January 2006

Metric Displacement Dissonance and Romantic Longing in the German Lied

Yonatan Malin

Wesleyan University, yonatan.malin@colorado.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://wesscholar.wesleyan.edu/div1facpubs

Part of the Music Commons

Recommended Citation

Malin, Yonatan, "Metric Displacement Dissonance and Romantic Longing in the German Lied" (2006). Division I Faculty Publications. Paper 111.
http://wesscholar.wesleyan.edu/div1facpubs/111

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Arts and Humanities at WesScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Division I Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of WesScholar. For more information, please contact dschnaidt@wesleyan.edu, ljohnson@wesleyan.edu.
The topic of metric dissonance has received a good deal of attention in recent years. Theorists have developed typologies and generalised descriptions of metric conflicts, and applied this analytically to the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and Schoenberg. There has been relatively little work, however, on the hermeneutics of metric dissonance; that is, on the meanings which emerge when metric conflicts are combined with other musical parameters and with texts. This article seeks to examine the hermeneutics of metric dissonance by exploring an association between ‘displacement’ or ‘syncopation-type’ dissonance and Romantic longing (Sehnsucht). In particular, it aims to show how displacement dissonance and Sehnsucht evolved together over the course of the ‘long nineteenth century’. Essentially, the four analyses presented here outline a pattern of introduction (in Schubert), intensification (in Schumann), complication (in Brahms) and refraction (in Schoenberg).

A convenient starting-point is Victor Zuckerkandl’s account of metre. For Zuckerkandl, metre is a cyclic process involving motion alternately ‘away from’ and ‘back to’ points of initiation:

A piece of music is played; there is no accentuation. We count with the tones one-two-one- . . . . Why did we say ‘one’ here instead of ‘three’? What peculiarity in our perception of the third beat makes us count thus and not otherwise? If the new beat did nothing but bring us a further fraction forward in time, the phenomenon would be incomprehensible. If we involuntarily and unconsciously count ‘one’ to beat number 3, this expresses the fact that it is not so much further as back that this beat carries us – and back to the starting point. To be able to come back, one must first have gone away; now we also understand why we count one–two, and not one–one. Here ‘two’ does not mean simply ‘beat number 2,’ but also ‘away from.’ The entire process is therefore an ‘away from-back to’.

Zuckerkandl’s claim might well invite the question as to what happens to this process of ‘away from–back to’ when syncopations are superposed onto the primary metre. In the terms of his analysis, a displaced or syncopated pulse denies the motion ‘back to’; it generates continued outward movement. This denial may extend for one phase so as to resolve with the next beat, as in $\frac{4}{4}$ $\underline{\text{N}}$ $\underline{\text{N}}$. Alternatively, it may extend for several phases, resolving with a higher-level beat as in $\frac{4}{4}$ $\underline{\underline{\text{N}}}$. Or it may extend indefinitely as in $\frac{4}{4}$ $\underline{\underline{\underline{\text{N}}}}$. . . . Furthermore, the movement ‘away from’, projected by the displaced pulse, may also start from...
a point of metric stability, as in the above examples. Or it may start as though already in motion as in \( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \) . . . . It may also, of course, occur in a variety of metres and at a variety of metric levels.

Zuckerkandl’s ideas suggest a link between metric displacement dissonances and *Sehnsucht*, since the outward movement of displacement dissonances is analogous to the outward movement of longing. Metric displacement dissonances may symbolise *Sehnsucht* if they are used in conjunction with a text that expresses or depicts longing, and with melodic, harmonic, textural or dynamic expansion. The first song from Schumann’s *Dichterliebe*, ‘Im wunderschönen Monat Mai’, affords a classic example. At the end of both strophes, the piano articulates the melodic notes on the fourth semiquaver of each crochet beat, sustaining them into the following beats as the poet sings ‘da ist in meinem Herzen die Liebe aufgegangen’ (‘then within my heart love broke forth’), and ‘Da hab’ ich ihr gestanden mein Sehnen und Verlangen’ (‘then I confessed to her my longing and desire’). The piano’s syncopations confound the primary metre, pushing the melodic line upward as the poet gives voice to his longing.

Displacement dissonances may create a sense of separation, or distance, as well as motion into the distance. In Schubert’s ‘Im Dorf’ (from *Winterreise*), for example, the Wanderer’s separation from the townspeople – marking his social displacement – is symbolised by the rhythmic conflict between the vocal line and the repeated piano chords. The repeated chords and rumbling bass constitute downbeat–upbeat patterns, which are opposed by the upbeat–downbeat gestures of the singer. Similarly, moments of longing often arise from an awareness of separation or loss. Weak-beat accents symbolise distance to and from the homeland in Schumann’s ‘In der Fremde’, from his *Liederkreis*, Op. 39. The weak-beat accents cease, significantly, with the repeat of the phrase ‘da ruhe ich auch’, at the point where the protagonist imagines her final rest.

My purpose is not to suggest that displacement dissonances always symbolise longing. Harald Krebs, for example, has shown that displacement dissonances in Schumann’s music actually express or symbolise a variety of affects, including disquiet, excitement, conflict (inner or outer), madness and humour, not to mention suspended or even dreamlike states. Moreover, although *Sehnsucht* could be regarded as the emotive signature of the Romantic Lied in general, innumerable songs express longing without resorting to displacement dissonances. Nevertheless, the link between syncopation and *Sehnsucht* is so frequent and compelling that we can learn about the nature of both terms through analysis of songs in which they are conjoined.

‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’ (Goethe/Schubert)

Although a number of possible examples might have been chosen for an initial case study, Schubert’s setting of Goethe’s ‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’ (D. 768, c. 1823) provides an instructive starting point (Ex. 1). Quaver syncopations in
Ex. 1 Schubert, ‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’

Langsam

Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh, in allen Wipfeln spürst du kaum ein- en Hauch; die Vögel schweigen, schweigen im Walde, war- te nur, war- te nur, bald－de ruhestdu auch, war- te nur, war- te nur, bald－de ruhestdu auch.
the accompaniment of bars 5–8 create an effect of subtle movement, coinciding with the mention of breath/breeze (Hauch). Intriguingly, the Wanderer feels hardly a breath (‘spürest du kaum einen Hauch’), and the birds are silent (‘die Vöglein schweigen im Walde’). The syncopated accompaniment could thus be heard as a symbol of ‘internal’ animation. We should also note that ‘spürest du kaum einen Hauch’ is the first indication that the poem has a subject – one who experiences nature’s tranquility together with his or her own internal unrest.

The subject’s internal animation, reflected in the musical animation generated by the syncopations, leads to an explicit gesture of longing in the final section of the song. The melodic line rises expressively in bars 9–10 (and again in bars 11–12) through the third b\textsuperscript{1}–c\textsuperscript{2}–d\textsuperscript{2}, and then more quickly up to f\textsuperscript{2}. The Wanderer reaches upwards as if towards the heavens, giving voice to his longing, ‘warte nur, warte nur, balde ruhest du auch’ (‘only wait, only wait, soon you too shall rest’).\textsuperscript{11}

Focusing now on the poem’s text, we should note that, while the poem expresses deep emotion, it does so indirectly. The poem was written around 1780, a few years after Goethe’s move to Weimar and during a period in which, according to L. P. Johnson, ‘a greater objectivity’ began to assert itself\textsuperscript{12}. Conforming to the ‘objectivity’ of Goethe’s Weimar period, the speaker of ‘Wandrers Nachtlied’ could be thought of as an ‘objective self’ who observes and comments on his experiences in the second person while standing apart. Conversely, Schubert’s syncopations may be heard as expressing the response of the ‘subjective self’. They cease as the objective self turns inward, urging patience (‘warte nur, warte nur’), after which the melodic ascent gives voice to the Wanderer’s (subjective) desire. This layering of voices and personae – internal subjective ‘beneath’ external objective – is an essential part of the song, distinguishing Schubert’s setting markedly from, for instance, Schumann’s treatment of Eichendorff.

The sources of animation and longing in the ‘Wandrers Nachlied’ can be traced within the poem’s metrical and syntactic elements.

1. Über allen Gipfeln
2. Ist Ruh,
3. In allen Wipfeln
4. Spürest du
5. Kaum einen Hauch;
6. Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
7. Warte nur, balde

Over all summits
Is peace,
In all treetops
You feel
Hardly a breath;
The birds are silent in the woods.
Only wait, soon
You too shall rest.\textsuperscript{13}

Lines 3–4 echo lines 1–2 very closely, as can be seen from the fully aligned text:

(1) Über \textit{allen Gipfeln} / (2) Ist \textit{Ruh}
(3) In \textit{allen Wipfeln} / (4) \textit{Spürest du} / (5) Kaum einen Hauch
Whereas the second line stops abruptly (dramatising ‘Ruh’), the fourth line leads on to the fifth through an enjambment.\textsuperscript{14} ‘Kaum einen Hauch’ thus emerges as a supplement, an extra line, which unsettles the parallelism of lines 1–2 and 3–4. It is ‘hardly a breath’, but it is enough, especially as experienced internally, to create unrest in the subject and in the poetic structure. Line 4 leading into line 5 also initiates a set of dactylic feet, ‘Spü-rest du / Kaum ei-nen Hauch’, increasing the sense of motion.\textsuperscript{15} Finally, ‘Hauch’ (the end of line 5) is an onomatopoeic word, symbolising life but not rest.\textsuperscript{16}

The poem continues to sustain tension from line 5 through to line 8, and beyond into the silence which follows. The fifth line is anomalous from the viewpoint of lines 1–4 since it introduces the new ‘au’ diphthong in both ‘Kaum’ and ‘Hauch’. Line 6, ‘Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde’, creates a moment of relative stability within the poem – it is a complete statement within one line, and it is the only statement that begins with its subject.\textsuperscript{17} The ‘au’ diphthong from line 5, however, still protrudes as a non-recurring element, and line 6 is energised by a regular dactylic rhythm. ‘Warte nur, balde’ (line 7) provides a rhyme for ‘Walde’ from the end of line 6, but receives no response to the ‘au’ diphthong, nor a rhyme for ‘Hauch’ until ‘Ruhest du auch’ (line 8). As Johnson notes, in reading the poem and waiting for a rhyme for line 5, we share the Wanderer’s anticipation.\textsuperscript{18} The final line brings together ‘Ruh’ and ‘auch’, sounds that were oppositional in the syntax of lines 1–5. Nevertheless, full closure is undermined by the ‘au’ diphthong (which can be read as being more ‘animated’ than the pure ‘u’ sound), as well as the relatively harsh ‘ch’ sound and the recollection of ‘Hauch’.

