flat in the bass, measures 51-54.

FIGURE 3.10: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 1, “Edward,” mm. 44-54.

The solid box in Figure 3.10 encloses a dominant pedal point on B $\flat$ , mm. 49-50, and the dashed box encloses a tonic pedal point on E $\flat$ , mm. 51-54. The entire B section of op. 10 no. 1 can be seen as a large crescendo and diminuendo, with a stable key area of D major at the beginning of the crescendo and a stable key area of E $\flat$  major at the end of the diminuendo.

The tonicization of E $\flat$  at this point in the piece is, from a Schoenbergian perspective, an organic development stemming from the problematized use of that note at the outset of the piece. E $\flat$  is the primary agent of centrifugal energy in this ballade, since it challenges the hegemony of the tonic by being both the first chromatic pitch introduced in the piece and the next-most-stable tonal region.

Measures 55-59 effect a retransition to the reprise of the A section and the tonic key. The A' section is adjusted in a number of ways compared to the A section. First, the *poco più moto* phrases are absent, eliminating the dialogic element that many commentators took to be essential to the program of the first A section.<sup>92</sup> This also obligates a different harmonic path to be taken, and the music detours into the key of A minor, the minor dominant. Finally a new inner voice is added in eighth-note triplets. Measures 65-71 present closing material, in which the melodic voice descends chromatically from scale degree 5 to 1. Matthew Gelbart points out that the reprise of the A section and the coda remain at low dynamic levels and relatively little dramatic interest. Gelbart interprets this as establishing a narrative frame, in which the musical narrator begins in an epic stance, becomes dramatically animated during the B section, and returns to a dispassionate epic tone for the remainder of the work.<sup>93</sup>

The key takeaways from this analysis are, first, the presence of triadic transformations at the musical and dramatic high-point, shown in Figure 3.6. In this way the P and L-transformations are foregrounded in the listener's awareness, and their presence later on in the work gains a thematic quality. The L-transformation is also involved in the voice-leading of the

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<sup>92</sup> Presumably, Edward has at this point already banished his mother or has entered his voluntary exile. Charise Hastings uniquely interprets this passage to actually take place prior to the events of the dialogue, but this issue is not essential to the analysis presented here.

<sup>93</sup> Gelbart, "Layers of Representation," 25.



first chromatic pitch of the piece, shown in Figure 3.5. Second, the pitch E $\flat$  ( $\flat$  II) serves in this piece as a source of tonal instability. It functions as a centrifugal pitch and tonal region, opposing the tonic d minor. These elements will be important for the summary argument made in Chapter 4.2.

### 3.2: OP. 10 NO. 2

The ballade op. 10 no. 2 is in D major, and along with op. 10 no. 1, was composed after op. 10 nos. 3 and 4 late in the summer of 1854. This is the most heterogeneous piece in the set in terms of tonal areas, motivic material, and musical topics. Moreover these topics are juxtaposed next to one another with little or no transition. The formal outline is given in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: A formal outline of op. 10 no. 2.

	A	B	C	B'	A'
Measures	1-23	24-50	51-79	80-117	118-148
Tempo Indication	Andante	Allegro non troppo	<i>Molto staccato e leggiero</i>	Allegro non troppo	Tempo I [Andante]
Key Area	D major: I	vi	VI	vi	VI $\rightarrow$ I
Topic	<i>Wiegenlied</i>	Chivalric	Scherzo	Chivalric	<i>Wiegenlied</i>

There are two ways of viewing the form of op. 10 no. 2, and they are not mutually exclusive. The first is as an early example of arch form, a highly-symmetrical form more commonly associated with 20<sup>th</sup>-century composers such as Bartók. The three sections are arranged symmetrically around a midpoint: ABCBA, creating a five-part form. The other way of viewing this piece is as a ternary form, ABA, whose B section is itself ternary. In this case an imbedded A(aba)A would be difficult to distinguish from the arch form ABCBA. A close listening to the piece, however, does suggest that the interior C section is hierarchically subordinate to the B section, supporting the A(aba)A ternary view. This is based on the fact that

the B and C sections share the same tonic pitch and the same tempo indication (the indication “*molto staccato e leggiero*” does not affect the tempo, and the return of the B section, although articulated with a double bar-line, is not indicated with a restatement of “*Allegro non troppo*”).

Each of these formal sections is also associated with a unique topic. The primary topic is the *Wiegenlied*, discussed in detail in Chapter 2. This topic is established directly at the outset of the A section, shown in Figure 3.11.

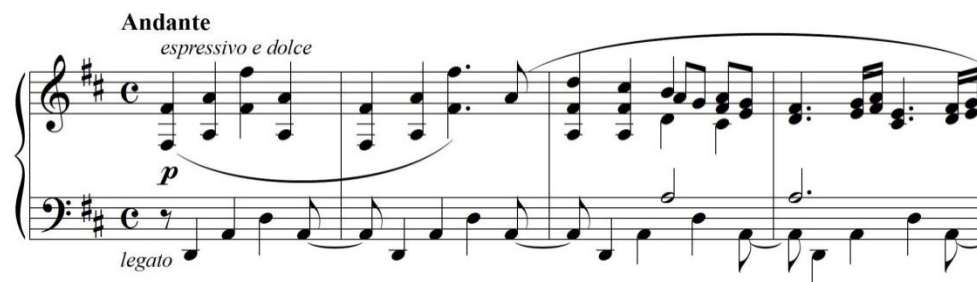


FIGURE 3.11: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 2, 1-4.

The piece begins with a two-measure introduction that outlines the tonic triad of D major. The introductory passage also establishes the gentle rocking rhythm associated with the *Wiegenlied* by syncopating the right and left hand material. The very fact that there is an “instrumental” introduction within an instrumental piece helps to establish the ostensible vocal quality of the melody when it enters on beat four of m. 2, not unlike the many “instrumental” introductions before Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte*. The introduction therefore establishes both the “cradle” and the “song” of the cradlesong topic. Figure 3.12 shows the beginning of the main theme.

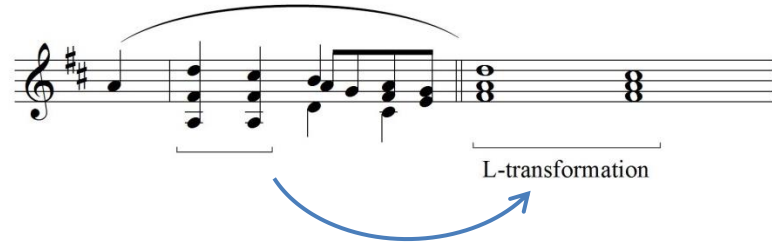


FIGURE 3.12: The embedded L-transformation in the main theme.

The theme contains the characteristic voice-leading of the L-transformation. The successive right-hand chords above the bracket in Figure 3.12 are the triads in question. The second chord might more accurately be called a simultaneity, since the bass line does not support a change of harmony on beat 2. Instead, the chord of D major is in play for the entire measure, and the C# of the melody on beat 2 of m. 3 acts as a dissonant passing tone. Nevertheless, the scope of a triadic transformation is the voice-leading between two pitch-events, and the passage in Figure 3.12 can be meaningfully described as an L-transformation. As we will see in Chapter 3.3, Brahms pursues many different dissonant interpretations of the members of the triads of the L-transformation over the course of op. 10.

The A section of the second ballade contains one of the most important transformational chains in the op. 10 set. A drone D in the bass supports a tonic harmony through mm. 1-9. In m. 10, the bass figuration changes to outline the harmony of B minor. Measures 10-11 and 12-13 form a pair, the initial idea and its repetition of a sentence that ends in m. 17. The initial idea, mm. 10-11, is presented in the key of B minor, while the varied repetition, mm. 12-13, is in the parallel key of B major. Figure 3.13 shows mm. 10-13.

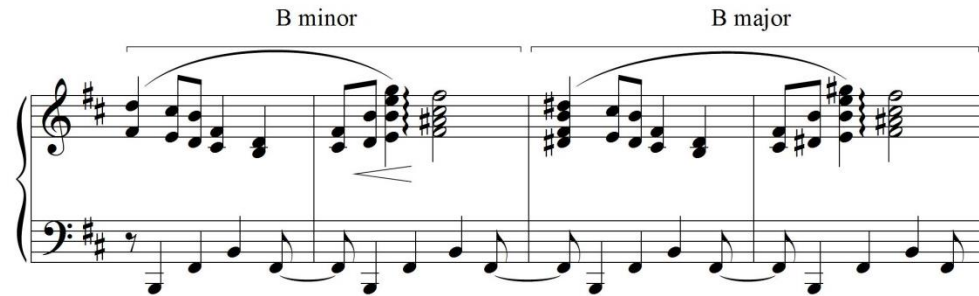


FIGURE 3.13: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 2, mm. 10-13.

This passage reveals a process of triadic transformations that serves as a microcosm for the transformational pathway taken by op. 10 at the global level. The transformational chain is shown below in Figure 3.14.

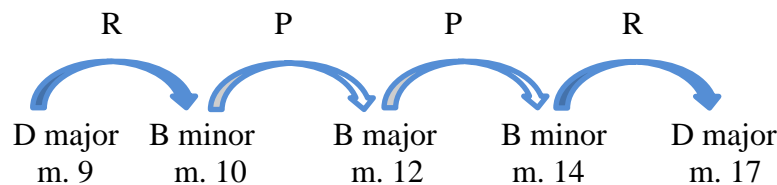


FIGURE 3.14: The transformational chain in mm. 9-17.

As can be seen from Figure 3.14, the succession of key areas forms a symmetrical pattern, mirroring the symmetrical application of R and P-transformations. Each transformation that is applied to the initial D major triad is undone by involution by the same transformation at a later point. When one compares Figure 3.14 and the key areas of Table 3.3, it is apparent that this sequence of key areas mirrors the key areas of op. 10 no. 2 at the larger level. As James Parakilas writes, “This small tonal excursion, within the theme... predicts the overall tonal course of the ballade.”<sup>94</sup> Parakilas might easily have taken this observation one step further. These are three of the four tonic keys of the op. 10 ballades. This passage recites the transformations that connect the key areas from D major to B major, and then retraces its steps back to the tonic key.

<sup>94</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades without Words*, 143.

The B section is a drastic departure from the *Wiegenlied* topic of the A section. This section is in B minor, is significantly faster (*Allegro non troppo*), and has the propulsive galloping rhythms and cross-rhythms of the chivalric style. The first few measures of the B section are shown in Figure 3.15. The chivalric style marks a change in narrative stance, similar to the way in which this topic was used in the interior section in the first ballade. In the first ballade, Brahms used the Ossianic manner to provide a typical epic narrative stance in the A section, foregrounding the bard-like narrator. The turn to the chivalric style marks a change to what Goethe would call dramatic poetry, in which the narrator becomes more like an actor living the events in real time. Similarly the chivalric style marks a change to dramatic action in op. 10 no. 2.



FIGURE 3.15: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 2, mm. 24-27.

The C section arrives abruptly, without transition. The rhythmic instability of the B section evens out in mm. 49-50, when the 3-against-4 cross rhythms are replaced with uniform staccato quarter notes. At the same time the harmonic instability of the B section is replaced by a focus on an alternation of dominant and tonic harmonies in the key of B minor. Together, the rhythmic and harmonic regularity signal expectations of a cadence on the downbeat of m. 51. Instead, this downbeat marks the beginning of the C section, as shown in Figure 3.16.



