The Romantic Generation

dures and can use instrumental color to bring new forms into being. The
toccata displays the instrument and tests it. It aims not at composition, but at
an illusion of improvisation.

In improvising, conception and realization are theoretically one and the
same. Practically, of course, there is generally a basic model that guides the
improvising performer, but the listener is intended to believe that the creation
is truly spontaneous. The relation to the instrument, its mechanics as well as
its sound, is all-important here: the improviser often feels as if the instrument
itself is creating the music. This delight in tone color and in the physical contact
with the instrument must, we suppose, have existed from the primitive begin-
nings of music, but it was the Romantic generation that introduced it directly
into the initial stages of strict composition. The change was not thoroughgoing,
of course: composers would long continue to erect neutral structures of pitch
and rhythm, and then clothe them in instrumental dress. From Schumann and
Liszt to Mahler and Debussy and to our own decades, however, it is evident
that timbre, register, and spacing play a greater and more determining part in
the conception of the most interesting and significant works. The Romantics
cannot be said to have enlarged musical experience except insofar as all original
composers have done so, but they altered the relationship between the delight
in sound and the delight in structure; they gave a new importance to aspects
of musical experience considered until then of secondary interest or relegated
entirely to the performer. They permanently enlarged the role of sound in the
composition of music.

Chapter Two

Fragments

Renewal

The first song of Schumann's Dichterliebe begins in the middle, and ends as it
began— an emblem of unsatisfied desire, of longing eternally renewed. The
introduction returns not only before the second stanza but at the end as well.
It starts as if continuing a process already in motion, and ends unresolved on
a dissonance (see next page).

The vocal line also remains unresolved, as if the music springs not so much
from the return of May in the opening verse as from the last words: "my desire
and longing." The direct inspiration is, of course, Heine's poem; the musical
representation, nevertheless, is dependent on a radical evolution in style. Not
until Schumann's generation was it possible to end with a dissonance—unless
one excepts Mozart's sextet "A Musical Joke," where each player ends crash-
ingly in the wrong key (no doubt Mozart enjoyed the effect, but the real
innovator, obviously, is the composer who took seriously what everyone before
him had thought nonsensically funny). The last chord of Schumann's song is
the dominant seventh of F sharp minor: more than any other chord in the
classical vocabulary, a dominant seventh demands an unequivocal resolution,
and the proper resolving chord is the most fundamental one, the tonic. There
is, in fact, no F sharp minor chord anywhere in the song—and some doubt
whether F sharp minor is really the key of the song. With an introduction that
does not fix the tonality but seems to take a previously settled harmony and
rhythmic motion for granted, and with an ending that prolongs the dissonance
of the opening phrase, "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai" is a brilliant and
famous example of the open form which was one of the ideals of the period.

This way of putting it, however, does imperfect justice to Schumann's art.
Vocal line and piano part may, separately, be unresolved in themselves, but
they successively resolve each other. The first bars of the singer dissolve all the
SINGSTIMME.

Langsam, zart.

PÄNNOFTE.

Im von der schönen Monat Mai...
als alte Kämmer.

sparen, da ist in meiner Brust... die Liebe aufgerungen.

FRAGMENTS
painful tension of the introduction into an A major cadence. In turn, the last notes of the singer move naturally into the F\(_4\) that follows in the piano:

![Music notation]

Although the harmony at the end of the vocal line is consonant (a D major triad), it is the line itself that is dissonant, that demands resolution. In the context of the song, indeed, even the harmony calls out for the resolution brought by the piano:

![Music notation]

The extraordinary craft of the song lies in the relation between voice and piano, the sense of the different musical spaces occupied by each, and the way resolution finally arrives only outside the space in which the tension was principally defined. The harmony of the final bar remains, naturally, unresolved—but we have already heard it resolved twice, in bars 4 to 6 and 15 to 17:

![Music notation]

The form is circular: the opening of each section in turn resolves the previous one and ends, itself unresolved—only a dissonant close is possible. The form goes around only twice, but logically there is no reason for it not to continue indefinitely, and it is part of the wonderful effect that we feel the infinite possibility of return. In this sense the dominant seventh chord is only the apparent close of a form that has no end, of a da capo senza fine; the form is closed on itself, although open in all imaginable realizations. In insisting upon the implicit resolution, I do not want to minimize the magical effect of the final chord which suspends motion without completing it.

It is significant that at the moment when the piano resolves the vocal line, piano and voice clash most strikingly. The G\(_4\) in bar 12, which is the climax of the singer’s melody, is followed a second later by the G\(_4\) above it in the piano:

![Music notation]

The most important opposition in the score is here, and it creates a dissonance of great emotional power in the principal line as it passes from voice to piano; it immediately and appropriately follows the words “die Liebe aufgegangen” (love arose), and then, in the second stanza, “mein Sehnen und Verlangen” (my desire and longing). The harmony implied by the vocal melody is momentarily frustrated, annulled by the instrumental sound (the dissonance would be far less striking if it were wholly outlived within either voice or piano). The effect is reinforced by the phrase rhythm: until this point the phrases have been a simple succession of four-bar units, and this is broken just here as the piano starts a new phrase in the last bar of the singer’s phrase, and the introduction returns before the singer has quite finished.