Returning to Schubert’s setting, we find that the syncopations coincide not only with the entry of the subject, but also with the onset of motion in the poem – ‘spürest du/Kaum einen Hauch’ (lines 4–5). Schubert’s harmony and line underscore this effect. Thus bars 5–6 feature motion to the dominant, with the chromatic bass line E–E–F (which reverses the F–E–E\textsubscript{b} chromatic descent of bar 2). A more subtle point concerns the G\textsubscript{b} (the chromatic upper neighbour to F) which influences the word ‘Wipfeln’ just before the syncopations begin. On the one hand, ‘Wipfeln’ echoes ‘Gipfeln’ within the tight parallel structure of lines 1–2 and 3–4. On the other, the ‘W’ of ‘Wipfeln’ issues from the lips with an impetus suggestive of breath (‘Hauch’), whereas the ‘G’ of ‘Gipfeln’, articulated in the throat, generates less energy. We can therefore recognise that the piano syncopations from bar 5 are embedded in a process that generates motion and unrest in many ways: through the physical sound of the words; the syntax and metre of the text; and the harmony and line of the music.

The syncopations from bar 5 can be understood within a still broader context, given that Schubert introduces hints of motion and unrest earlier in the song. The piano plays a complete I–V–I progression in bars 1–2, evoking the tranquility of nature. This tranquility is then disturbed: the voice’s entrance, in imitation of the piano’s dactylic rhythms, compresses the I–V–I motion into one and a half bars; moreover, the second poetic statement (‘in allen Wipfeln . . .’)

begins in the middle of bar 4 with a burst of energy, a leap up to E. This unsets the semibreve pulse of the notated bars. The singer also introduces articulations at the level of the semiquaver pulse with the dotted rhythm of ‘Über [allen]’. This rhythm recurs on ‘Wipfeln’, and again on ‘spürest (du)’ as the piano’s resultant rhythm begins to articulate a regular semiquaver pulse.

The intensification in bars 5–6 then expands into an energetic plateau in bars 7–8. The poetic line ‘Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde’ itself embodies a kind of energised stability, as has already been noted. Schubert sets this line in bars 7–8 with a regular oscillation of V7 and I. The semibreve layer of the notated metre is projected clearly for the first time since the piano introduction, creating a broad sense of stability even as the syncopations continue. Nonetheless, the underlying dominant pedal prevents the tonic harmonies from achieving full stability.

Schubert’s gesture of longing culminates in the final section of the song. The b1–c2–d2 ascent of bars 9–10 comprises a nested version of the large-scale initial ascent from the b1 in bar 3 to the c2 in bars 7–8 (also implied in bar 6) up to the d2 in bar 10 – the long-delayed Kopfton. The ascent to f2 thus culminates as a moment of heightened expression and anticipation external to the Urlinie progression. This climax is all the more effective as a gesture of anticipation because f2 arrives both on a weak beat (beat two in bar 9 and beat four in bar 12) and on a weak syllable. The weak beats ‘lean’ forward with pauses, embodying the sense of anticipation.

Schubert often repeats words and text phrases in the concluding sections of his songs. Here, the text repetitions influence both the metric structure and the sense of anticipation. With the repetition of ‘warte nur’, the final two lines occupy five minims, or two and a half bars. The concluding phrase (itself also repeated) thus unsettles the semibreve pulse, which was established briefly in bars 7–8. (In comparison, the repetition of ‘schweigen’ in bars 7–8 helps the composer to confirm the semibreve pulse. ‘Die Vögelein schweigen, schweigen im Walde’ has four feet, which are set in four minims.)

To summarise, Schubert’s ‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’ stages longing as internal animation followed by a reaching outwards towards the infinite. It expresses longing as anticipation and deferral, both of which are embodied in a single word, ‘balde’ (‘soon’). The syncopations generate a subtle sense of motion which coincides with ‘away-from’ motion both in the harmony, and in the textual domains of syntax, poetic metre and phonetics. The presence of an ‘objective’ voice in poem and song renders the expression of Sehnsucht all the more moving.

‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’ can be usefully compared with other songs by Schubert. As Susan Youens has observed, offbeat and weak-beat accents pervade Schubert’s Winterreise. They are associated with longing in two particular songs, ‘Letzte Hoffnung’ and ‘Der Lindenbaum’. Metre and harmony are both suspended in the opening of ‘Letzte Hoffnung’ in ways which symbolise the hanging leaf and Wanderer’s hope. Here, the irrationality of hope (the leaf must
surely fall) renders it analogous to longing; the initial metric deferrals suggest a flight from reality. Metre and harmony resolve at the end of the first vocal phrase, and with the phrase ‘fällt mit ihm die Hoffnung ab’ (‘my hope falls with [the leaf]’).

The first strophe of ‘Der Lindenbaum’ features memory of a distant, idyllic time, set to a simple chordal accompaniment doubling the vocal line. The second strophe brings the Wanderer closer to the present, and near to the linden tree, the site of former ease, pleasure and love. Memory and longing impinge painfully; Schubert sets the first half of this strophe in E minor, and places registral and dynamic accents on the second beats of the new piano figuration. After a dramatised flight (‘die kalten Winde bliesen . . .’) the Wanderer reaches safety ‘many hours away’ from the site of his past. Arpeggiated triplets in the accompaniment echo those of the second stanza, but the dynamic accents are now shifted onto the downbeats. In this song, distance represents safety, whether it is the temporal distance of the first strophe or the spatial distance of the last (itself measured in hours of travel). The enticing call of the linden tree in the second strophe, ‘hier find’st du deine Ruh’ (‘here you will find your rest’), becomes a safer subjunctive in the last strophe: ‘du fändest Ruhe dort’ (‘there you would find rest’).

The second-beat accents in ‘Der Lindenbaum’ are not syncopations; they do not sustain over the bar line. They do displace the primary accent, however, so we can refer to them as metrical displacement dissonances. The piano triplets generate momentum away from the downbeat and towards the second beat. In Zuckerkandl’s terms, they emphasise motion ‘away from’ and understate the motion ‘back to’. The forward motion depicts the wanderer’s steps, and it symbolises his unease and longing.

A comparison with Beethoven’s *An die ferne Geliebte* further highlights the nature of Schubert’s artistic insight. There is, of course, no pretence to art in Beethoven’s setting. The sixth song declares itself to be ‘the product of the poet’s *Sehnsucht* (longing), ohne Kunstgepräng’ (without the stamp of art, or without artifice), as William Rothstein has observed. 23 The songs in Beethoven’s cycle are mostly strophic, with variations in the accompaniment. In song one, strophe three, semiquavers and bass offbeat quavers animate the texture as the poet sings of his glowing look which hurries to the beloved. Simple chords accompany the fourth strophe, in which the poet finds that there is no messenger for his love. Syncopated semiquavers in the right hand then animate the accompaniment for the final strophe, in which space and time vanish and the loving heart reaches that which it holds sacred. The syncopated accompaniment may be taken to represent a quickening heart, but Beethoven attempts no subtle rhythmic shaping of individual strophes in response to the text, as in the brief span of Schubert’s ‘Wandrers Nachlied II’. (The poetry, by Alois Jeitteles, is itself not as finely crafted as Goethe’s poem.) The end of this first song, which returns at the end of the cycle, suggests triumphant arrival rather than a longing for that which is yet to come. 24
A closer precursor for Schubert’s ‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’ can be found in his own earlier ‘Wandrers Nachlied’ (‘Der du von dem Himmel bist’, D. 224) of 1815. This song is similarly brief; it also begins with dactylic rhythms, animates its middle section with syncopations, and concludes with a repeated expression of longing. It seems in fact that Schubert must have had the earlier ‘Wandrers Nachlied’ in mind when composing the later version. The latter part of ‘Über allen Gipfeln’ echoes the opening of ‘Der du von dem Himmel bist’ especially closely; both feature prominent I–vi progressions, third motives with identical rhythms, and structural 1–2–3 ascents. The two poems were printed on the same page in the 1815 edition of Goethe’s works, with the second poem titled ‘Ein Gleiches’ (‘A similar one’).

The phrase ‘ach, ich bin des Treibens müde!’ (‘oh, I am tired of striving!’) included within the earlier Nachtlied is more personal and direct than anything in the later song, and Schubert sets it with a brief moment of recitative. Nevertheless, the previous phrases, which describe the healing effects of the deity, are relatively impersonal. Offbeat chords in the right hand and accented syncopations accompany the phrase ‘den der doppelt elend ist, doppelt mit Entzückung füllst’ (‘the one who is doubly wretched, you fill doubly with delight’). Here, as in the ‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’, displacements suggest the internal animation of a subject not yet identified in the text. As in Die Winterreise, the accented syncopations suggest emotional disturbance. Offbeat accents return in the brief postlude, resolving each time with a prayer-like plagal cadence.

‘Intermezzo’ (Eichendorff/Schumann)

In 1843, Robert Schumann identified Eichendorff as one of the poets who had inspired advances in the Lied. A ‘more artistic and profound kind of Lied’ emerged, according to Schumann, as the ‘new poetic spirit’ of Rückert, Eichendorff, Uhland and Heine was ‘mirrored in music’. The following analysis of ‘Intermezzo’, the second song of Liederkreis, will show how, in the course of setting Eichendorff’s poem, Schumann made extensive use of a radical form of syncopation so as to undermine the primary metre at all levels. The central feature of Eichendorff’s poem, which seems to have inspired Schumann’s syncopated accompaniment, is a longing for the distant beloved.