FIGURE 3.16: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 2, mm. 49-52.

The C section material, marked *Molto staccato e leggiero*, contrasts in almost every imaginable way with that of mm. 49-50. In a sense, the listener receives the expected cadence in B, but in the wrong mode, and elided with new material. Most performers choose to equate the quarter-note pulse of the 6/4 time signature to the quarter-note triplets of the B section, preserving the length of the measure between sections. If the cross-rhythms of the B section represent the heroic conflict of the Chivalric style played out as a conflict of duple vs triple time, then the listener is bound to predict the duple meter to emerge the victor due to the rhetorically strong assertion of straight quarter notes in the cadential passage. The casual reversal to triple time at the downbeat of m. 51 is a surprise, not just because it apparently has exerted no effort to overcome the duple meter (for whom defeat has been snatched from the jaws of victory) but also because it undermines the proposition that such a conflict existed to begin with. This is an ironic juxtaposition that calls the rhythmic discourse of the piece into question.

The C section is in the scherzo topic, partly because of its rhythmic play and partly because of its comic irony. Another element of the comic irony of the C section is the formal ambiguity mentioned earlier. An attentive but uninitiated listener, having already experienced the strong contrast between A and B sections, might reasonably assume the piece to be in a ternary ABA form. The cadential preparation in mm. 49-50 prepares the listener for the end of

the B section and the return of the A section. The elision of the cadence in m. 51 with a new formal area creates a confusion of formal boundaries and organization. Only when the B section returns in m. 80, and then the return of the A section in m. 118, is the listener made aware of the symmetrical planning of the ballade. The repeat of the B section, mm. 80-117, is largely verbatim, but the return of the A section at m. 118 is crucially altered (Figure 3.17).

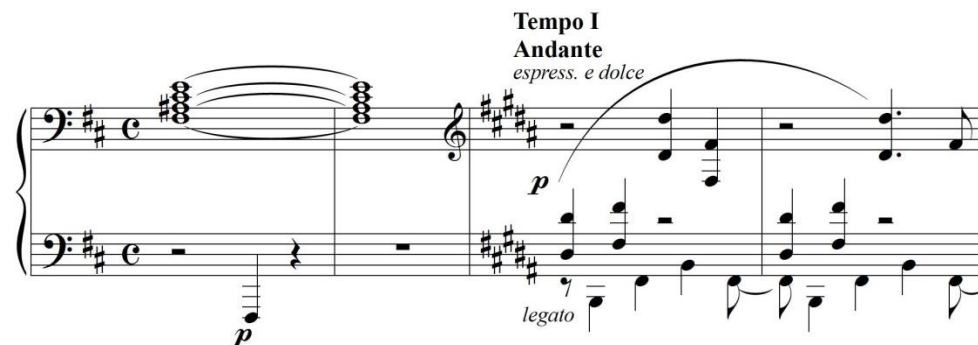


FIGURE 3.17: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 2, mm. 116-119.

The *Wiegenlied* begins in a transposed version before finding its way, halfway through its reprise, to the tonic key of D major – a technique similar to the false recapitulations in the humorous sonata-allegro movements of Haydn and Beethoven. The material corresponding to the instrumental introduction and first phrase of the melody (mm. 1-9) is presented in the key of B major (mm. 118-126). From there the music of the reprise continues in alignment with its original pitch-level. The B minor triad at the downbeat of m. 10, shown in Figure 3.13, is experienced as related by R-transformation to the preceding cadence in D major. The corresponding B minor triad at the downbeat of m. 127 is heard as related by P-transformation to the preceding cadence in B major (m. 126). The transition from B major to D major is mediated smoothly by an altered version of the triadic transformation chain shown in Figure 3.14. Figure 3.18 shows the transformation chain from earlier in the work compared to its altered version in the reprise.

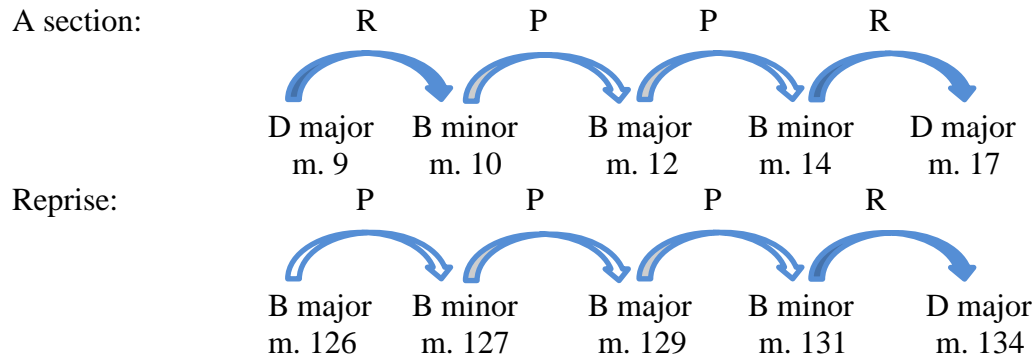


FIGURE 3.18: The transformational chain in mm. 126-134 compared with the earlier chain.

Op. 10 no. 2 is the most formally and topically complex ballade in the op. 10 set. The piece juxtaposes seemingly unrelated topics within an apparently arbitrary formal plan. When the topics are understood as part of the larger deteriorationist plot of the op. 10 set, their inner coherence becomes more apparent. The topics of op. 10 no. 2 depend for their coherence on the topical plot of the larger set, and the formal complexity of the piece is a direct consequence of the progression from naïve expression embodied in op. 10 no. 1 to the greater self-awareness and *Mündigkeit* of the later pieces. This piece includes an explicit statement of the key triadic transformations for the op. 10 set, serving as a foreshadowing of the tonal trajectory of the entire work. Finally, the second ballade also associates the tonal region of B major as a symbol of irony and self-awareness, as the ironically juxtaposed scherzo topic of the B section and as the “wrong” key reprise of the A section, and this will have consequences for the argument for tonal coherence in Chapter 4.2.

### 3.3: OP. 10 NO. 3, “INTERMEZZO”

As was mentioned in Chapter 1.1, Brahms originally conceived the Ballade op. 10 no. 3 as a character piece with the title “Scherzino,” or little scherzo, as a member of the *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines Musikers* before the piece was reworked as a member of the op. 10 ballades and given the new subtitle “Intermezzo.” The change of title does so little to alter the primary



topic of the piece – the scherzo topic – that Ryan McClelland identifies it as such even without mentioning (or perhaps being aware) of Brahms’s original title.<sup>95</sup> The third ballade is the only ballade of the op. 10 set to bear a descriptive subtitle, not counting the popular designation “Edward” for op. 10 no. 1. It is partly because Brahms placed his scherzo-like “Intermezzo” at the third position in op. 10, the default position of a scherzo within a multi-movement work, that some commentators have argued for the op. 10 set to be viewed and performed as a unified work.

This piece is an example of what McClelland identifies as a type of scherzo movement preferred by Brahms early in his career. The scherzo movements from the three piano sonatas, Opp. 1, 2, and 5, the stand-alone scherzo op. 4, the scherzo from the F-A-E sonata published posthumously, and the Ballade op. 10 no. 3 are all in the minor mode and possess very little in the way of musical humor. McClelland describes these pieces as having a “fiery, turbulent character.”<sup>96</sup> He goes on to say:

Such movements manifest the fascination of Romanticism with the darker elements of the human psyche, and the young Brahms was thoroughly immersed in German Romanticism, eagerly collecting quotations from Jean Paul, Goethe, Novalis, Eichendorff, and others.<sup>97</sup>

It is noteworthy that at this point in his career, Brahms had not written any other kind of scherzo than the darkly ironic kind McClelland identifies with German Romanticism. Op. 10 no. 3 is littered with examples of Romantic irony, and in fact the entire work can be viewed as a study in double meanings and self-contradictions. Table 3.4 shows the formal outline of op. 10 no. 3.

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<sup>95</sup> Ryan C. McClelland, *Brahms and the Scherzo: Studies in Musical Narrative*, (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010), 13.

<sup>96</sup> McClelland, *Brahms and the Scherzo*, 27.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

TABLE 3.4: Formal outline of the Ballade op. 10 no. 3

	A	B	A'
Measures	1-42	43-92	93-124
Key Areas	B minor: i	$\sharp$ iii	i
Topic	Scherzo	Chorale	Scherzo

The piece is designed, like many of Brahms's early scherzos, in a simple ternary form. The tonal region of the interior B section is highly problematic, and contributes to a tonal problem interpretation of the piece. This tonal problem will be described more as the events of its unfolding arise in the analysis. The piece begins immediately with the rhythmical play and Romantic irony associated with the scherzo topic, as described in Chapter 2 (Figure 3.19).



FIGURE 3.19: A) Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 3, “Intermezzo,” 1-4; and B) the other possible rhythmic interpretation of the same passage.

The piece begins with the open fifth B-F $\sharp$  stated forte and staccato in the low register of the piano. These stabbing gestures are notated to occur on the last eighth-note of each measure, although because the listener has no rhythmic context, they are likely to be heard as downbeats. The left-hand fifths establish a conflicting meter with the right-hand theme when it arrives on the downbeat of m. 3, and the uninitiated listener does not know whether to understand the meter as

it is notated in the score and in Figure 3.19A, or as it is notated in Figure 3.19B. The resulting rhythmic ambiguity is a direct example of Romantic irony – a musical self-contradiction that calls attention to the artificiality of its construction. One might also imagine that the two-measure introduction to the main theme and the rhythmic offset of the right and left hands of the performer is an ironic parody of the opening measures of op. 10 no. 2, shown earlier in Figure 3.11.

Harmonically, the main theme is recursively self-similar to the key areas of the A section. Figure 3.20 shows the main theme and its harmonic profile. Melodically, the theme is characterized by accented non-chord tones on the downbeat of each measure. When these pitches are discounted, the theme can be seen to outline a simple tonic-to-dominant motion with a chromatic predominant, in this case a standard Neapolitan harmony –  $i-\flat II^6-V$ . This is the progression that plays out over the course of the next 39 measures. Figure 3.21 shows how each harmonic component of the theme maps onto the tonal regions of the A section.

B minor:  $i$                        $\flat II^6$                        $V$

FIGURE 3.20: The harmonic profile of the main theme.

The A section mimics the tonal gesture of the main theme not only in the sequence of harmonic events but also roughly their proportion. The  $\flat II$  chord arrives halfway through the theme, and the C major tonal region is established in m. 19, at approximately the midpoint of the

42 measure A section. In a similar way the dominant tonal region is established in m. 31, at almost exactly three fourths through the A section. This mapping of part-to-whole is emblematic of the Romantic aesthetic of organicism. Figure 3.22 shows the material in the C major tonal region.

Theme:                    m. 3                    m. 4                    m. 5                    m. 6

A Section:                    m. 1                    m. 18                    m. 31

FIGURE 3.21: The self-similarity of the harmonic progression of the main theme and the tonal regions of the A section.

FIGURE 3.22: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 3, 19-20.