In Eichendorff’s poem, the poet’s longings emerge from an imagined visual exchange with the beloved. The poet gazes at an image of the beloved deep within his heart, and the image gazes back at him ‘brightly and happily’ (stanza 1). From this visual exchange, song and longing are born; the poet’s heart sings a beautiful old song, and this song soars out to the beloved (stanza 2).

1. Dein Bildniss wunderselig
   Your blessed image
2. Hab’ ich im Herzensgrund,
   I have in the bottom of my heart,
3. Das sieht so frisch und fröhlich
   It looks so brightly and happily
4. Mich an zu jeder Stund'.
5. Mein Herz still in sich singet
6. Ein altes, schönes Lied,
7. Das in die Luft sich schwinget
8. Und zu dir eilig zieht.

At me through every hour.
My heart sings quietly within itself
An old, beautiful song,
Which soars into the air
And quickly flies to you.26

While, literally speaking, the beloved is absent in the first stanza, she is figuratively ever present. (As Prometheus says to Minerva in an early dramatic fragment by Goethe, ‘Abwesend auch mir immer gegenwärtig’ – ‘Even in absence always present to me’.27) David Wellbery has observed that, in Eichendorff’s poetry, ‘the object of desire is hallucinated as absented, withdrawn to an infinite remove, and . . . this very absence is experienced by the subject as fulfillment . . . . The beloved object becomes, paradoxically, the absence of the beloved’.28 And as Adorno writes in his commentary on Eichendorff’s poem ‘Sehnsucht’: ‘longing opens out onto itself as its proper goal’.29 This is the situation in ‘Intermezzo’ as well.

Longing becomes an end in itself which is realised as song. The flight of the song in the second stanza represents the outward reach of the poet’s longing. We should observe that the song emerges quietly from within the poet’s heart.

Thus, Eichendorff’s poem figures longing as a gesture that moves from within the self, out into the distance. The poem, in other words, draws an affinity between the depth within and the distance without. And whereas this affinity was only implicit in Schubert’s song, in Schumann’s it becomes as explicit as in Eichendorff’s poem.

Schumann’s song is in an ABA form (Ex. 2). Syncopated chords pulsate almost through the entire song (with the single exception of bar 24). The chords become most unsettling in the B section (bars 9–17), since the piano no longer ‘grounds’ the syncopations with downbeat articulations. (Downbeat articulations had also been absent in the piano in bars 6–9.) In the B section, furthermore, the upper voice of the chordal accompaniment doubles the singer’s pitches so as to displace them by one semiquaver from the quaver pulse of the notated metre. The pulsating chords thereby symbolise the reverberation of song within the poet’s heart as well as its flight into the distance.30 In this regard, they once again succeed in drawing an affinity between the depth within and the distance without. It should also be noted how the vocal line, with its delayed doubling in the piano, reaches up from e₁ (bars 9–10) to f₂ (bars 14 and 16), while the piano itself extends one step further to g₂ (bar 15). The syncopations seem to generate the energy for this melodic ascent and for the ‘rise and expansion’ of longing.31

The radical nature of these syncopations deserves further comment. In standard practice, metric pulses could be thought to provide a sense of ‘present-ness’; they initiate temporal spans that we experience as individual moments or temporal gestalts. With Schumann’s syncopations, by contrast, moments that would otherwise be experienced as ‘present’ are split, eliciting a
sense of movement and ‘friction’ which is projected, by analogy, onto the imaginary persona of the beloved. In short, Schumann’s syncopations create a feeling of movement and ‘friction’ as they stage the outward flight of the poet’s longing. Unlike the ‘Wandrers Nachtlied’, Eichendorff’s poem portrays...
no objective self; the poet identifies entirely with his longing, and gives himself over to its dynamics. As Adorno has observed of Eichendorff’s poetry, “The word “wirr” [confused, chaotic], one of his favorites . . . signals the suspension of the ego, its surrender to something surging up chaotically.” If this is true of Eichendorff, then it is especially so of Schumann’s Eichendorff. The displacement dissonance in Schumann’s song escapes the frame of the notated metre, just as the self surrenders to surges of longing.

The following analysis reveals how metrical and tonal displacements generate dissonance in strophe 1 (A), which is then intensified in strophe 2 (B), prior to being resolved in strophe 3 (A¹). The piano subsequently restores outward
motion in the postlude, while the syncopations of the final bars seem to dissolve before fully resolving. The poem itself has an open ending, with the song seemingly reaching towards the beloved. Schumann initially imposes closure by returning to the first stanza after the second, but then proceeds to re-open the structure with the piano postlude. The song thus recreates the poem’s structure at a different level, transforming the poem-as-fragment into a song-as-fragment.

In harmonic terms, the initial tonic sonority constitutes an unstable second-inversion chord, grounded by the bass A articulated on the downbeat of bar 2. Bars 1–5 prolong the tonic with a bass pedal and secondary motion to V7/V (bar 3) and V7 (bar 4). Bars 6–9 then begin a decisive ‘away from’ movement (as Zuckerkandl would put it), arriving at a structural cadence on V (E major) in bar 9. The second strophe effects local tonicisations of B minor and D major (bars 10–11 and 12–13), before reaching a repeated half-cadence in F♯ minor (bars 14–17).³⁵ Schumann returns to the tonic in the third strophe, but in a roundabout manner. The words ‘Dein Bildnis’ in bars 17–18 are set by V7/IV (rather than by I, as in bars 1–2), and the bass supports a sequence of secondary dominants in bars 18–21 (rather than articulating a tonic pedal, as in bars 2–5). At the end of the third strophe Schumann confirms the tonic, resolving the structural dissonance and completing the harmonic motion ‘back to’.³⁶ With the tonic cadence of bar 25, the vocal line achieves a sense of closure and apparent satisfaction. The beginning of the postlude, however, overlaps with this cadence, while the piano adds a further comment, attempting once again to bridge the distance between the poet and his beloved. The overhanging scale-degree 3 (C♯) at bar 29 renders the ending partially open, since the tonic resolution is not reinforced by a 3–2–1 descent.

The metric narrative, by contrast, involves four interacting musical layers: the vocal line, the pulsating chords, the bass and the counter-melody in the piano, right hand. The vocal line projects the notated metre with a regular 2-bar, 4-bar and 8-bar hypermetre (Ex. 3). The pulsating chords initiate a syncopated quaver pulse in bar 1, which continues through to bar 23. Employing Krebs’s terminology, we may refer to this syncopated pulse as 2+1 (unit = semiquaver). That is, in the formula x+y (unit = z), x denotes the periodicity of the displaced layer (and the layer that it displaces), y refers to the amount of displacement, and z indicates the unit of measurement.³⁷

The pulsating chords of bar 1 combine metric instability (experienced in retrospect, once the notated metre is established) with tonal instability (the
The bass anchors both metre and harmony with its downbeat As, beginning in bar 2. The bass then drops out in bar 6, while the syncopated chords take flight in the second strophe. The displaced quaver pulse (2+1) emerges unchallenged over bars 8–9 in the piano just as the dominant becomes established as the secondary key area for the song. We have already observed a correlation between dominant harmony and displaced quaver motion in Schubert’s ‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’. Here, however, both of the ‘non-tonic’ phenomena are more firmly entrenched, making at least partial or temporary claims for tonic status. It is especially notable that the pulsating chords refuse to resolve their metric displacement on the downbeat of bar 10, a beat that participates in the 2-bar, 4-bar and 8-bar hypermetric pulses. The pulsating chords undermine the notated metre (that is, the singer’s metre) at all levels, sustaining forward motion into the second strophe.

In fact, the pulsating chords in the second strophe establish their own displaced metric field with an entire set of displaced pulses. It is because of this that they are able to create the effect of flight: at a basic level, the chords establish a displaced quaver pulse, 2+1 (the semiquaver unit remaining throughout this analysis). The piano chords also change harmonies and registers in time with a displaced crochet pulse, 4+1, and a displaced minim pulse, 8+1. I have annotated bars 12–13 of the score to show how the piano articulates a D major IV–V₃⁴–I progression (with a 4–3 suspension on the tonic) displaced by one semiquaver relative to the primary metre. Ex. 4 represents the primary metre in graphic form together with each of the three displaced pulses: 2+1, 4+1 and 8+1. These displaced pulses align to create an independent metric hierarchy, a feature which may be referred to as ‘hierarchically aligned’ displacements. The ascent of the vocal line and accompanying piano chords throughout the second stanza culminates in a further displacement at its apex. In bars 14 and 16 both voice and piano successively leap to f⁵², the piano continuing to climb a further step to g⁵³ at bar 15. The piano’s three successive apexes in bars 14–16 – respectively f⁵³, g⁵³ and f⁵³ (circled in the score) – now proceed to generate an 8+4 pulse in relation to the previously established 8+1, and a further 8+5
in relation to the minim pulse of the notated metre. The feeling of distance (as well as motion into the distance) is thereby amplified as the melodic line attains its peak. Schumann’s ‘old beautiful song’ truly ‘soar[s] into the air’. This is the apex of an energetic wave; from here on the poet returns to the image within, and the syncopations become grounded. The return of the bass at the beginning of the third strophe (bar 18) restabilises the metre, thereby providing metric and harmonic support for the singer. It also establishes an anchor against which the pulsating chords can pull. In this sense, the bass enacts the grounding effect of the image that the poet holds in his heart. The restoration of metric stability coincides with a return to the self – in other words, to the image held within.