The accented non-chord tone on the downbeat of m. 19 (and again at its repetition in m. 21) forms a hint of the L-transformation taken with the pitch-content of the rest of the measure. The B to C motion in the primary voice is the half-step that would carry an E minor triad to C major, completing the characteristic tonal path of an L-transformation. The passage can only be conceived as an L-transformation if one accepts the pitches E and G to be in play at the beginning of the measure. This material is transposed into the key of F# minor in m. 31. The tonic-to-dominant tonal motion of the theme results in the larger form also ending in the dominant key before a repeat sign at the end of m. 40 returns the listener to the tonic at the beginning of the form.

The B section demonstrates at the same time a high degree of contrast and continuity with the preceding scherzo. Topically, the B section engages in a kind of chorale topic. James Parakilas describes it as the “pealing of distant bells.”<sup>98</sup> The theme takes place in a very high range of the instrument and entirely in pianissimo dynamics. Continuing in his description, Parakilas states that:

... the simple chords and the movement of all parts in rhythm with the melody suggest choral singing in some archaic style – not a style in which ballades are likely to have been sung, but perhaps one evoking the same lost world that the name “ballad” evokes.<sup>99</sup>

In contrast to the instrumentality of the A section, the B section is an imitation of choral singing, and whereas the affect of the A section was animated and somewhat playful, the B section is serenely mysterious. The B section also maintains quiet dynamics, in distinction to the sudden and unexpected changes in dynamic from the A section (often also occurring on rhythmical upbeats). In a number of concrete ways however, the B section is a continuation of a number of elements of the A section. It continues the Allegro tempo and 6/8 time signature of the scherzo and even, starting in m. 71, the characteristic syncopation of right and left hands.

Harmonically as well, the theme of the B section can be viewed as a direct continuation of the ponderous chords in the low register of the instrument that close the A section. As shown in Figure 3.23, both derive from the L-transformation. Figure 3.23A shows the chords just mentioned, 3.23B shows the primary theme of the B section, and 3.23C is a reduction of the L-transformation that underlies both of them. This is only one of several moments where the L-transformation is foregrounded melodically, harmonically, and motivically in op. 10 no. 3. The next instance occurs in m. 53 of the B section, shown in Figure 3.24.

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<sup>98</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words*, 144.

<sup>99</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words*, 144.

37 **Allegro**

A

(Allegro)

43

B

*pp* *sempre legato*

L-transformation

C

FIGURE 3.23: A) the low chords at the conclusion of the A section; B) the main theme of the B section; C) the L-transformation underlying both A and B.

(Allegro) 52

*pp*

8va-

D#m: i iv  $\flat \Pi^6$

FIGURE 3.24: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 3, 51.5-53.

The E major chord of m. 53 contains one of the few chromatic pitches of the B section (the other being the leading-tone in D# minor). This is another instance of the Neapolitan chord, and it is brought about in this case by an L-transformation from the diatonic G# minor triad, iv in the key of D# minor. The progression is i-iv- $\flat \Pi$ , and a reduction of the voice-leading is shown in Figure 3.25A.

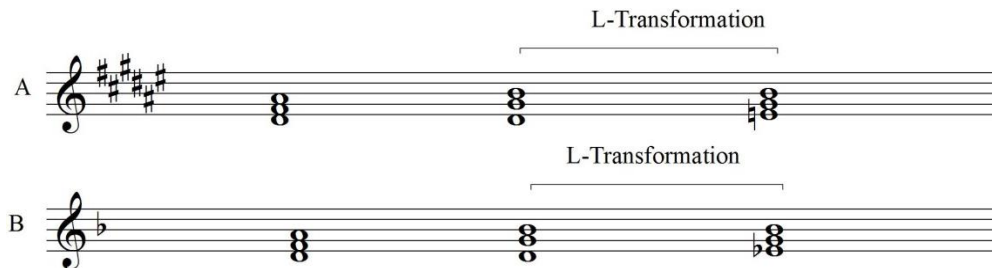


FIGURE 3.25: The comparison of A) the harmonic progression in op. 10 no 3, mm. 51-53; and B) op. 10 no. 1, mm. 1-5.

Comparing 3.25A and B, we see that this is in fact the same progression from the opening of op. 10 no. 1, shown in Figure 3.5 transposed up one semitone. This is not necessarily a purposeful recall of the first ballade, since the Neapolitan harmony and the L-transformation are both thematic elements of the op. 10 ballades. The L-transformation is not the only triadic transformation at play in the B section. Figure 3.26 shows a conspicuous P-transformation between measures 70 and 71.

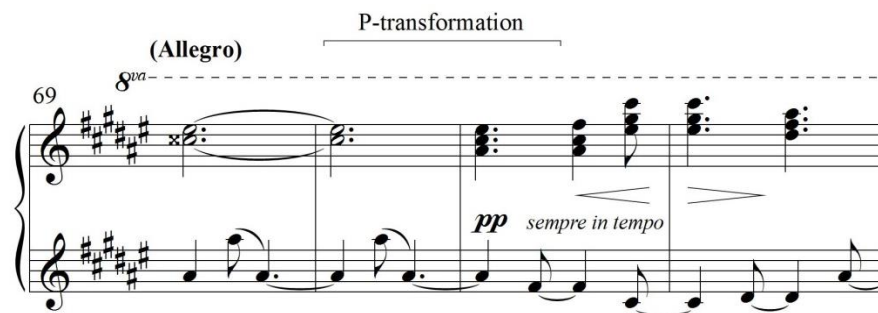


FIGURE 3.26: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 3, 69-72, with P-transformation highlighted.

The first full phrase of the B section (mm. 43-70) comes to rest on a half-cadence on the dominant – an A# major triad in the key of D# minor. When the phrase is repeated, the first chord of the phrase, an A# minor triad, is juxtaposed directly with the A# major triad of the half-cadence. The boundary between phrases, then, is demarcated with a very clear P-transformation.

The boundary between the B section and the reprise of the A section, however, is even more subtle. In this case, the boundary is demarcated not with a conspicuous contrast of harmony but a conspicuous continuity. The retransition contains an F $\sharp$  dominant pedal beginning in m. 81. Between mm. 81 and 92, the pedal is overlaid with a fully-diminished seventh chord built on A $\sharp$ , the notes of which, when taken together with the F $\sharp$  in the bass, are synonymous with an F $\sharp$  dominant ninth chord. Figure 3.27 shows the boundary between the B section and the reprise of the A section.

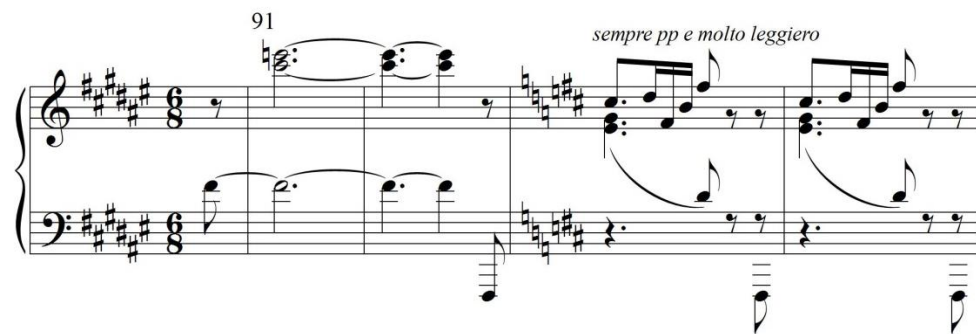


FIGURE 3.27: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 3, 91-94, retransition.

The chord on the downbeat of m. 93 is a C $\sharp$  diminished triad. This chord is a subset of the dominant ninth of the retransition, and what is more the dominant pedal of the retransition continues through the restatement of the main theme. Despite the change of key signatures, it is difficult to argue that a change of harmony has occurred on the downbeat of m. 93. The return of the main theme and the return of the tonic harmony are out of alignment – a Romantic technique diametrically opposed to the double-return of the classical era. This is another instance of Romantic irony, in which Brahms sets up goals and expectations in order to playfully subvert them.



The key area of the B section, D $\sharp$  minor, is a problematic one. The  $\sharp$ iii tonal region is an exceedingly rare and chromatic compositional choice, and it brings attention to the opposition between the natural third scale degree of B minor, D $\flat$ , and the raised version, D $\sharp$ . This opposition is laconically summarized in the cascade in mm. 113-114, shown in Figure 3.28.

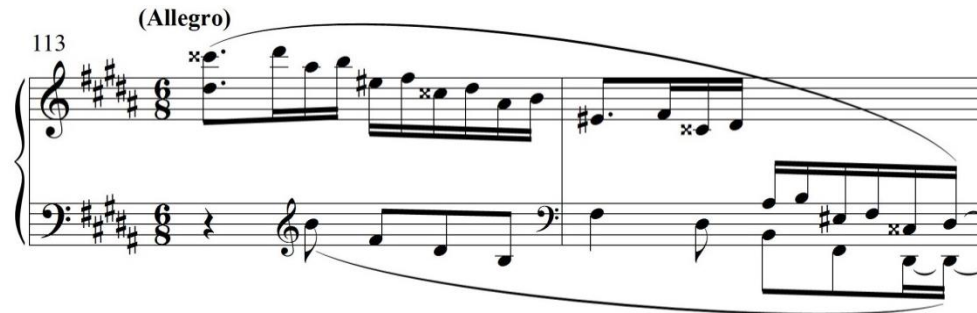


FIGURE 3.28: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 3, 113-114.

As the left hand arpeggiates a B major triad in eighth notes, the right hand decorates each note of the arpeggio with dissonant half-step appoggiaturas, beginning directly with an enharmonic D $\flat$  against D $\sharp$ . As we will see, this cross-relation is a source of harmonic conflict for the entire op. 10 set.

Although none of the reprise section can be considered conventional, there are a few more isolated events that are particularly salient. The recapitulation of mm. 19-20 (seen in Figure 3.22) occurs in mm. 109-110 with a substantial alteration. The alternation of C with its dominant is replaced by harmonies a tritone away (the  $\flat$ II and V tonal regions, another modelling of the harmonic profile of the main theme). In addition, the L-transformation whose presence was attenuated in mm. 19-20 is now stated unambiguously in full accented chords in the right hand on the downbeats of mm. 109-110. The passage is shown in Figure 3.29A, and Figure 3.29B is a reduction and respelling of the L-transformation.



FIGURE 3.29: A) Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 3, 109-110; B) a reduction of the L-transformation.

The thematic recognition of the triads of the L-transformation, accented and full voiced on the downbeats, works ironically against the voice-leading of the passage itself. Both the E minor triad and the C major triad are downbeat dissonances that resolve on the second beat of the measure. In the E minor triad on the downbeat of m. 109, the note B resolves upwards as an appoggiatura, and the entire enharmonic C major triad on the downbeat of m. 110 resolves as a Neapolitan harmony to the dominant in the second half of the measure. The thematic recall of the L-transformation, especially after its use as the head motive of the main theme of the B section (see Figure 3.23) ironically subverts the dissonant interpretation of its constituent triads that is established through local context.

Finally, there is the final cadence of the piece. The piece ends on a B major triad that is reached by a highly circuitous and ironic path. One might imagine that a piece in B minor ending on a B major triad would be invoking the tradition of the Picardy third, but in this case that assumption would be incorrect. Brahms saves the exploration of the *tierce de Picardy* as an opportunity for compositional play with the P-transformation for the fourth ballade. Instead, op.