These metric displacements resolve so as to prepare the structural cadence at the end of the third strophe (bars 23–25). Nevertheless, the resolution is far from simple. First, Schumann introduces a higher-level displacement. The right-hand counter-melody plays a syncopated crochet pulse, 4+2, from the last quaver of bar 20 to bar 23. (The first strophe’s counter-melody had introduced occasional displacements such as the C’s in bars 5–6 and the F’s in bars 6–7. But it does not sustain these displacements into an independent metric layer until the third strophe.) Accordingly, the structural cadence is prepared via the interaction of four layers (Ex. 5).

Three patterns are projected in bars 22: singer and piano bass line give the notated metre; the pulsating chords play 2+1; the counter melody unfolds 4+2. Then, in bar 23, the pulsating chords resolve their 2+1 pulse onto the counter-melody’s 4+2, including the singer in their syncopation. All four streams converge with the dominant harmony on the downbeat of bar 24. Schumann creates a sense of relaxation by introducing the slower syncopation, 4+2, at the end of the third strophe. 4+2 works together with the locally tonicised subdominant
to prepare the cadence. The displaced crochets of the right hand in bar 22 participate in a voice exchange with the bass, thereby prolonging the subdominant.

The 2+1 and 4+2 pulses do not reinforce each other metrically: 2+1 displaces the primary quaver pulse, while 4+2 confirms the primary quaver pulse and displaces the primary crochet pulse. Thus the two displacements neither generate an independent hierarchy nor significantly disrupt the primary metre. We may refer to them as ‘rhythmically complementary’ displacements. Ex. 6 presents a graphic representation of the primary metre overlaid with the two syncopation schemes, 2+1 and 4+2. The beats of the two syncopated pulses fill out the texture, almost saturating the lowest-level pulse. Only the ‘downbeats’ – that is, the beats of the primary crochet pulse – are empty.

The piano and singer simultaneously project multiple levels of the consonant metric hierarchy at the end of the third strophe. The consonant metric hierarchy suggests the cyclical quality of time with its sense of eternal recurrence. Thus, by resolving all the metric displacements at the end of the third strophe, the line ‘jeder, jeder Stund’ (‘every, every hour’) seems to enact its ideal as a healing reality. With the ritardando and repetition of ‘jeder, jeder’ in bar 24, time appears to stand still, and Schumann’s poet gives himself over to the fantasy of a fulfilling communion with the image that lies within.

As previously observed, the beginning of the postlude overlaps with the structural cadence in bar 25. The piano sings alone, while the song reaches out once more towards the distant beloved. Schumann inverts the original descending figure, which now ascends briskly to C, the same pitch that the counter melody had reached for with the crochet syncopations in bars 5 and 21. Metric displacements in the postlude symbolise both the distance between the poet and his beloved, and a continuing desire to bridge that distance. Schumann resumes the displaced quaver pulse 2+1 in bars 25–27, while the displaced crochet pulse 4+2 returns in bar 28. Bars 28–29 contain no events to confirm the notated metre’s crochet pulse. If we hear the crochet pulse from bars 25–27 as continuing into bars 28–29, then the first two chords (vii7 and V7) are displacements; in this regard, the descent from F# to G in bars 28–29...
could be interpreted as an echo of the piano’s earlier syncopated F↓ to G↓ descent (bars 22–23). It becomes difficult, however, to hear the tonic arrival, on the second quaver of bar 29, as a syncopated event. (The amount of ritardando taken by performers in these final bars will affect our metric experience.) The syncopation dissolves before fully resolving, reminding the listener of the poet’s longings.40

‘Intermezzo’ is a quintessential example of syncopation and longing in Schumann’s songs. There are other of his songs, however, which combine the two, and they do so in a variety of ways. ‘Im wunderschönen Monat Mai’ expresses longing by combining the piano’s delayed doubling with a rising line, much as in ‘Intermezzo’. Metrical displacements in ‘Im Rhein’ (from the same song cycle) correspond with processes of interiorisation and the expression of desire.41 The song’s opening bass octaves depict the cathedral’s general air of monumentality, as well as the building’s reflection in the powerful Rhine. The tone then softens as the poet moves into the cathedral, and describes the picture that has shone into his life (‘in meines Lebens Wildness hat’s freundlich hinein gestrahlt’). The interlude initiates displacements of semibreve and breve pulses; these displacements continue with a rising line as the poet notices that the Madonna’s eyes, lips and cheeks resemble those of his beloved. This comparison inflects both terms: the holy image becomes corporeal just as the beloved is made to seem holy and pure. Nevertheless, the visual resemblance also suggests a sensual recollection – in the fourth song the poet looks into his love’s eyes, kisses her mouth and leans upon her bosom.

The syncopations of ‘Intermezzo’ participate in a network of associations with displacement dissonances in two other songs from the Eichendorff Liederkreis. In the first song, ‘In der Fremde’, accented pitches double the vocal line on beats two and four. This delayed doubling generates a 2+1 layer (unit = crotchet). The right hand features expressive B–F↓ leaps in bars 10–11, with the text ‘wie bald, ach wie bald kommt die stille Zeit’ (‘how soon, oh how soon will the time of quiet come’). The repeated ascent to F↓ hints at a displaced semibreve pulse 4+2 (unit = quaver), with a remarkable fusion of displacement, upward reach and longing. As previously observed, this motive is then echoed by ‘Intermezzo’ through an analogous higher-level displacement (bars 3 and 19).42 Krebs’s notation nicely illustrates the metric analogy. Both songs feature a pervasive 2+1 layer, and a brief 4+2 layer initiated by the B–F↓ motive (the unit being a crotchet in ‘In der Fremde’ and a semiquaver in ‘Intermezzo’). The singer’s two ascents to F↓ in the middle strophe of ‘Intermezzo’ echo the earlier song’s B–F↓ motive; as before, the F↓s hint at a higher-level displacement (8+4, unit = semiquaver). This technique of delayed doubling continues virtually throughout the entire song. A salient moment occurs with the repetition ‘da ruhe ich’, when the piano doubles the voice directly, suggesting that the protagonist is imagining a unified self in a state of rest. The line E–D–C↓–B–A↓, setting ‘auch, da ruhe ich auch’, then returns at the beginning of ‘Intermezzo’, underscored by pulsating syncopations.
‘Wehmuth’ (‘Sadness’), the ninth song, has a richly textured accompaniment, with the piano doubling the vocal line, often in octaves. Syncopations in the tenor voice of the accompaniment are mostly hidden, since its pitches either coincide with upbeat figures or are subsumed within arpeggiated harmonies. An independent syncopated tenor does manage to emerge at one significant moment, however, with the phrase ‘der Sehnsucht Lied erschallen’ (‘sound forth the song of longing’). This syncopated line would seem to represent, or at least contribute to, the ‘song of longing’ (‘Sehnsucht Lied’) sung by the poem’s nightingales. The syncopations recall those of the ‘altes schönes Lied’ in ‘Intermezzo’, and the tenor moves from E to F♯ and eventually up to B, replicating the pitches of ‘Mein Herz still in sich singet’. The syncopations in ‘Wehmuth’, however, are buried in an inner voice, and the nightingales sing their song of longing ‘aus ihres Kerkers Gruft’ (‘from their imprisoning cage’). This poem actually reflects directly back on ‘Intermezzo’, inverting its affective message. ‘Da lauschen alle Herzen, und Alles ist erfreut’ (‘all hearts listen, and all are gladdened’), sings the poet in the last stanza of ‘Wehmuth’, ‘doch Keiner fühlt die Schmerzen, im Lied das tiefe Leid’ (‘yet no one feels the pain and deep grief in the song’).

Adorno identifies the suspension of ego in both Eichendorff’s works and Schumann’s music as a form of generosity: ‘The ego no longer becomes callous and entrenched within itself. It wants to make amends for some of the primordial injustice of being ego at all’.43 For Schumann, this generosity led to transcendence and madness. (‘Zwielicht’, from the Eichendorff Liederkreis, affords an example of the latter.) What Adorno terms ‘generosity’ is born, however, from a kind of optimism which was no longer prevalent in the latter half of the nineteenth century.44 Pursuing this line, I would now like to explore the means by which Brahms infuses the Sehnsucht of his songs with despair, and how displacement dissonances create the haze of a ‘Brahms fog’ (‘Brahmsnebel’), which the protagonist can only penetrate through longing.45

‘Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer’ (Lingg/Brahms)

The protagonist in Brahms’s ‘Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer’, the second of the five Songs, Op. 105, is a dying woman. Sorrow trembles over her ‘like a veil’ through which she reaches for a final glimpse of her beloved. Indeed, Brahms uses syncopations in this setting precisely in order to obscure and disorientate. At the end of the song, syncopations combine with a dramatically rising line to stage a desperate plea – a form of longing that seeks to escape from futility only to fall backwards back again. Romantic Sehnsucht, according to Sybille Reichert, often features ‘the succession of moments of the subject’s attempted escapes, of rise and expansion, of evocations of infinity, on the one hand, with inevitable moments of recoil and resignation, and the subject’s painfully heightened awareness of his or her finitude, on the other’.46 Brahms’s song presents exactly such a succession of moments.
Longing for Brahms looks back as much as forward. The melancholic aspect of his personality is beautifully illustrated in a letter sent to his friend, Vincenz Lachner. The composer writes that ‘I would have to confess that I am, by the by, a severely melancholic person, that black wings are constantly flapping above us’. However pertinent this statement may be to ‘Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer’, it certainly suggests that the song’s longing is a feature of Brahms’s world view as well. It is also, as Reinhold Brinkmann has proposed, a feature of the age:

Brahms’s plural (‘that black wings are constantly flapping above us’) confirms the rightness of Ernst Bloch’s historical perspective of melancholy as the ‘secret keyword of the age’ . . . . Melancholy as depression, as a pessimistic and deep-seated feeling of inadequacy and failure, is a negative condition and experience of the nineteenth century. Brahms’s confession about the ‘black wings’ that are ‘constantly flapping above us’ belongs to this late period in history.