10 no. 3 reaches B major via an L-transformation from the remote key of D $\sharp$  minor, as shown in Figure 3.30a.

Figure 3.30 consists of three musical excerpts labeled A, B, and C. Excerpt A shows the final cadence of op. 10 no. 3, starting at measure 121, marked (Allegro) (poco riten.), with a piano (p) dynamic and a pedal (Ped.) instruction. Excerpt B shows the main theme of the B section of op. 10 no. 3, starting at measure 43, marked (Allegro) 8va, pp sempre legato. Excerpt C shows the introduction to op. 10 no. 2, marked Andante espressivo e dolce, p, legato.

FIGURE 3.30: A) the final cadence of op. 10 no. 3; B) the main theme of the B section of op. 10 no. 3; and C) the introduction to op. 10 no. 2.

The closing motive starting in m. 121, shown in Figure 3.30A, is a transposed variation of the opening motive of the main theme of the B section, shown in Figure 3.30B, and both contain the characteristic L-transformation that is so prevalent within this ballade. The rhythm of the cadential motive is a direct augmentation of the rhythm of the B section theme, but its intervallic content is a direct recall of the introductory passage from the second ballade, shown in

Figure 3.30C. Both are instances of Brahms's personal "F-A-F" motive, meaning "Frei aber froh" (free but happy).<sup>100</sup>

The final cadence of op. 10 no. 3, iii-I in B major, is highly peculiar. It does not fit into typical cadential categories, like authentic or plagal. The ballade sounds as if it will end in the remote key of D# minor, or #iii, the key of the B section, before the tonic triad of that key is altered by an L-transformation to produce the major tonic, B major. It is as if Brahms pauses on the D# minor triad in order to allow the listener to appreciate its remoteness, and to be surprised when the minute change of a single half-step transports the music back to the tonic key. In other words, Brahms creates a context in which the #iii tonal region can be conceived as both very distant and very near.

In the closing measures of op. 10 no. 3, Brahms ironically problematizes the conceptual distance between the chromatic mediant keys of B minor and D# minor. This problem is directly relatable to the chromatic cross-relation of D $\flat$ /D#, or pitch-classes 2 and 3, and this tonal problem carries into the final ballade, op. 10 no. 4.

### 3.4: OP. 10 NO. 4

The final ballade of op. 10 is in B major, and is the topical antipode of the "Edward" ballade, op. 10 no. 1. Table 3.5 shows the formal outline of the fourth ballade, op. 10 no. 4.

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<sup>100</sup> Ting-Chu Heather Shih, "The Four Ballades, op. 10, of Johannes Brahms: A Song Cycle without Words," (DMA diss., Boston University, 2005): 75.

TABLE 3.5: Formal outline of op. 10 no. 4

	A	B	A'	B'
Measures	1-46	47-72	73-134	135-148
Tempo Indication	Andante con moto	Più lento	Tempo I	Più lento
Key Area	B major: I	iii-V	I	i

Unfortunately, Table 3.5 conceals as much about the music as it reveals. The fourth ballade is by far the most harmonically, topically, and formally complex of the op. 10 ballades. The ABA'B' form of the fourth ballade is unprecedented in the set and has no obvious historical model. The outline of the key areas in Table 3.5 is a gross approximation. Each section of the fourth ballade is characterized by modal mixture and extensive chromaticism, such that no one formal area can be said to express a single key area unambiguously, especially the B section. The upcoming analysis will provide a finer-grained view of the important harmonic details of the work, but the chromaticism is too extensive to engage every tonal event in the course of the analysis.

Compared to the tables showing the formal outlines of the previous ballades, Table 3.5 gives no indication of the outline of the topics of the work. This is partly because the fourth ballade does not observe a clean alignment of formal area and topic. The key elements of the *Mündigkeit* topic described in Chapter 2.4 are in play throughout the entirety of op. 10 no. 4, and so in another sense a topical designation for each section of the work would be redundant or at least somewhat uninformative.

The final ballade begins immediately where the third ballade left off. The melody of the main theme presents the chromatic cross-relation of pitch-classes 2 and 3 quite plainly. The conflict and alternation of these two pitch-classes, although important in op. 10 no. 3, is the

central harmonic conceit of the fourth ballade, and this has been noted previously.<sup>101</sup> Figure 3.31 shows the opening four measures.



FIGURE 3.31: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 4, 1-4.

The A section is structured as a very large sentence form, containing an initial idea, repetition, continuation and cadence. The A section, if given a contextual topical label, might be categorized as an aria topic or singing style since the melody is clearly distinguished from the accompaniment throughout. Parakilas identifies it similarly.<sup>102</sup> Measures 1-16 form the primary statement (called X in later parts of the analysis), projecting a tonal path from tonic to dominant with frequent modally-mixed coloring. This subsection is then repeated before moving on to the continuation in m. 17, shown in Figure 3.32.

This subsection, which we will call Y, is almost entirely diatonic. With the exception of the A#s that appear in m. 26, the material of subsection Y operates entirely within the 2-sharp diatonic collection. The theme begins in B minor in m. 17, passes by D major in m. 21, and ends on the dominant of B in m. 26. This entire passage can be seen as an elaboration of the initial D $\sharp$  of m. 1. Within op. 10 no. 4, D $\sharp$ , as the chromatically-lowered scale degree three, operates as the main centrifugal element and the source of the tonal instability of the ballade. After

<sup>101</sup> “The minor/major shifting becomes in effect the principal theme of the fourth ballade,” Shih, “The Four Ballades, op. 10 of Johannes Brahms,” 104.

<sup>102</sup> “The opening section ... could almost have been from a Mendelssohn ‘Song Without Words’” Parakilas, *Ballades without Words*, 145.

subsection Y, an abridged version of subsection X returns and ends with a perfect authentic cadence in B major in m. 46.



FIGURE 3.32: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 4, 17-26.

The B section is marked *Più lento*, and has the indication, “*Col intimissimo sentimento, ma senza troppo marcare la melodia*” (With innermost sentiment, but without overemphasizing the melody). The melody of this section is performed in the inner voices of the texture with 3-against-2 cross rhythms between the outer voices. James Parakilas senses that this unique texture is modeled on Schumann’s Romance in F-sharp major, op. 28 no. 2, which shares its 6-sharp key signature.<sup>103</sup> Although there is nothing vital to comment upon within the B section, Figure 3.33 shows the first few measures of the section as an incipit.

The reprise of the A section, however, bears directly on the formal complexity that I argue is a feature of musical modernity and the *Mündigkeit* topic. The reprise of the A section makes most sense when compared with the original presentation of subsections X and Y. Table 3.6 shows the layout of the subsections of the A Section compared to those of the A’ section.

<sup>103</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words*, 145.



FIGURE 3.33: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 4, 47-48.

TABLE 3.6: Formal outline of the A and A' sections of op. 10 no. 4.

A	X	Y	X
Measures	1-16	17-26	27-46

A'	X	Z	Y	Z
Measures	73-88	89-114	115-124	125-134

The reprise of subsection X is very similar to the original presentation, except that the notes originally presented as simultaneous eighth notes in the original figuration are broken apart into consecutive sixteenth notes and the descending figuration is now marked staccato (Figure 3.34). The end result of these minor changes is a topical shift. The vocalicity of the original song topic is attenuated by the new focus given to the instrumental accompaniment pattern. Instead we are left with a quasi-scherzando topic. When subsection X has finished, the listener is presented with new material instead of the expected Y subsection. We can call this subsection Z, and it is topically far removed from anything yet heard in the piece. The passage is chordal and

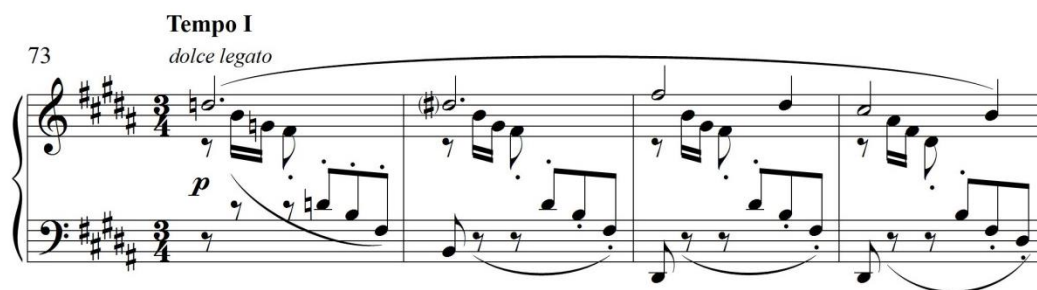


FIGURE 3.34: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 4, 73-6.



homophonic, alternating quarter notes on the downbeat and half notes for the rest of the measure. Perhaps this is the section that Joachim described as a “saraband.”<sup>104</sup> The Z section makes use of a wide number of chromatic juxtapositions. Of this section, James Parakilas says that “Whereas some earlier chordal passages in the Ballades sounded archaic, here the tone is more Mendelssohnian.”<sup>105</sup> This statement is in agreement with the view that op. 10 no. 4 engages the specifically modern sound world of the *Mündigkeit* topic.

The chordal “saraband” subsection Z lasts from mm. 89-114. In m. 115 we find the greatly altered reprise of subsection Y. This time through, the melody of subsection Y is harmonized in block chords whose rhythm matches the alternating quarter note and half note pulse of subsection Z. This is the most extensive topical transposition in the op. 10 set. Compare Figure 3.35 with Figure 3.32. After the altered return of the Y subsection, the Z material returns once more. This time, the saraband includes a prominent tonicization of D major. This is another example of the organic relationship of part to whole in Brahms’s music, and this moment of cadence in an otherwise meandering chromatic section can be seen as a manifestation of the tonal conflict between pitch-classes 2 and 3. The tonally destabilizing D♭ from the main theme in m. 1 has exerted its centrifugal energy as a rival to the tonic throughout the piece through the ubiquitous modal mixture, but here the “problem note” itself is tonicized (Figure 3.36).

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<sup>104</sup> Horne, “Brahms’s op. 10 Ballades,” 100.

<sup>105</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words*, 146.



FIGURE 3.35: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 4, 115-119.

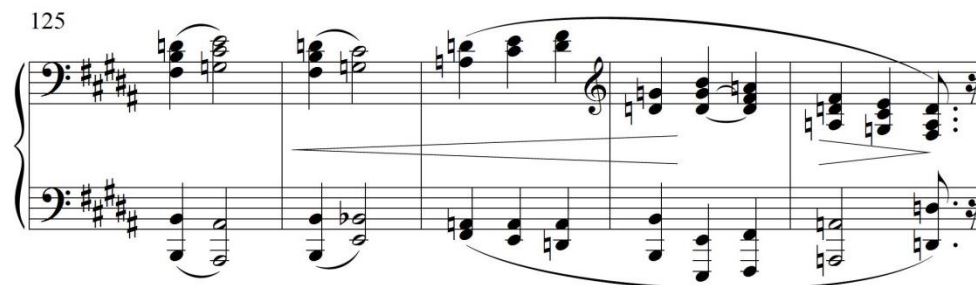


FIGURE 3.36: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 4, 125-129, tonicization of D major.

The bizarre reprise of the A section is the area of op. 10 no. 4 that most epitomizes the *Mündigkeit* topic. The reprise does not simply move through the preceding material, it takes it apart, modifies it, and comments on it. Looking on the reprise of the A section as a whole, we see that it is interrupted twice by the Z material. Whereas in the A section both X and Y subsections occupied the same singing style topic, the interruption serves the function of isolating the subsections to be topically modified separately. The shift from the recapitulated materials to the Z material is a shift of discursive level, and Brahms marks each shift with a double bar line as a way of conceptually segregating the discursive levels. The formal complexity of this section seems to invite the act of analysis even as it imitates that act itself.

The final section of the piece is a return of the texture of the B section, now with a key signature of B minor. The head motive of the main theme of the A section (Figure 3.31) is added in counterpoint above the theme of the B section in mm. 141-144. The piece ends with one last instance of Romantic irony (Figure 3.37).

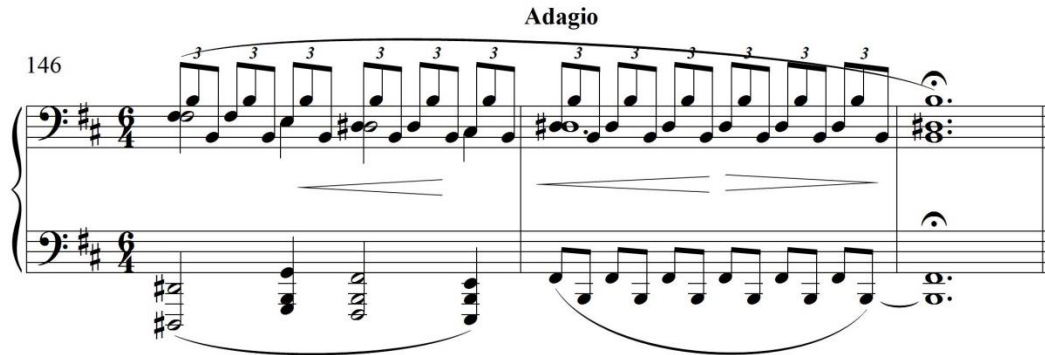


FIGURE 3.37: Brahms: Ballade op. 10 no. 4, 146-148, Picardy third cadence.

The final triad of the piece is a B major triad, however, its hegemony as the “natural” version of the chord built on B is significantly undermined. The piece closes with the key signature of the parallel minor key – B minor. If the final triad is viewed as a Picardy third, then one must say that the piece ends “in” B minor, since the Picardy third is a device that is conceptually dependent on the minor mode. Is the establishment of the B major triad at the end of the piece strong enough to consider the piece to have ended “in” that key? We are left with a self-annihilating irony – that the piece both ends in B minor and that it does not. The piece therefore ends with an ironic compromise between the chromatic cross-relation  $D\flat/D\sharp$  that served as its generating “idea,” or “gedanken,” since the first measure.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 4 is a discussion of the elements of the argument that could not be discussed until after a presentation of the background information in Chapters 1 and 2 and the analyses of the op. 10 ballades in Chapter 3. It will therefore rely heavily on reference to these earlier components while also presenting some new information and ideas. Chapter 4.1 is a summary of the topical plot of op. 10 that seeks to demonstrate the topical and generic coherence of the work. Chapter 4.2 is a discussion of the theoretical problems in viewing op. 10 as a coherent musical whole, as well as a discussion of the tonal problem that aids in a coherent understanding of the four ballades. Chapter 4.3 is a short summary of the main points of the thesis.

### 4.1 TOPICAL COHERENCE

Ting-Chu Heather Shih, in her Dissertation, “The Four Ballades, op. 10 of Johannes Brahms: A Song Cycle without Words,” titles her fifth chapter “Epilogue: A Story has been Told.”<sup>106</sup> One of the important lacunas in the literature on op. 10 is an answer to the question, “what is the story that has been told?” Whatever kind of story the ballades tell, it is not a literal program, except perhaps in the case of the first ballade. The apparent gap between the programmaticism of the first ballade and the increasing abstraction and instrumentalism of the other three is the primary stumbling block to answering this important question. I would argue that, rather than trying to detect some sort of coherent narrative that negotiates the restrictions of this problem, the problem itself should be taken as a primary feature of the narrative. The fact that the first ballade has a specific program and the others do not is compatible with at least one kind of narrative: one that traces a path specifically from programmaticism to instrumentalism.

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<sup>106</sup> Shih, “The Four Ballades, op. 10 of Johannes Brahms,” 128.

Indeed, op. 10 traces a path from epic narrative in the first ballade to modern instrumentalism in the fourth that forms a coherent and aestheticized plot. The op. 10 ballades can therefore be seen to tell a story in the opposite direction of Beethoven's Symphony no. 9, op. 125. Whereas the D minor symphony traces a path towards vocality, text, and program that seeks to transcend the limitations of the instrumental, the ballades begin in a state of texted narrative and progressively work towards the ineffability of Romantic instrumental music. This progression is mediated by the historical association of instrumentality with musical modernity and the epic narrative of the "Edward" ballad with the ancient past. The plot is therefore also historical.

The historical component of the plot carries with it the associations of Schiller's three stages of mankind, and the accompanying deteriorationist historiography discussed in Chapter 1.3. The op. 10 ballades trace a path from the ancient genres to the modern ones, and these genres and narrative stances are captured, musically, by a topical plot. The topical conflict between naïve and sentimental elements generates a great deal of the musical interest of op. 10. By naïve and sentimental, I mean the full system of naïve and sentimental dichotomies listed in Chapter 1.3 in Table 1.1, including the dichotomy of the ancient past and modernity. This is one form that the "generalized discourse" of topical plots, referred to by Kofi Agawu, can take.<sup>107</sup> Table 4.1 is a table of the primary topics of op. 10.

Op. 10 begins with a genuine musical representation of balladry by referencing the text of Thomas Percy's "Edward" ballad. Brahms uses the Edward story, about a medieval knight who kills his father at his mother's behest, as the source of a deteriorationist fall narrative. David Atkinson identifies the Edward ballad as an example of an incest ballad, and this Oedipus-like

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<sup>107</sup> Agawu, *Playing with Signs*, 33-34.

TABLE 4.1: An overview of the plot layout of the ballades.

Op. 10 no. 1	Ossianic	Chivalric	Ossianic		
Op. 10 no. 2	<i>Wiegenlied</i>	Chivalric	Scherzo	Chivalric	<i>Wiegenlied</i>
Op. 10 no. 3	Scherzo	Choral	Scherzo		
Op. 10 no. 4	<i>Mündigkeit</i>				

moral transgression marks the “fall from grace” associated with deteriorationist fall narratives.<sup>108</sup>

The dialogue depicted in the ballad takes place after the murder but before Edward’s self-imposed exile. The Ossianic manner of the first ballade is therefore not a depiction of naïveté per se, but of the trauma in the immediate aftermath of the fall event. The intertextual narrative of the op. 10 ballades therefore takes place, from beginning to end, within Schiller’s second stage of human development, albeit at opposite extremes within that stage.

Viewing the character of Edward as an exiled wanderer also has interesting implications for the coherence of the ballades. The figure of a wanderer is a Romantic archetype habitually explored as the subject of song cycles, such as Beethoven’s *An Die Ferne Geliebte*, Schubert’s *Winterreise*, Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* and *Eichendorff Liederkreis*, and Mahler’s *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*.<sup>109</sup> This is one way in which Brahms’s ballades can be seen to operate like a song cycle – an intuitive conclusion made quite often by analysts of op. 10.<sup>110</sup> Inge van Riij points out that many of Brahms’s song collections feature a plot that moves from sorrow to comfort, and this is another way in which op. 10 mirrors the construction of a song cycle. Edward’s exile is a traumatic starting point, and the curative perspective of maturity, or *Mündigkeit*, is only reached at the end of the cycle. Of course, the character of Edward is not

<sup>108</sup> David Atkinson, *The English Traditional Ballad: Theory, Method, and Practice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 136.

<sup>109</sup> Barbara Turchin, “The Nineteenth-Century *Wanderlieder* Cycle,” *Journal of Musicology* 5 no. 4 (Autumn, 1987): 498-525.

<sup>110</sup> For example, the subtitle of Ting-Chu Heather Shih’s Dissertation – “A Song Cycle Without Words.”

specifically evoked in the ballades after op. 10 no. 1, since they do not contain similarly explicit programs. However the Edward persona does extend through the opus in the sense that his trauma and recuperation are allegorized and abstracted by the intertextual commentary provided by the work's topical plot, even within the purely instrumental ballades. The plot of the Romantic *Wanderlieder* is a suitable metaphor for the modern condition of humanity within the second stage of Schiller's three stages of mankind, and it is this condition that is explored in the remaining ballades of op. 10.

The primary topic of the second ballade is the *Wiegenlied*, or cradle song. By placing this topic directly after the close of the "Edward" ballade, Brahms provides an intertextual commentary. The cradle-song is a positive expression of nostalgia for the mother, a far cry from the relationship expressed between Edward and his mother in the first ballade. In distinction to the power of the feminine temptress who precipitates the fall event (not unlike Eve from the Genesis story, or Pandora from Greek myth), op. 10 no. 2 begins with a depiction of a positive relationship between mother and child. Although the musical persona of the second ballade need not be taken as Edward, there is continuity between the disastrous end to his relationship with the mother figure of op. 10 no. 1 and the nostalgic longing for a restoration of an innocent relationship with the mother figure of op. 10 no. 2.

Recall from Chapter 1.2 that Goethe, in his essay, "Ballade: Definition and Reflection" (1823), advocates for the mixture of the three poetic genres – epic, dramatic, and lyrical – as a defining feature of the modern ballad. Whereas poets of the past were capable of naively engaging the epic tone in their ballads, the modern poet, in Goethe's view, is not so privileged. The narrator of a modern ballad, if he aspires to be Romantic, must mix the poetic genres and approach the audience in a number of different ways. Brahms places these shifts of narrative

style at the junctions between musical topics. The Ossianic manner, as the point of departure for the rest of the work, is an example of epic narrative, in which the musical persona adopts the perspective of an impartial narrator who recites events dispassionately. This is the narrative mode most associated with “story-telling.” The emergence of the chivalric style in the middle sections of both op. 10 no. 1 and op. 10 no. 2 are used as opportunities for dramatic action, in which the musical persona actively depicts the struggle and conflict of the framing narrative as if it is happening in real-time.

The scherzo topic is treated in two different ways within op. 10. In both cases, however, it is used as an opportunity for Romantic irony. The emergence of the C section scherzo of op. 10 no. 2 is itself ironic, and the analysis of op. 10 no. 3 in Chapter 3.3 demonstrated a number of musical ironies and self-contradictions. An ironic tone is necessarily sentimental, according to Schiller’s formulation, and both instances of the scherzo topic serve to further the plot of deteriorationism by problematizing the discursive frame of the music. The scherzo, in other words, is a musical topic representing skepticism and self-awareness. Schiller describes two different categories of satire:

[the satirist] may place earnestness and passion, or jests and levity, according as he may take pleasure in the domain of the will or in that of the understanding. In the former case it is avenging and pathetic satire; in the second case it is sportive, humourous, and mirthful satire.<sup>111</sup>

The first example of the scherzo topic, in the C section of op. 10 no. 2, is an example of humorous satire. The unexpected shift to the major mode at the elision of the cadence of the B section subverts the heroic, serious tone of the chivalric style. The flicked grace notes in octaves, ninths, and tenths below the melody can also be heard as a mimesis of laughter. The

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<sup>111</sup> Schiller, “On Simple and Sentimental Poetry” 157.



scherzo topic in op. 10 no. 3, however, is, in Schiller's words, the avenging kind of satire. It is the kind of scherzo that Ryan McClelland describes as having a "fiery, turbulent character."<sup>112</sup> If op. 10 represents the deteriorationist allegory of human history, then the scherzo sections of op. 10 no. 3 represent the nadir of deterioration, pessimism, and separation from nature.