The poem ‘Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer’ was written by Hermann Lingg and published in his Gedichte of 1857. The first stanza describes the course of longing experienced in a dream – an outward movement towards the sound of the beloved’s voice, followed by ‘recoil and resignation’ (as Reichert put it) as the woman awakes and weeps. The poem’s second stanza splinters the hazy dream-longings of the first stanza into morbid realism (lines 1–3), and a phantasmatic wish that the beloved will return once more (lines 6–7). In between, lines 4–5 indicate that death is imminent; indeed, that it will precede vernal awakenings.

1. Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer, Ever softer grows my slumber,
2. Nur wie Schleier liegt mein Kummer Only like a veil lies my sorrow
3. Zitternd über mir. Trembling over me.
4. Oft im Traume hör ich dich In my dreams I often hear you
5. Rufen drauß’ vor meiner Tür, Calling outside my door,
6. Niemand wacht und öffnet dir, No one wakes and lets you in,

1. Ja, ich werde sterben müssen, Yes, I shall have to die,
2. Eine Andre wirst du küssen, You will kiss another,
3.Wenn ich bleich und kalt. When I am pale and cold.
4. Eh’ die Maienlüfte wehn, Ere the May breezes blow,
5. Eh’ die Drossel singt im Wald: Ere the thrush sings in the wood:
6. Willst du mich noch einmal seh’n, Will you see me yet once more,
7. Komm, o komme bald! Come, oh come soon!

Brahms sets the poem in a modified strophic form. Both strophes divide into three parts: a tonally closed section in C♯ minor, setting lines 1–3 of each stanza; a modulation to the relative major, setting lines 4–5; and a tonally unstable section, setting lines 6–7 (Ex. 7). Just prior to this passage, the song
moves into the relative major, E, as the protagonist remembers her dreams and the beloved’s call from outside her door. Brahms treats ‘Niemand wacht und öffnet dir’ (‘No one wakes and lets you in’) in halting declamation, with abrupt shifts from E major to G major and D major to F major: two chromatic
mediants, or PR transformations, in neo-Riemannian terms. The chromatic shifts seem to perform the malleability and unreality of the dream state. At the same time, crochet syncopations in the piano create a metric haze. Syncopations emerge in the right hand from the last quaver of bar 14, and they continue through to bar 22. They ride over the semibreve pulse (that is, the bar-line pulse) directly, with no events falling on the downbeat of bar 15. In fact, the syncopation can initially be heard as an anticipation at three levels: 2–1, 4–1 and 8–1 (unit = quaver throughout the analysis): this is another example of a hierarchically aligned displacement. There is a partial metric re-orientation as singer and piano left hand articulate the downbeats of bars 16 and 18. Even here, however, the bass note is relatively weak, being the unstable fifth of each harmony; likewise, the rising arpeggios end with chordal fifths on the last quaver of bars 16 and 18. The syncopations continue, with the primary metre articulated only at the downbeats of bars 18 and 20.50 In this way, the syncopations help stage a hazy dream state. They emerge not with the first mention of the beloved in lines 4–5, but with a longing that is already inflected by impossibility.

How does Brahms respond to the despairing awakening of line 7 (‘ich erwach und weine bitterlich’)? The cadential on ‘ich erwach’ marks a return to E (now E minor) and a break in the descending whole-tone sequence (E/G in bars 14–16, D/F in bars 17–18 and C in bar 19). The tonal re-orientation, in other words, coincides with a return to bleak reality. Similarly, the syncopations continue in bars 20–22, but now supported by more consistent articulations of the primary bar line and minim pulses. The syncopations in fact emerge in bar 20 as delays (2+1; unit = quaver) rather than anticipations, as the singer awakes and ceases to anticipate a meeting with her beloved. The syncopations then shift up a level in the metric hierarchy: minim syncopations (4+2) replace the quaver syncopations (2+1) in bar 23. (This shift, together with the elongated 3/2 bars, constitutes one of the many instances where Brahms embeds tempo shifts in the notation of rhythm and metre.51) C minor, the key of the opening, returns with the repetition of ‘weine bitterlich’ in bars 22–23, and the C minor cadence in bar 24 initiates the second strophe. The words of the opening, ‘Immer leiser wird mein schlummer’, seem to hover over the melody in bars 24–26, and the singer responds, ‘Ja ich werde sterben müssen’. In sum, waves of anticipatory dreaming give way to the recoil of bitter awakening in the first strophe. Brahms renders Sehnsucht with deep pessimism; he expresses it against a backdrop of overriding futility. The latter part of strophe 2 (bars 41–53) recalls the waves of metric suspense and release in the first strophe (Ex. 8).

Syncopations sound by themselves in the right hand in bars 42, 44 and 46 (once again riding over the bar lines), and the bass returns to ground the metre in bars 43, 45 and 47. Here, however, the alternation of metric suspense with release coincides with a rising minor-thirds sequence: E major (bars 41–42), G major (bars 43–44), Bb major (bars 45–46) and Db major (bars 47–53).52
Singer and piano right hand reach up together through a diminished seventh, $g^1\text{--}b^1\text{--}d^2\text{--}f^2$, with the $f^2$ of bar 47 marking the song’s registral climax. The right-hand syncopations thus provide the energetic stimulus for the ‘rise and expansion’ of the song’s second gesture of longing. With each successive wave of metric suspense and release, piano and singer climb to new registral heights, and new levels of intensity. A final burst of energy is reserved for the cry, ‘komm, o komme bald!’ in bars 46–48. The right hand temporarily resolves its syncopations and strikes an augmented triad on the fourth beat of bar 46, accompanying the singer’s ‘o’, thus adding yet another degree of intensity and pain to the expression of Sehnsucht.

The singer’s ‘o’ is a pressing call to the other. But it is also the woman’s moment of exhaustion. Following the climax of bar 47, the song undergoes a
gradual descent and a loss of life energy. Brahms approaches the final cadence by layering displacements at three levels of the metric hierarchy: the right hand continues its crochet syncopations (2+1); the singer has a minim syncopation in bar 49 (4+2); and the left hand plays a semibreve syncopation in bars 48–49 (8+4). (We should recall that in Schumann’s ‘Intermezzo’, the final vocal cadence is prepared through the superposition of rhythmically complementary displacement dissonances at two levels. In this respect, Brahms takes Schumann’s technique one step further.) The ‘empty’ downbeat of bar 49 marks a salient moment in this superposition of displacements; each of the ‘voices’ – right hand, singer and left hand – enters in turn after this point. Moreover, while sustaining the tension of a dominant ninth harmony, this downbeat also initiates the singer’s weakened repetition of her plea, ‘komm, o komme bald!’ Displacements return in the final bars of Brahms’s song, but more as echoes than as new disturbances.

Hence the protagonist performs her second gesture of longing with a rise, a burst of energy, and an appeal to transcendence, after which she fades away into herself. The effect aptly evokes Reichert’s notion of a ‘painfully heightened awareness of finitude’. The protagonist is aware of her imminent death; it will occur, as she says, ‘ere the May breezes blow, ere the thrush sings in the wood’. She emerges from and returns to this awareness as she gives voice to her final plea.

Metric disturbances are common in Brahms’s music. Since they seem to be a matter of style, one may balk at according them too much significance. Nevertheless, the way they emerge in individual songs in relation to form, harmony, line, motive and text does suggest possibilities for interpretation. The metric haze in the first strophe of ‘Immer leiser’, created by syncopations riding over the bar-line pulse, arguably evokes the blurred perception of the sickly, dreaming protagonist. It is through this ‘blurred perception’ – this ‘veil’ of sorrow – that longing must penetrate. Displacement dissonances also correspond with a sense of blurred perception in the final strophe of ‘Wie Melodien zieht es mir’, the song immediately preceding ‘Immer leiser’ in the Op. 105 set. ‘Wie Melodien zieht es mir’ is composed in modified strophic form. Syncopations emerge in all three strophes before the repetition of the last line. The gradually descending syncopations produce a hovering effect, which responds most closely to the line ‘und schwebt wie Duft dahin’ (‘and wafts away like a fragrance’). In the final strophe, however, the piano introduces the displaced pulse earlier. The second and fourth crochets of bars 34–35 (‘den mild aus stillem Keime ein feuchtes Auge ruft’) are marked by bass agogic accents and right-hand registral accents, the metric blurring corresponding with the blurred perception of the moist eye (‘feuchtes Auge’). The moist eye, an instrument of empathetic understanding, calls forth hidden essences in this poem. As in ‘Immer leiser’, the protagonist reaches through perceptual blurring to that which lies beyond.

The association of syncopation with a dramatically rising line is also evident in Brahms’s earlier ‘Dämmerung senkte sich von oben’, the first song from the
Op. 59 set, where they combine as an ecstatic gesture of hope. Dusk and darkness in Goethe’s poem symbolise perceptual and emotional crisis (‘Alles schwanket ins Ungewisse’ – ‘All wavers in uncertainty’). The first stanza ends with an image of ‘black-deepened darkness’ (‘Schwarzvertiefte Finsternisse’). The second stanza then begins with new light: ‘Nun am östlichen Bereich/Ahn’ ich Mondenglanz und -glut’ (‘Now in the eastern region I sense the shine and glow of the moon’). Brahms sets this pair of lines with an octave ascent in the voice and syncopations in the right hand. The ecstatic quality of this gesture flows from the way it drives upwards to its resolution. The vocal line ascends from e\textsuperscript{1} to b\textsuperscript{1} in four bars and then from a\textsuperscript{1} to e\textsuperscript{2} in two bars. A hemiola in these last two bars (for ‘Mondenglanz und Glut’) contributes to the sense of acceleration, while the bass’s two-octave descent opens up a vast registral expansion. Pulsating syncopations reach up and over the top, continuing through the entire second stanza. Perhaps just such a gesture is required to overcome darkness and melancholy in the age of Brahms.