The *Mündigkeit* topic of the fourth ballade is a symbol of musical Romanticism and modernity. Of the poetic genres of Goethe, the fourth ballade represents lyricism. Amazingly, nowhere in the 148 measures (and the 8-10 minutes of a typical performance) of op. 10 no. 4 does the dynamic ever rise above piano (with the exception of hairpin crescendos and a few sforzandos). The fourth ballade does not operate in the world of plot events and dramatic action, the home of the chivalric style of op. 10 no. 1 and no. 2. Nor is it part of an epic narration, as are the Ossianic sections of op. 10 no. 1. The fourth ballade occupies an interior space for reflection, commentary, and lyric contemplation.

The fourth ballade also represents the fully mature modern condition according to Schiller's conception, in comparison to the earlier ballades. Unlike the third ballade, that interprets its modernity in a pessimistic way, the fourth ballade represents nostalgia for the ancient past while embodying the positive aspects of Goethe's formulation of *Mündigkeit*. In Schiller's generic model, the fourth ballade is a sentimental elegy. The affect of nostalgia in this piece has a concrete analog within the work; the D $\flat$  "problem note" serves as a recollection of the D tonal regions earlier in the op. 10 set. From this perspective, the destabilizing centrifugal force of D $\flat$  that brings about the severe modal mixture and tonicizations of D major can be seen as a literally nostalgic force. The opposition of D $\flat$  and D $\sharp$  has afflicted the entirety of op. 10,

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<sup>112</sup> McClelland, *Brahms and the Scherzo*, 27.

but in op. 10 no. 4 (in fact within the opening theme), D $\flat$  yields to D $\sharp$ . This is the same moment when past yields to present, and when the mythical events of the Edward ballad are connected and grounded in the nineteenth-century concert hall. Within Schoenberg's theory, the "idea," or "Gedanken," of op. 10 no. 4 is musical sentimentality and nostalgia.

The four ballades can be seen to cohere as an organic whole with respect to this dynamic topical plot. David Ferris, in his book, *Schumann's Eichendorff Liederkreis and the Genre of the Romantic Cycle*, distinguishes between formal and dynamic organicism within Romantic cycles.<sup>113</sup> Although he is writing on the topic of song cycles, the distinction is still a useful one for op. 10. Formal organicism involves the unique relationship of part to whole that is commonly associated with the aesthetics of organicism. The integration and interdependence of all the parts of a work establishes a delicate perfection, since an alteration to even a single detail will mar the overall organic scheme. Dynamic organicism, on the other hand, emphasizes change, imperfection, and process, and the relationship of part to whole within this framework is more robust and accommodating for imperfection. The generic and topical coherence of op. 10 is best viewed through this latter, dynamic, view of organicism.

## 4.2 TONAL COHERENCE

Chapter 4.2 is concerned with the tonal relationships of op. 10 as a whole. Until now, the discussion has implicitly treated op. 10 as a unified work, expressing a single coherent musical gesture. Chapter 4.1 has argued for the topical and generic coherence of the set, and the analyses of Chapter 3 have developed a sense of the local tonal relationships within each ballade, but it remains for this section to tie these elements together and to demonstrate the tonal coherence of

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<sup>113</sup> David Ferris, *Schumann's Eichendorff Liederkreis and the Genre of the Romantic Cycle*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 61.

the work. The discussion will begin with the difficulties in establishing a monotonal framework for the opus, and will end with a Schoenbergian tonal problem analysis that connects the four ballades.

The tonal distance between the opening and closing key areas of op. 10 is quite interesting, and it is the first and most apparent challenge to the claim that op. 10 is a tonally coherent work. Op. 10 is an example of non-concentric tonality, or more simply a work that does not end in the same key area as it began. Other terms for this same phenomenon are “progressive tonality,” “directional tonality,” and “poly-focal tonality.”<sup>114</sup> Many approaches have been developed to make sense of non-concentric tonality and to preserve the hegemony of the tonic in tonally non-concentric pieces, especially in the music of Frédéric Chopin, Gustav Mahler, and Hugo Wolf.<sup>115</sup> Heinrich Schenker, in his graphic analyses, tends to privilege the final key area as the tonic, and many Schenkerian scholars since have also preferred to explain off-tonic beginnings rather than off-tonic endings. The analysis that follows takes B major as the putative “tonic” of the op. 10 ballades.<sup>116</sup> Figure 4.1 shows a plausible reading of the op. 10 ballades according to a Schenkerian view of monotonicity.

Figure 4.1 is a decidedly non-Schenkerian attempt to represent tonal relationships between movements. Of course, Schenker himself never attempted to graph tonal relationships that extend beyond a single movement. Nevertheless, Figure 4.1 captures something about the

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<sup>114</sup> I prefer the term non-concentric because it does not privilege either the beginning or ending key area as tonic, as do the terms “progressive tonality” and “directional tonality.”

<sup>115</sup> For more on this phenomenon, see Harold Krebs, “Alternatives to Monotonicity in Early 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music,” *Journal of Music Theory* 25 no. 1 (Spring, 1981): 1-18; and “Tonal and Formal Dualisms in Chopin’s Scherzo op. 31,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 13 no. 1 (Spring, 1991): 48-60.

<sup>116</sup> I say this aware of the fact that B major may not be experienced as a traditional kind of tonic. The op. 10 ballades need not be performed together as a set, and if they are the performer is not necessarily required to perform them in sequential order (although this analysis certainly advocates that this be the case).

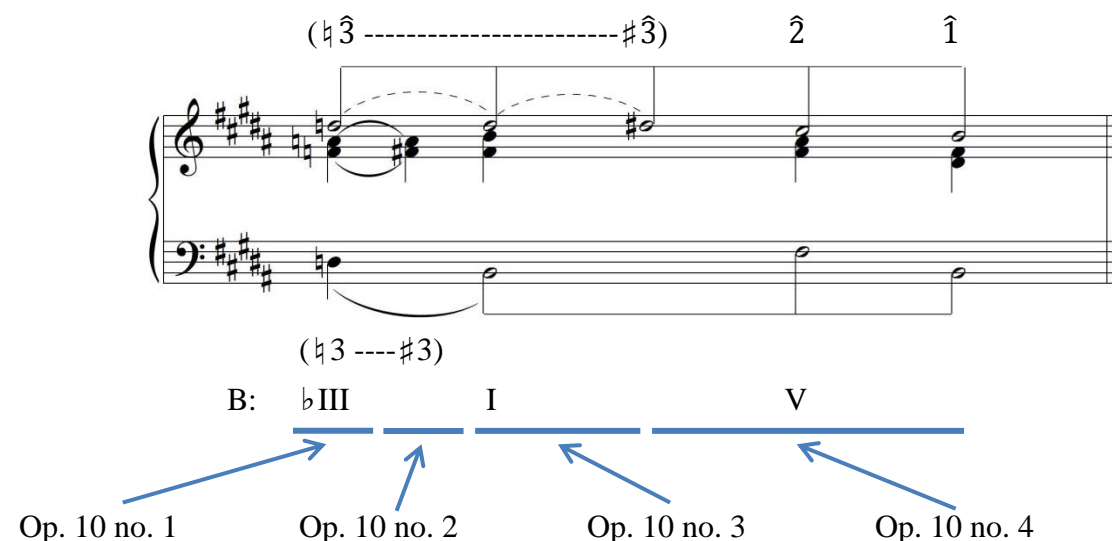


FIGURE 4.1: A Schenkerian monotonal reduction of the op. 10 ballades.

tonality of the work that would otherwise not be apparent. The first three ballades can be seen as consonant support for a modally mixed *kopfton* that does not reach its natural form until the opening theme of op. 10 no. 4 (seen in Figure 3.31). The conflict between  $D\flat$  and  $D\sharp$  is, of course, the primary tonal conceit of that ballade, and it is a conflict that is foreshadowed much earlier in the work in various places, to be discussed more in relation to the tonal problem at the end of this section. The modal mixture of  $D\flat$  to  $D\sharp$  in the *kopfton* forms a parallelism with the motion from  $F\flat$  to  $F\sharp$  between the first and second ballades. The majority of the fundamental structure is contained in the final ballade.

Arnold Schoenberg's theory of tonal music also requires a foundational monotonicity, wherein only one tonic is the ultimate center of gravity for other tonal regions. The first key area encountered in op. 10 is d minor, and the final key area is B major. There are multiple ways of considering the tonal "path" traversed by op. 10 from d minor to B major, and Figure 4.2 shows the first way of viewing this distance – on the circle of fifths.

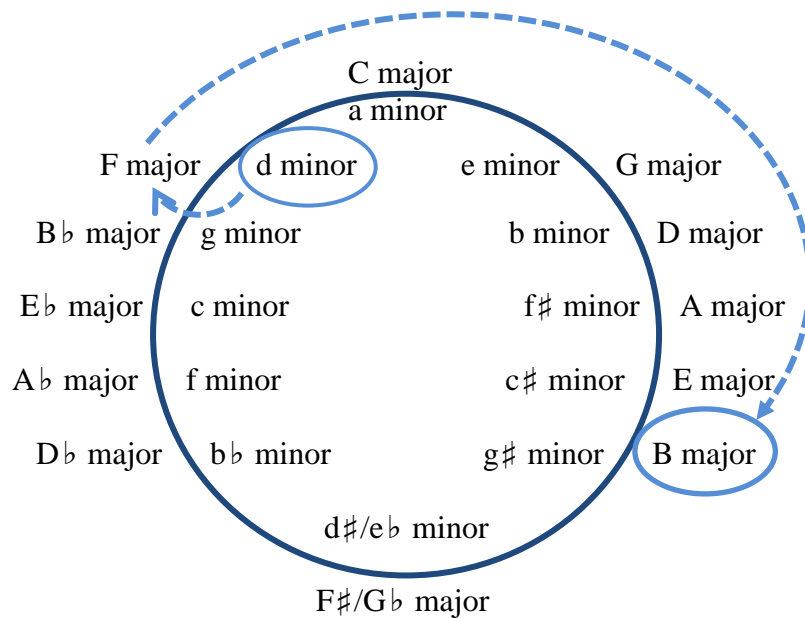


Figure 4.2: The circle of fifths, with the distance between the key of d minor and B major highlighted.

When the tonal space of op. 10 is conceived on the circle of fifths, it can be seen from Figure 4.2 that the keys of d minor and B major occupy the furthest possible tonal distance from one another. Starting with the key of d minor, one must first transfer to the relative major key of F major (i.e., from the inner ring of minor keys to the outer ring of major keys). Then one must move either six keys up or down the circle of fifths to the tritone pole of F; B major. The direction does not matter because the distance is the same in both directions, and the large arrow in Figure 4.2 could just as easily have been drawn counterclockwise. These two keys are separated by seven total steps, and there is no relationship between two keys on the circle of fifths that covers more or as many steps (assuming enharmonic equivalence).