‘Unterm Schutz’ (George/Schoenberg)

Brahmsian melancholy and post-1848 disillusion give way to decadence in the fin-de-siècle world of Stefan George and Arnold Schoenberg. Here Sehnsucht is refracted into suppressed desire and eruptive passion. The ‘rise and expansion’ of longing turns into sudden seismic release. Syncopations create tension, like the tension of suppressed desire, and they resolve as the vocal line leaps upward. Indeed, syncopations are pervasive throughout Schoenberg’s song settings – so much so, that at times there seems to be no metre left. The first song of his Book of the Hanging Gardens, Op. 15, is ‘Unterm Schutz’ (Ex. 9). Considering the song’s opening, Carl Schorske argues that ‘[The opening] motif, four times restated before the voice enters, is freed of formal order in time; it expands and contracts like breathing. Rhythm crosses the bar line, ignores the meter – a free pattern of quarter notes – first four, then two, then five, before they sweep upward and subside again’. Syncopations thus create an effect of temporal suspension (Schweben), which matches the schwebende Tonalität (suspended tonality) that Schoenberg himself heard in Wagner and Mahler, as well as in some of his own songs. Because the music lacks clear metric hierarchies, John Roeder has analysed Schoenberg’s atonal works in terms of ‘interacting pulse streams’, none of which assumes metric priority. On the other hand, the effect of temporal hovering may depend on hints of a regular metre, which can then be denied. Charles Morrison has shown that syncopations working against a regular metric frame emerge as motives in three of Schoenberg’s Op. 19 piano pieces. Similarly, syncopations create tension in ‘Unterm Schutz’ by working against implied pulses. In short, the listener is not obliged to hear a regular metre in this song (there is certainly no single metric frame). Rather, by feeling syncopated events as syncopations it is possible to discern an energetic process that stages critical features of the text.
Ex. 9 Schoenberg, ‘Unterm Schutz’, Op. 15 No. 1

1. Unterm schutz von dichten blättergründen
   Under the shade of dense ground–leaves
2. Wo von sternen feine flocken schneien
   Where fine flakes snow from the stars
3. Sachte stimmen ihre leiden künden
   Soft voices announce their pains
4. Fabeltiere aus den braunen schlünden
   Fabled beasts, from their brown gullets

*) Die beigesetzten Metronomzahlen dürfen nicht wörtlich genommen werden, sondern sollen bloß die Zähleinheit (d = ) des Grundtempos andeuten, aus welchem das Tempo frei zu gestalten ist.
Ex. 9 Continued

5. Strahlen in die marmorbecken speien
   Spout jets into the marble basins
6. Draus die kleinen bäche klagend eilen:
   From them small streams rush, complaining:
7. Kamen kerzen das gesträuch entzünden
   Candles came, setting the foliage ablaze
8. Weisse formen das gewässer teilen.
   White forms parse the water.

Journal compilation © 2006 Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
The Op. 15 cycle relates a tale of sexual awakening and disillusion. In the first poem, ‘Unterm Schutz’, the garden itself mirrors the inner world of the still undefined subject. There are soft voices that tell of their pains (line 3); fabled beasts with brown throats – presumably gargoyles – spout jets into marble fountains (line 4); and the water itself complains, like the soft voices, as it rushes about in small streams (line 6). The scene recounted in the first six lines takes place in a leisurely flowing present. A colon at the end of the sixth line – the only internal punctuation in George’s poem – sets up the central event: ‘Kamen kerzen das gesträuch entzünden’ (‘Candles came, setting the foliage ablaze’), which surely represents a moment of sexual awakening, forecasting the events of songs 2–11. This is the moment when undefined complaints, analogues of the indefinite longings of the earlier Romantics, turn into desire or are ‘set ablaze’. Also notable is the shift from the matrix of water and vocality to that of light and fire. Just as the ‘soft voices’ of line 3 represent vocality without shape, the ‘white forms’ of line 8 represent shape without vocality. Likewise, the ‘brown throats’ in line 4 suggest dark interiority, and the ‘white forms’ in line 8 depict bright exteriority. Finally, hearing – hitherto the prevailing faculty – yields to vision in the final line, so as to disrupt the flow of voice and water: ‘Weisse formen das gewässer teilen’ (‘White forms parse the water’).

How does Schoenberg respond to this text? A useful starting-point is the music for ‘kamen Kerzen das Gesträuch entzünden’ (bars 17–18). In bar 17, the singer makes a sudden leap to a syncopated e\(^2\), eighteen semitones above her previous b\(\text{w}\) and a perfect fourth above her previous registral limit (the b\(\text{w}\) of bar 13). She then resolves the e\(^2\) syncopation with a further rise to g\(\text{C}\). In its extremity the gesture effects a literal representation of ‘setting ablaze’. And it is significant that the moment is preceded by a steady loss of energy. I have annotated the vocal line in bars 13–16 with asterisks to mark the structural descent, b\(\text{w}\)–a\(^1\)–f\(\text{C}\)–e\(^1\)–d\(\text{w}\), which is followed by a further descent to b\(\text{w}\), the voice’s lowest pitch in the song. The vocal contour becomes broader throughout bars 14–16: the f\(\text{C}\) on the second crochet of bar 14 continues into the third beat of the bar before spilling over into a series of semiquavers; the e\(^1\) on the second crochet of bar 15 is followed by five quavers; and the d\(\text{w}\)\(^1\) on the second crochet of bar 16 is succeeded by only three quavers. The leap up to ‘kamen Kerzen’ thus emerges as a sudden breakthrough.

This leap, though startling and extreme, is not unprepared. The F\(\text{C}\)–D–F–E progression in the piano introduction escapes both its register and its centripetal tendencies with a leap up to g\(\text{C}\). This gesture foreshadows ‘kamen Kerzen’ by similarly resolving a syncopation with motion from E to G\(\text{C}\). A key difference, however, is that the opening gesture’s E follows on from a series of syncopated crochets (2+1, unit = quaver). Since ‘Unterm Schutz’ opens with a displaced layer sounding by itself, a listener without a score hearing the song for the first time would perceive only the sounding crochet pulse. Conversely, those with a score, or who know the song, might infer the missing pulse. The displaced
pitches F♯, D, F and E will then be heard to accrue potential energy, like the tension within a compressed spring. This energy would then be discharged as the syncopations resolve, propelling the line from E to g♭, with an extra lift from the immediately preceding F♯.69 The rise from e² to g♭² at ‘kamen Kerzen’ (bar 17) thus recalls the opening gesture, and partakes of its tension and release. The minor third descent from G♯ to E♭ on the word ‘Ker-zen’ seems to correct the semitone descent from G♯ to G♭ at the end of the opening gesture, while at the same time recalling the minor third at the end of the second gesture (C♯ to A♭) in bars 3–4. A G♯/E♭ oscillation in the piano then reverberates from bar 17 through to the end of the song.
The opening gesture (Ex. 10a) and the ‘kamen Kerzen’ moment (Ex. 10d) are mediated by elements of bars 6–12 (Ex. 10b) and bars 14–16 (Ex. 10c). In bar 6 the piano brings back the F–D–F figure in minims, doubled now in octaves. In other words, the opening gesture returns, but rhythmically augmented and metrically aligned. It consequently loses its metric dynamism as well as its ability to function as a motivating force. The figure can thus no longer reach up to the G: the music creates a prolonged moment of stillness expressing the text’s ‘Unterm Schutz von dichten Blättergründen’. Meanwhile, E, the fourth note of the opening gesture, is echoed by the octave Es of bars 8–9 (piano left-hand pedal e; right-hand e’s). The singer then syncopates the e at bar 11 on ‘sach-te’, thereby re-energising the opening figure, and directing it up towards the g (renotated here as A). The e/g leap at bar 11 (Ex. 10b) mediates registrally between the E/g of the opening and the e/g of ‘kamen Kerzen’. The resolution of this G (A) affords yet another link: by descending to G, it recalls the opening gesture; by continuing down to F on ‘ihre’ and ‘künden’, it anticipates the minor third descent of ‘Kerzen’ at bar 17.

Thus Schoenberg lets the ‘soft voices’ ‘announce their pains’ by returning to and re-energising the opening figure. This figure becomes a recurring, even obsessive, thought: we hear it in the opening; it is buried in the bass (from bar 6) depleted of metric energy; and it re-emerges with the syncopated statement of ‘sach-te’ (bars 11–12) in the middle register, as vocalised pain. This pain continues to be vocalised in the repetitions of the opening motive at bars 14–16. The process turns on Schoenberg’s analogy of vocality with water. Thus when vocality returns in lines 4–6 of the poem, it is linked to the imagery of jets of water spouting from the gargoyles’ throats, and of rushing, complaining streams. Furthermore, Schoenberg’s word-painting informs his motivic transformations of the opening figure into arch shapes evocative of the poem’s water jets. Thus we hear the first five notes of this motive (significantly omitting the G) in their original ordering, followed by the first four notes transposed down by two and four semitones (Ex. 10c). ‘Mar-mor-be-ken’ at the end of bar 14 transposes the permuted pitches of the opening gesture up a semitone. Its arching contour encapsulates transpositions unfolded across the entire passage (bars 14–16): {D, E, F, F} transposed up a half step to {B, F, F, G}, down a minor third to {C, D, E, E}, and down a whole step to {B, C, D, D}. As before, the opening gesture is ‘de-energised’, after which the singer re-energises and completes the gesture by syncopating the E and leading it up to G (bar 17).

A peculiarity of the song is that the gesture recollected in bars 14–16 does not actually indicate any need for completion. The ‘breakthrough’ (Durchbruch) leaps up to e and g in bar 17 mark the moment when vocality and water are replaced by light, fire and form. Ironically, it is the extreme vocality of these leaps which represents the emergence of light and fire in the song’s performance. The moment is also peculiar on a metrical level, since the syncopation on ‘ka-men’ (bar 17) seems to bear no relation to the immediately preceding rhythms. In fact, it arrives at the precise point to disrupt an established semibreve pulse.
The vocal line has agogic accents on the second beats of bars 14–16, which generate the displaced semibreve pulse 8+2, unit = quaver (or 4+1, unit = crotchet). The syncopation rides over this displaced semibreve pulse, pushing the agogic accent forwards to the third beat of bar 17.

In Schoenberg's setting of the poem's final line (including the piano postlude), the image of flickering candles is well expressed by the reverberations of the G♯/E♯ in octaves (piano right hand, bars 18–19). This continues to project the displaced crochet pulse (2+1, unit = quaver), with Arabic numeral 2s in the score indicating the events that contribute to this layer. At bar 19 the six-note figure which opened the song recurs in the left hand. Although this figure is syncopated, as before, Schoenberg institutes a crucial difference: it now sounds against the primary quaver and crochet pulses projected by the singer (‘Formen das Gewässer tei-(len)’). By subdividing the left-hand syncopations, the singer enacts what the text describes: an abnormal division – ‘Teilen’ – of something (water, opening gesture) that should otherwise flow freely.

The word ‘teilen’ signals a separation and splitting, but it may also indicate an ordering – an interpretation which relates to a theme of George’s poetic cycle as a whole. ‘There is a tension, as Schorske puts it, between ‘the socially ordered nature of the garden and the eruptive passion of an initiate to love’.

As we have seen, Schoenberg stages eruptive passion through the opening gesture’s metric tension and sudden release. The ordered quaver and crochet pulses of ‘Formen das Gewässer tei-(len)’ seem to oppose the energy of this gesture, and the opposition continues through the moment of release, though the roles are reversed: g♯ arrives in bar 20 on the third crochet beat, and the final syllable of ‘tei-len’ is delayed until the weak quaver.

Displacement dissonances are also apparent at other metric levels from bar 17 to the end of the song. The singer generates a displaced semibreve pulse (8+4, unit = quaver) with the accented syllables ‘Kerzen’, ‘entzünden’ and ‘Formen’ at bars 17–19 (see Arabic numeral 8s). The most significant result of the (rhythmically complementary) superposition of 8+4 and 2+1 is an absence of events on the downbeats of bars 18 and 19. Here the singer engages the intermediary minim syncopation, 4+2, with her final word, ‘teilen’. The piano then picks up 4+2 in bars 21–23 (see Arabic numeral 4s), and the song’s final two chords chime respectively with the 8+4 and 4+2 displacements. Both metre and tonality remain suspended. Desire – a fin-de-siècle analogue of Romantic longing – is left hanging, ready to erupt again as the song cycle continues.

This specific configuration of pitch motive, syncopation, contour and repressed/eruptive desire is unique to ‘Unterm Schutz’. Nevertheless, metric displacement dissonances continue to interact in significant ways with contour and motive in subsequent songs from the Op. 15 cycle, thereby tracing the dynamics of desire. The cycle’s second poem, for instance, describes the intricate beauties of the garden-paradise. A subject emerges only in the last line, and in contrast to all the garden’s enticements, his dream ‘follows only one’ (‘mein

traum verfolgt nur eines’). Schoenberg’s setting is restrained, as though the subject, standing outside of the garden, has yet to experience the full force of desire. The song’s vocal line proceeds to circle within a restricted registral range; for example, its opening slow recitative (setting the first full sentence of text) first descends from f¹ to a, then gradually rises to g¹, before continuing to b¹, the song’s apex. In the third song, the subject (a novice) describes his awkward entrance into the beloved’s enclosed space, and declares: ‘Kein Staunen war vorher in meinen Mienen / Kein Wunsch in mir eh ich dich blickte rege’ (‘there was no astonishment before in my face / no stirring desire in me before I saw you’). Now there is desire, and syncopations in the setting of the third line lead up to the first properly achieved climax in the cycle (bar 7). To achieve this climax, the piano must overcome its stalled D–E₃ progression; D moves to E and remains there in the right hand on beats three and four of bars 1, 2 and 3. The piano then succeeds in raising E₃ (as D⁷) to E in bar 4, again in bar 5, climaxing with the E, E₃ and G of bars 6–7. The overall progression from D to G fills in and energises the questioning D–G ascent from the end of song two. The youth would escape, ashamed, in the fourth song, but he finds his gaze returned. A glance (‘der Blick’) from the other seems to seek him out, to question him, to afford him a sign of hope. The song lacks a notated time signature, although it includes an extended section in ‘5/8’ beginning in bar 11 which leads into the climax at ‘vor dem ich ohne Lass gekniet’. Within this section, the left hand’s agogic accents on the notated downbeats sound against the right hand and vocal line’s agogic accents on the fourth quaver of each bar. In other words, the passage is driven up towards its climax by a D⁵₃ dissonance.

Approaching Schoenberg’s cycle in terms of this link between syncopation and desire affords a fresh perspective on David Lewin’s celebrated analyses of songs 5 and 7. The ‘affective disorder’ which Lewin discovers in the seventh song arguably originates in ‘tempestuous longing’ (‘ungestümes Sehnen’). As Lewin puts it, the song ‘works itself out dynamically into total exhaustion’, reflecting the words of George’s text, which ‘trail off in sighing’. In this respect, longing is no longer capable of reaching outwards; it collapses into an ‘Angst und Hoffen’ (‘anguish and hope’) which the poet must suffer in solitude.

Schoenberg employs, in an extreme form, a principle known to song composers since Schubert. This article has shown how displacement dissonances have been variously used in the nineteenth-century Lied tradition as an expressive vehicle of Sehnsucht. Whether ‘Unterm Schutz’ marks the end of that tradition, or merely its continuation, is a matter for future research. It would be interesting to explore the association of displacement dissonance and Sehnsucht in later music, as well as in instrumental genres, where it arguably features even more widely. We have seen that metrical effects can mediate between the technical and aesthetic aspects of musical material. Indeed, metric displacement dissonances perform the longing of the musical and poetic subjects, as they reach outward to the infinite and the beyond.
NOTES

The author would like to thank Richard Cohn, Berthold Hoeckner and Harald Krebs for their comments on earlier versions of this article. Examples 1 and 9 are reprinted with permission from the Neue Schubert-Ausgabe (Bärenreiter) and Arnold Schönberg: Sämtliche Werke (© 1914 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien/UE 5338), respectively.


4. Metric ‘displacement’ or ‘syncopation-type’ dissonances are defined as interactions of two or more pulses that have the same periodicity but which are not aligned. ‘Grouping’ or ‘hemiola-type’ dissonances, which I shall not explore here, involve two or more pulses with different periodicities, for example ‘3 against 2’. The
terms ‘displacement’ and ‘grouping’ dissonance are defined and used extensively in Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces*; they originate in Peter M. Kaminsky, ‘Aspects of Harmony, Rhythm, and Form in Schumann’s Papillons, Carnaval and Davidsbündlertänze’ (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1989), p. 27. Krebs uses ‘type A’ and ‘type B’ for grouping and displacement dissonances respectively in his earlier paper, ‘Some Extensions’. Richard Cohn uses the terms ‘syncopation-type’ and ‘hemiola-type’ for these same categories (see Richard Cohn, ‘Introduction to Meter and Metric Dissonance’, unpublished paper, 1999). There exists a potential for confusion between Krebs’s ‘metrical displacement dissonance’, referring to all situations in which metric layers of the same periodicity conflict, and Walter Frisch’s ‘(actual) metrical displacement’, referring to the specific situation in which we perceive the primary metre (temporarily) as something other than the written metre. Krebs uses the term ‘sublimal dissonance’ to refer to situations of ‘actual metrical displacement’ (see Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces*, especially pp. 46–52).

5. The period of this study extends from 1780, the year in which Goethe is said to have written ‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’, to 1908/09, the years in which Schoenberg wrote the George Lieder, Op. 15. This roughly parallels the ‘long nineteenth century’ of European history as outlined by David Blackbourn: ‘the period between the “double revolution” of the late eighteenth century (the French Revolution of 1789, the Industrial Revolution in Britain) and the First World War’. See his *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xiii.

6. Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), pp. 167–8. Zuckerkandl goes on to specify that ‘since in time there can be no real going back . . . the process can be better understood and visualised as a wave’ (p. 168).


9. As both David Ferris and Harald Krebs have observed, the poem was spoken by a female character in Eichendorff’s novella *Viel Lärmen um nichts*. Krebs also discusses the weak-beat accents, and their resolution with the phrase ‘da ruhe ich auch’. See Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces*, p. 163 and David Ferris, *Schumann’s Eichendorff Liederkreis and the Genre of the Romantic Cycle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 244, n. 9.


11. Critics have differed on whether ‘balde ruhest du auch’ expresses a longing for death; biographical issues relating to Goethe’s composition of the poem, and his return to it many years later are implicated in this debate. See L.P. Johnson, ‘“Wandrers Nachtlied”’, *German Life and Letters*, 36/i–ii (1982–3), p. 45, and

12. See Johnson, ‘“Wandrers Nachtlied”’, p. 35.


14. Johnson (p. 40) observes that ‘Whereas opening adverbial phrases such as “Über allen Gipfeln” and “In allen Wipfeln” demand that one should go on and complete the sense, they exercise nothing like the syntactical and semantic tug which exists between a transitive verb and its direct object: “In allen Wipfeln/Spürest du – Kaum einen Hauch”’.

15. Despite the text’s dactylic rhythms, the word ‘du’ receives an accent for two main reasons: firstly because it falls at the end of a line; and secondly because of its parallelism with Ruh. This accent marks the entrance of the subject into the poetic discourse.


17. I retain the ‘e’ in ‘Vögelein’ following the *Ausgabe letzter Hand*, and, as Johnson notes (p. 35), ‘all subsequent editions which possess any degree of authenticity’. Schubert, however, set the word as ‘Vöglein’, and I shall follow his practice in my discussion of the song.


24. Joseph Kerman suggests that the last stanza of the first song was Beethoven’s own addition. See his ‘An die ferne Geliebte’, pp. 126–7.