Another way of conceiving of this tonal space is on the neo-Riemannian Tonnetz (Figure 4.3). Compared to the circle of fifths, the conceptual distance between the tonic triads of the two keys in this case is significantly shorter and simpler. Each node in Figure 4.3 represents a pitch-class, arranged in fifths horizontally, major thirds along the northwest to southeast diagonal, and

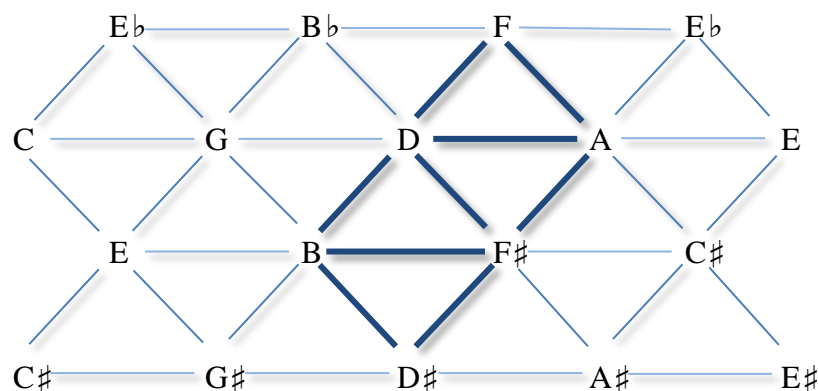


Figure 4.3: A section of the Tonnetz, showing the proximity of d minor and B major triads.

minor thirds along the northeast to southwest diagonal. The plane continues infinitely in all directions beyond the segment shown, although when enharmonic equivalence is assumed, the Tonnetz wraps upon itself in both dimensions, and can be imagined as a torus. Each triangle represents a major or a minor triad whose chord members are the pitch-classes of the nodes that form the triangle. In Figure 4.2, the lines that bound the d minor, D major, b minor, and B major triads are highlighted in bold. These are the four tonic triads of the ballades of op. 10, and as can be seen, they lie adjacent to one another on the Tonnetz. The particular path through the Tonnetz taken from the beginning of op. 10 to the end involves a chain of P and R transformations, as discussed earlier in Chapter 1.4 and seen in the analyses of Chapter 3 (Figure 4.4).

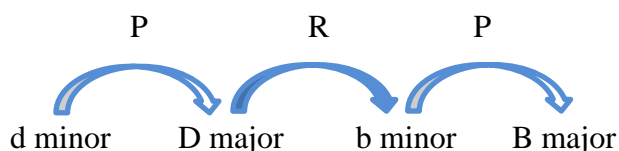


Figure 4.4: A short chain of P and R transformations linking d minor and B major triads.

Figure 4.4 shows the chain of P and R transformations that link d minor and B major triads on the Tonnetz. This path requires only three conceptual steps, compared to the seven involved in the circle of fifths, and is a simpler relationship between the two tonic triads. This path is also the one used by Brahms in op. 10. Each time d minor is connected to B major, it is mediated by the keys of D major and b minor. This is most obvious at the largest scale, since the

tonic triads of the four pieces are d minor, D major, b minor, and B major, respectively, each representing one step in the conceptual chain shown in Figure 4.4. This P-R transformation chain could continue and eventually return to its starting position at D minor. Figure 4.5 shows the tonal regions of op. 10 (conceptually reduced to their tonic triads) as they fit in the P-R transformation cycle.

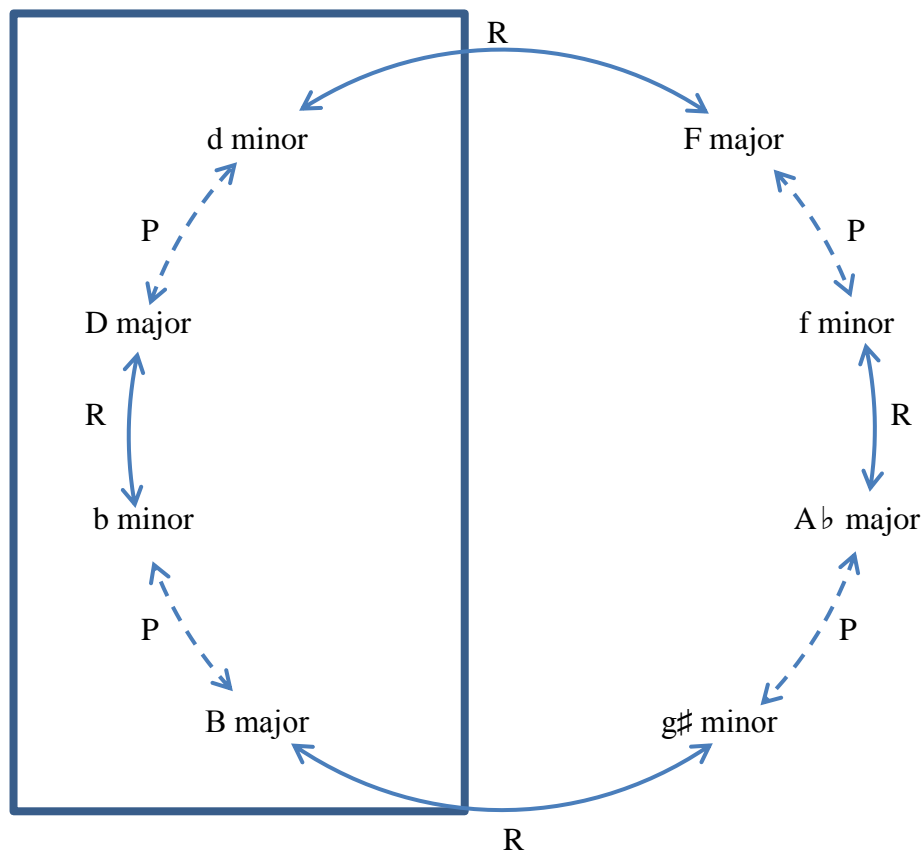


FIGURE 4.5: The P-R Transformation Cycle. The triads within the box are the important triads of op. 10.

A final way of viewing the relationship between d minor and B major is given by David Kopp. The emphasis of this view is not on the path taken from one key to another but on the static relation of the tonic triads. Kopp gives three categories of third-related chords, whose groupings are based on the number of common tones shared between triads. Figure 4.6 shows Kopp's disjunct mediant relationship.



FIGURE 4.6: The disjunct mediant relationship associated with a major tonic.<sup>117</sup>

The disjunct mediant relationship is defined as two third-related chords that do not share any common tones. There are only two such relationships for any given major triad. The first, shown between a  $\flat$  minor and C major triads in Figure 4.6, is the often-discussed hexatonic pole.<sup>118</sup> Richard Cohn describes the hexatonic pole as an emblem of the uncanny, since a consonant reading of one triad obligates the chromatic reading of the other.<sup>119</sup> In other words, the two triads mutually exclude one another's potential as an unambiguous consonant triad. This has fascinating implications for late 19<sup>th</sup>-century composers and their application of the hexatonic polar relationship for tonal signification. The second kind of disjunct mediant is the one that concerns op. 10. Unfortunately, this relationship does not have a name of its own, but it will be referred to in this thesis simply as a disjunct mediant, with the understanding that if a hexatonic pole needs to be addressed, it will be referred to by its more common name. Figure 4.7 shows the disjunct mediant relationship between d minor and B major triads.



FIGURE 4.7: The disjunct mediant relationship between d minor and B major triads.

Like the hexatonic pole, the triads of the disjunct mediant shown in Figure 4.7 share no common tones. Also, the two triads are modally paired – one is major, the other minor – and the relationship has a similar potential for tonal signification. As has been mentioned earlier, the

<sup>117</sup> David Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Music*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>118</sup> Richard Cohn, "Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions," *Music Analysis* 15 no. 1, (March 1996), 9-40.

<sup>119</sup> Richard Cohn, "Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57 no. 2, (Summer 2002): 285-324.



chromatic distance between these two triads can be conceived as both very far, when viewed from the traditional circle of fifths (see Figure 4.2), and very near, when viewed from a transformational perspective (see Figure 4.3). Within op. 10, Brahms uses this tonal relationship to signify the conceptual distance between the ancient past and modernity.

The tonality of op. 10 is most coherent when viewed from the perspective of Arnold Schoenberg's theory of tonal music. Indeed, the tonal gesture of op. 10 can be seen to be generated by a single tonal problem that also gives shape to the content of each of the four ballades individually. The problem has been mentioned several times already as a chromatic cross-relation between  $D\flat$  and  $D\sharp$ .<sup>120</sup> For the rest of this analysis, the opposition will be designated as between pitch-classes 2 and 3 since, as we will see, the problem is also enharmonic. This problem plays out at the largest scale as a modal inflection of the *kopfton*, as seen in Figure 4.1. Figure 4.8 shows a number of more local instabilities generated by the chromatic cross-relation.

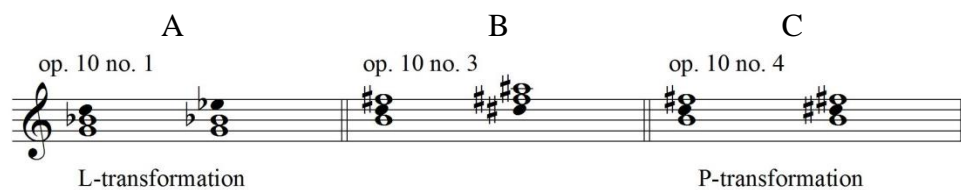


FIGURE 4.8: A number of instances of the problematized pitch-classes 2 and 3.

Figure 4.8A is the L-transformation from op. 10 no. 1 that introduces the first chromatic pitch of the work:  $E\flat$  (pc 3). This L-transformation is also shown in Figure 3.5. Recall from Chapter 3.1 that pc 3 is the strongest opposition to the D minor tonic (pc 2) within the work. This centrifugal opposition manifests itself in a number of ways. First, pc 3 forms the third of a

<sup>120</sup> Recall that Patricia Carpenter identifies the cross-relation specifically as a source of tonal instability.

B major triad in m. 37 (seen in Figure 3.7) that is the dramatic highpoint in the ballade and is the furthest tonal region from the tonic. Second, pc 3 is prominently tonicized in mm. 49-54 as the chromatic  $\flat$ II tonal region, at a moment in the form where it is far more likely to find a tonicization of the dominant.

Figure 4.8B shows the tonic triad of the A section of op. 10 no. 3, B minor, and the tonic triad of the B section, D $\sharp$  minor. The tonicization of D $\sharp$  within this piece is a clear destabilization of the B minor tonic, since the tonal region of D $\sharp$  is built on a chromatically-altered scale degree –  $\sharp$ iii – and again the destabilization arises due to the opposition of pc 2 (the natural version of  $\hat{3}$ ) and pc 3. Finally, Figure 4.8C shows the modal mixture of the last ballade, op. 10 no. 4. The problematic nature of the cross-relation between pc 2 and pc 3 has already been discussed at length in Chapter 3.4. The tonal problem in op. 10 no. 4 is a problematization of the P-transformation, and the ironic Picardy third ending. It is important to point out that this same relationship is used as the source of tonal instability in op. 10 no. 2 where, as shown in Figure 3.14, Brahms foreshadows the tonal trajectory of the rest of the ballade and the rest of the opus.

The tonal problem of the op. 10 ballades can be diagrammed using the S-space and the concept of the chromatic pivot interval discussed in Chapter 1.4. Figure 4.9 shows the tonal problem of op. 10 as a series of intervals between ordered pairs in Rings’s S-space. The left-most box in Figure 4.9 shows the problematic relationship between pc 2 and 3 within op. 10 no. 1, the “Edward” ballade. Pc 3 is experienced as the chromatic  $\flat$ II scale degree, whose natural voice-leading tendencies are downwards to the consonant scale degree 1, pc 2. As was mentioned in

the analysis of this piece, the  $\flat$ II scale degree, as the characteristic scale degree of the Phrygian mode, can be taken to represent musical antiquity.

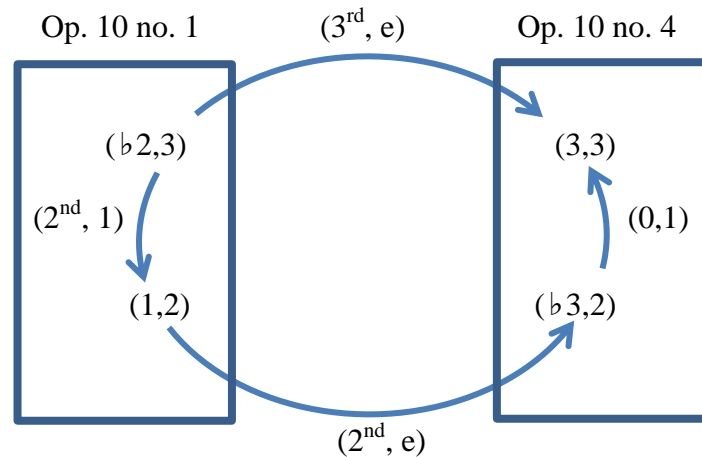


FIGURE 4.9: The (sd,pc) ordered-pair representation of the evolution of the tonal problem over the course of op. 10.

In op.10 no. 4, the consonant/dissonant relationship between pitch-classes 2 and 3 is reversed. Pc 2 is a chromatic scale degree  $\flat$ III that is ambiguously resolved upwards to the natural form of scale degree 3, pc 3. In this case, the opposition also reflects the ballade's position at the end of the topical plot, since the cross-relation it embodies is a feature of the chromatic musical practice of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

The op. 10 ballades are an underperformed and underappreciated part of Brahms's compositional output. Part of the reason for this neglect is the estimation in the scholarly literature that the ballades are relative juvenilia, and that they do not represent a coherent genre and therefore a serious body of music. As James Parakilas writes, "Brahms may have been using the title that properly belonged to the first piece as a solution to the problem of what to call the

whole set, even at the price of mislabeling the others to a greater or lesser extent.”<sup>121</sup> This would only be true if Brahms’s conception of the ballade genre was limited to epic narrative, which indeed only the first ballade demonstrates through its programmatic association with the “Edward” ballad. However, as argued in Chapter 1.2 and 4.1, Brahms’s conception of the genre likely included generic mixture and the necessity of a larger narrative frame that includes and incorporates the Romantic lyricism found in the third and fourth ballades. Parakilas goes on to write:

They [the pieces of op. 10] do not all have the same relationship to the title “Ballade,” and there would be no point in comparing them to a ballad cycle that tells different episodes of a single story or single life... The common title “Ballade” makes sense, then, as a description not so much of the nature of each piece, as of the relationships among them: it suggests that they belong together, and should be performed together, like a purposefully constructed set of songs.”<sup>122</sup>

Most of this document can be seen as a fleshing out of this statement by Parakilas.

Although the pieces of op. 10 do not share the same relationship to the title “ballade,” they do each have a unique role to play in establishing the topical plot that grounds the Romantic *Kunst-Ballade*. It is this expanded view of the role of the ballade in 19<sup>th</sup> century aesthetics that allows the inner coherence of op. 10 to become apparent. Brahms arranges the four pieces as a “ballade” set because together they serve the function of modern balladry. They recite an ancient ballad and then proceed to establish the narrator’s distance from the subject, according to Schlegel’s “romantic imperative” of generic fusion, which was brought into explicit contact with the ballade genre by Goethe in his essay, “Ballade: Definition and Reflection” (1823).

The op. 10 ballades also reveal a fascinating design when approached from the tonal theories of Arnold Schoenberg. Beyond the apparent artifice of their symmetrical tonal

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<sup>121</sup> Parakilas, *Ballades without Words*, 136.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

arrangement, Schoenberg's tonal problem approach reveals a deeper organic relationship between the tonal plan and content of the four ballades. The progression from D minor to B major over the course of the opus unfolds alongside a tonal problem that generates nearly every tonal digression and even the tonal profile of many of the themes. In this way Brahms justifies the unconventional tonal design of op. 10 with the aesthetic metaphors of organic growth and development.

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## APPENDIX

The appendix contains three versions of the text of the Edward ballad. The first, presented in the left-most column, is that found in Francis James Child's collection of folk ballads, the middle column shows the modern English equivalent, and the right-most column shows the translation into German by Johann Gottfried von Herder. In addition to its association with the first ballade, Brahms later used Herder's translation as the text of his 1877 duet setting, op. 75 no. 1.

Edward (Child 13b)	Modern English	German
<p>“Why dois your brand sae drap wi’ bluid, Edward, Edward, Why dois your brand sae drap wi’ bluid, And why sae sad gang yee O?”</p> <p>“O I hae killed my hauke sae guid, Mither, mither, O I hae killed my hauke guid, And I had nae mair bot hee O.”</p> <p>“Your haukis bluid was nevir sae red, Edward, Edward, Your haukis bluid was never sae red, My dier son I tell thee O.”</p> <p>“O I hae killed my red-roan steid, Mither, mither, O I hae killed my red-roan steid, That earst was sae fair and frie O.”</p> <p>“Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair, Edward, Edward, Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair, Sum other dule ye drie O.”</p> <p>“O I hae killed my fadir deir, Mither, mither, O I hae killed my fadir deir, Alas, and wae is mee O!”</p> <p>“And whatten penance wul ye drie, for that, Edward, Edward, And whatten penance wul ye drie, for that, My deir son, now tell me O.”</p> <p>“Ile set my feit in yonder boat, Mither, mither, Ile set my feit in yonder boat And ile fare over the sea O.”</p> <p>“And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your</p>	<p>“Why does your sword so drip with blood, Edward, Edward, Why does your sword so drip with blood, And why so sad go you, O?”</p> <p>“O I have killed my hawk so good, Mother, mother, O I have killed my hawk so good, I had no more but he, O.”</p> <p>“Your hawk’s blood was never so red, Edward, Edward, Your hawk’s blood was never so red, My dear son I tell thee, O.”</p> <p>“O I have killed my red-roan steed, Mother, mother, O I have killed my red-roan steed, That before was so fair and free, O.”</p> <p>“Your steed was old, and you have got more, Edward, Edward, Your steed was old, and you have got more, Some other sorrow you bear O.”</p> <p>“O I have killed my father dear, Mother, mother, O I have killed my father dear, Alas, and woe is me, O!”</p> <p>“And what penance will you bear, for that, Edward, Edward, And what penance will you bear, for that, My dear son, now tell me O.”</p> <p>“I’ll set my feet in yonder boat, Mother, mother, I’ll set my feet in yonder boat, And I’ll fare over the sea, O.”</p> <p>“And what will you do with your towers and ,</p>	<p>“Dein Schwert, wie ists von Blut so rot, Edward, Edward! Dein Schwert, wie ists von Blut so rot, Und gehst so traurig her? O!”</p> <p>“O, ich haben geschlagen meinen Geier tot, Mutter, Mutter! O, ich haben geschlagen meinen Geier tot, Und keinen hab ich wie er. O!”</p> <p>“Dein’s Geiers Blut ist nicht so rot, Edward, Edward! Dein’s Geiers Blut ist nicht so rot, Mein Sohn, bekkenen mir frei! O!”</p> <p>“O! Ich hab’ geschlegen mein Rotross tot, Mutter, Mutter! Ich hab’ geschlagen mein Rotross tot, Und’s war so stoltz und treu, O!”</p> <p>Dein ross war alt, und hast’s nicht not, Edward, Edward! Dein ross war alt, und hast’s nicht not, dich drucht ein anders Schmerz, O!”</p> <p>“O ich hab’ geschlagen meinen Vater tot, Mutter, Mutter! O ich hab’ geschlagen meinen Vater tot, Und weh, weh ist mein Herz! O!”</p> <p>“Und was für Busse willst du nun tun? Edward, Edward! Und was fur Busse willst du nun tun? Mein Sohn, bekkenn mir mehr! O!”</p> <p>“Auf Erden soll mein Fuss nicht ruhn, Mutter, Mutter! Auf Erden soll mein fuss nicht ruhn, will gehn tern übers Meer. O!”</p> <p>“Und was soll warden dein Hof und Hall,</p>

<p> ha,  Edward, Edward,  And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your  ha,  that were sae fair to see O?"  Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,  Mither, mither,  Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,  For here nevir mair maun I bee O."  "And what wul ye leive to your baims and  your wife,  Edward, Edward,  And what wul ye leive to your baims and your  wife,  Whan ye gang over the sea O?"  "The Wardis room, late them beg thrae life,  Mither, Mither,  The wardis room, late them beg thrae life,  For thame nevir mair wul I see O."  "And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir,  Edward, Edward,  And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir,  My deir son, now tell me O?"  "The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,  Mither, mither,  The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,  Sic counseils ye gave to me O." </p>	<p> your hall,  Edward, Edward,  and what will you do with your towers and  your hall,  that were so fair to see, O?"  "I'll let them stand 'til they fall down,  Mother, Mother,  I'll let them stand 'til they fall down,  for here nevermore must I be, O."  "And what will you leave to your children and  your wife,  Edward, Edward,  And what will you leave to your children and  your wife,  when you go over the sea, O?"  "The world is large, let them beg through life,  Mother, Mother,  the world is large, let them beg through life,  for them nevermore will I see, O."  "And what will you leave to your own mother  dear,  Edward, Edward,  And what will you leave to your own mother  dear,  My dear son, now tell me, O?"  The curse of hell from me shall you bear,  Mother, Mother,  The curse of hell from me shall you bear,  such counsels you gave to me, O." </p>	<p> Edward, Edward?  "Ich lass es stehn, bis es sink und fall',  Mutter, Mutter!  Ich lass es sthen, bis es sink und fall',  mag nie es wiedersehn. O!"  "Und was soll warden dein Weib und Kind?  Edward, Edward!  Und was soll weden dein Weib und Kind,  wann du gehst über Meer? O!"  "Die Welt ist gross, lass sie betteln drin,  Mutter! Mutter!  Die Welt ist gross, lass sie betteln drin,  ich seh' sie nimmermehr! O!"  "Und was willst du lassen deiner Mutter teuer?  Edward, Edward!  Und was willst du lassen deiner Mutter teuer?  Mein sohn, das sage mir! O!"  Fluch will ich euch lassen und höllisch Feu'r  Mutter, Mutter!  Fluch will ich euch lassen und höllisch Feu'r,  Denn Ihr, Ihr rietet's mir – O! </p>
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## VITA

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