30. Frank Samarotto briefly describes the role of metric displacements in Schumann’s ‘Intermezzo’: ‘Schumann’s setting, an essay in displacement on many levels, features an offbeat accompaniment that portrays both a beating heart and the distance it longs to bridge’. See Samarotto, ‘“The Body That Beats”’, n. 6.


32. This analysis draws on William James’s notion of the ‘psychological present’ as described by Candace Brower: ‘As William James first noted in 1890, we do not experience the present as a point, but as a span of time, made up of those events of the past that are still part of our conscious awareness . . . . The psychological present is not of fixed duration, like a sliding window through which we view passing events. Instead, a continuous stream of information is broken up into a series of psychological presents’. See her ‘Memory and the Perception of Rhythm’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, 15/i (1993), p. 22.


34. One imagines that Adorno’s interest in this aspect of Eichendorff may in fact have been inspired by Schumann’s settings. Adorno also observes that ‘The line “Und ich mag mich nicht bewahren” [“And I don’t care to preserve myself”], which appears in one of the poems he placed at the head of his collected poems, is in fact a prelude to his whole oeuvre. Here he is most intimately akin to Schumann’ (p. 64, my emphasis added). Adorno’s essay concludes with a discussion of Schumann’s *Eichendorff Liederkreis*; Reinhold Brinkmann has noted that both Adorno and Thomas Mann quote Eichendorff poems using words that Schumann changed. See Brinkmann, *Schumann und Eichendorff*, p. 9.

35. It is significant that F♯ minor is also the key of the cycle’s immediately preceding song, ‘In der Fremde’, whose protagonist dwells on his or her absolute isolation both in life and in death. In a sense, the protagonist of ‘Intermezzo’ attempts to bridge a distance that, in the previous song, appears unbridgeable.

36. Ferris discusses aspects of voice-leading, harmony and rhythm that give this cadence a feeling of conclusiveness. See his *Schumann’s Eichendorff Liederkreis*, pp. 138–9.

37. Krebs uses the expression Dx+y (unit = z), with ‘D’ representing ‘displacement’, to refer to the interaction of two layers (see Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces*, p. 35). I often find it useful to refer to individual displaced layers. I therefore use x+y to refer to the
individual layer, and $D_{x+y}$ to refer the interaction of two layers; $x+y$ will refer to a displacement vis-à-vis the primary metre unless specified otherwise.

38. I identify hierarchically aligned displacements in response to a critique of Krebs’s theory by Robert Hatten. Hatten asks whether consistently grouped rhythmic layers that do not coincide with the notated or primary functioning metre always amount to metrical dissonance. ‘The question is’, Hatten writes, ‘whether the displaced antimetrical layers . . . possess an internal hierarchy independent of the prevailing metric layer’. See Robert S. Hatten, review of Harald Krebs, Fantasy Pieces, Music Theory Spectrum, 24/ii (2002), pp. 274 and 276. In Schumann’s ‘Intermezzo’, we find that the syncopated chords do possess precisely such an internal hierarchy, independent of the prevailing metre.

39. The distinction made between ‘rhythmically complementary’ and ‘hierarchically aligned’ superpositions parallels Krebs’s own distinction between dissonances that are related to each other through augmentation or diminution (for example, $D_{2+1}$ and $D_{4+2}$), and layers which have the same displacement index but a different cardinality (for example, $D_{2+1}$ and $D_{4+1}$). See Krebs, Fantasy Pieces, pp. 99–100 and 104–5.

40. See also Ferris, Schumann’s Eichendorff Liederkreis, p. 139.

41. The following discussion summarises a more extended analysis in Yonatan Malin, ‘Metric Dissonance and Music-Text Relations in the German Lied’ (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2003), pp. 68–82.


43. Adorno, ‘In Memory of Eichendorff’, p. 64.

44. As Alfred North Whitehead observed, ‘The earlier half of the century . . . was a peculiar period of hope, in the sense in which, sixty or seventy years later, we can now detect a note of disillusionment, or at least of anxiety’. See his Science and the Modern World (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 96.


49. The translation is adapted from Lionel Salter, CD booklet to Orfeo C 058 831 A.

50. As Heather Platt describes this passage, ‘The piano has two-measure segments, but . . . the bass line does not coincide with the melody’s segments, which are doubled in the upper lines of the piano . . . . Carl Schachter has suggested that this lack of synchronization echoes the girl’s dream: the man arrives but too late, the girl has already died’. See her ‘Text-Music Relationships in Lieder of Johannes Brahms’ (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1992), p. 172.

51. This phenomenon is discussed by Hugo Riemann in ‘Die Taktfreiheiten in Brahms’ Liedern’, *Die Musik*, 12/i (1912), pp. 10–21.

52. For discussion of the minor thirds sequence in this song, see Stein and Spillman, *Poetry into Music*, pp. 129–31, and Pieter C. Van den Toorn, ‘Taruskin’s Angle’, *In Theory Only*, 10/iii (1987), p. 40. It is significant that the song begins in C\# minor and ends in D\# major. The use of D\# rather than C at the end of the song may be explained as a matter of notational convenience. On the other hand, it is impossible to progress through a series of minor-third related harmonies, as Brahms does here, and arrive at a literal octave. To arrive at C\#, Brahms would have needed to re-write one of the minor thirds as an augmented second. In this sense, there is no return in the song; the persona arrives at a radically different (tonal) place from where she began. Conversely, one might equally argue that she does in fact return to the same place, even in the absence of a stable tonal hierarchy – in other words, that minor thirds and augmented seconds are equivalent. For the problems associated with so called ‘equal divisions of the octave’, see Richard Cohn, ‘Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions’, *Music Analysis*, 15/i (1996), pp. 9–11. Heather Platt considers the shift from C\# minor to D\# major in this song in relation to Brahms’s general use of key associations, as well as comparing it with a similar shift in the last song of Schumann’s *Dichterliebe*. See Platt, ‘Text-Music Relationships in Lieder of Johannes Brahms’, p. 190.


54. See Platt, ‘Text-Music Relationships in Lieder of Johannes Brahms’, p. 190: ‘Although Lingg’s poem does not specify that the girl dies, I would like to suggest that Brahms’s change of mode and the quiet dynamic level of the final measures signify that her fight is over’.

55. Stein and Spillman note metric ambiguities at the beginning of the song that hint at a displaced semibreve layer, 8+4. The initial \(\frac{4}{3}\) harmony, the arrival on a root position tonic in bar 1 and the cadence in bar 2 all generate third-crochet accents, while the singer has entrances on the third crochets of bars 10 and 13. See Stein and Spillman, *Poetry into Music*, p. 186.


57. For a discussion of this poem in relation to similar themes in Eichendorff’s ‘Zwielicht’, see Reinhold Brinkmann, Schumann und Eichendorff, pp. 56–7.


63. I follow Stefan George’s punctuation, including his practice of capitalising only the first word of each line. The translation is adapted from Robert Erich Wolf, CD booklet to Elektra Nonesuch 9 79237–2.

64. For a discussion of the influence of Symbolism on George, see David Michael Hertz, The Tuning of the Word: The Musico-Literary Poetics of the Symbolist Movement (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).

65. Schoenberg adds commas after lines 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7, and there is a rest in the vocal part following each of these lines.

66. The term ‘vocality’ refers here to an actual or implied use of voice in the poem. Thus vocality is explicit in the ‘soft voices’ which ‘announce their pains’, while water resembles a voice when it ‘spouts’ from ‘throats’, and when ‘small streams rush, complaining’. My analysis also refers to the ‘vocality’ (the use of voice) of a spoken utterance within the poem, as well as in its musical setting. Moreover, ‘vocality’ in linguistics may denote the use of voice in individual consonants (for example, the s in ‘sachte’ is ‘vocalised’, whereas the s in ‘Stimmen’ is not). This technical usage does not concern me here. For further discussion of vocality in song, see Jonathan Dunsby, Making Words Sing: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Song (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).


68. I designate this series of pitches (excluding the bs) as ‘structural’ for two reasons: they have agogic accents (durations of at least a dotted quaver); and they are sung with accented syllables.
69. It is significant that Ernst Kurth uses the term ‘potential energy’ to refer to the tendencies of chromatically inflected harmony (especially in Wagner), which he contrasts with the ‘kinetic energy’ of melodic phenomena. See Ernst Kurth, *Selected Writings*, trans. Lee A. Rothfarb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 135. Unlike Kurth, I use the term to capture the sense in which tension grows with each additional deferral of metric alignment. Schoenberg’s syncopation here is also notable because it resolves onto beat two, a weak beat in the notated metre. Nothing at this point suggests hearing the notated second beat as a weak beat. Nonetheless, Schoenberg may have wanted the listener to perform and perceive this not as a complete metric resolution, but as a transference of the metric displacement: 2+1 becomes 4+2 (unit = quaver).

70. I adapt the method for annotating such metric dissonances from Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces*.

71. I am grateful to Ulrich Plass for this observation.


**ABSTRACT**

This article seeks to explore the hermeneutics of metric dissonance by examining the association between displacement or syncopation-type conflicts and Romantic longing (*Sehnsucht*) in the German Lied. It includes close readings of music-text relations in four specific songs: the ‘Wandrers Nachtlied II’ (Goethe/Schubert); ‘Intermezzo’ (Eichendorff/Schumann); ‘Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer’ (Lingg/Brahms); and ‘Unterm Schutz’ (George/Schoenberg). The primary methodology for the process of metric analysis derives from the work of Harald Krebs.

The article as a whole traces changes both in the use of displacement dissonance, and in the nature of *Sehnsucht*, as well as correlations between the two over the course of the ‘long nineteenth century’. The four analyses as a group outline an historical progression of ‘introduction’ (in Schubert), ‘intensification’ (in Schumann), ‘complication’ (in Brahms) and ‘refraction’ (in Schoenberg). The study thereby combines a history of metric dissonance – one of the recurring elements of nineteenth-century style – with that of *Sehnsucht* – one of the most prominent features of Romantic consciousness.