“Introduction” is the wrong word: the melody is seamless—some of the notes have words put to them. The overlapping between voice and piano results in an unbroken line:

![Music notation]

From this it should be clear that the singer’s melody grows directly out of the piano’s—it is the same shape inverted:

![Music notation]

Even more significantly, the piano interlude in turn, when it comes back, appears to grow out of the vocal line. At the end of the first stanza we realize that the second playing of the opening bars outlines the same shape as the second part of the vocal melody, “Then love rose in my heart”:

![Music notation]

As this proceeds, its full contour is anticipated in the piano by

![Music notation]

and the return of the opening sums it up, intensifies it, and resolves it:
In short, the piano seems to derive from the voice by diminution, just as the vocal melody came from the piano motif by inversion. It would be simpler to think of the whole song as the continuous development of a single motif.

The ambiguous relation of voice to instrument is crucial to Schumann’s technique. When the voice enters, it is almost perfectly doubled by the piano—almost, as the voice begins by repeating one note that the piano ties, and anticipates the next note (B), a sixteenth note before the piano (bars 4 to 5). This kind of small deviation from exact doubling is common practice long before Schumann, a device essential to the use of an accompaniment that doubles a solo voice or instrument: it was found in the previous century in opera and in chamber music as well as in songs, and Schubert employed it to great effect. No one, however, exploited it as radically and obsessively as Schumann, as we can see even in the small space of this short song: as it proceeds, voice and piano move gradually farther apart without ever completely separating.

The two versions, vocal and instrumental, of the same melody appear to pull at each other in bars 5 to 12 as one moves ahead or drags behind, creating dissonances between successive notes of the melody, many of which remain unresolved or only partially resolved—resolutions which come too late to be completely convincing or to muffle the gradually increasing tension. In bars 9 to 12 the piano doubles most of the notes of the melody, but plays them too late and holds them too long:

\[\text{Image of music notation}\]

The C\(_4\) in the piano at the end of bar 9 is never, in fact, resolved. Schumann plays with our sense that resolution in another register or in another space is incomplete as voice and piano move out of phase, and the dissonances enrich the harmony in a way totally unacceptable to classical counterpoint (the resolving D appears in the piano too late—only in bar 11, when the harmony has changed).

\[\text{Image of music notation}\]

At the end of the phrase, we might consider the voice and piano to have split apart as the piano’s G\(_4\) attacks the previous G\(_4\) in the voice, except that the melodic line remains essentially unbroken.

The subtle interplay between solo melody and accompaniment occasionally found in earlier composers is transcended here. The piano is no longer an accompanying instrument, and the complete melody is contained only within its part. Every note of the melody appears in the piano and is notated as a melody note in a principal voice, except for bars 10 and 12: we accept the fact that the necessary resolving D cannot be found in the upper line of the piano in bar 10, and is delayed until bar 11 (where it still doubles the voice); we accept the transformation of C\(_4\) to G\(_4\). Our acceptance of these tensions is essential to Schumann’s purpose. The blurring of accompaniment and solo part is mirrored in the voice leading within the piano, as accompanying voices fuse with the principal voice. We are meant to hear the first bar as one single expressive line:

\[\text{Image of music notation}\]

although it is notated—and also understood—as four-voice harmony. This technique is sustained throughout.

These ambiguities—the keyboard part as four-voice texture and yet as single line, voice and instrument as opposed and yet as one unified melody—are further extended on a larger scale to the harmony. The piano, when alone, appears to be in F sharp minor; the voice enters with a clear A major cadence. The controversy about the real key of the song seems to me largely misguided, although Schenkerians, who insist on A major, have the obvious advantage, since only the A major of bars 5 to 8 give one the traditional sense of rest and of release of harmonic tension. It should also be obvious that the contrast of F sharp minor and A major is only a surface opposition: like Chopin (in the Scherzo no. 2 and the Fantasy, op. 49), Schumann treats the relative minor here and elsewhere as a variant form of the tonic, using it rather for a change of mode and not of tonality. The controversy, however, reveals a genuine ambiguity on which the emotional power of the song rests. The dominant seventh of F sharp minor is paradoxically the most stable chord in the song, and we return to it over and over again. The A major that enters with Heine’s poetry is, in fact, a surprise, and line 3 of the stanza immediately initiates a turning back towards F sharp minor, a movement that is never completed. It may be reasonable to claim that A major is the basic key, but to insist too much upon it is to obscure the fact that Schumann has elaborated a form in which the tonic is itself unstable. (The second song will both resolve and intensify these contradictions.) The revolving structure wonderfully makes the A major cadence less convincing the second time than the first since we now know that it will have such a transitory effect, and the most unstable chord, the dominant seventh, becomes the stable pivot around which everything turns.

Without for a moment challenging the system of tonality, Schumann here stands basic tonal structure on its head. The standard tonal procedure (with the exception of forms like toccatas and fantasies, which are intended to act...
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as free improvisation) is to define a point of rest, a central triad, move away from it, and return to it one or more times. Schumann's song, however, starts with a traditionally unstable chord, moves to a point of rest, a stable cadence, and returns to the unstable chord as its goal. It is crucial for the conception that the return be identical with the opening so that the form is infinitely repeatable. The structure is finished in conception, although both beginning and end are open in sound. The closure is defined not by the points of rest but by a potentially infinite oscillation, adequately revealed by two stanzas. Completely balanced and yet unstable, it is a perfect Romantic fragment: complete in itself, a fragmentary image of the infinite, the return of springtime, the renewal of desire.

The Fragment as Romantic form

The Romantic Fragment—at once complete and torn away from a larger whole—had a distinguished literary history by the time Schumann wrote Dichterliebe. It came into being with the early Romantic movement in Germany, the circle of young artists, philosophers, scientists, and poets in Jena during the very last years of the eighteenth century, and was for a brief time their principal form of expression: it characterized the movement. One might say that the creator of the Fragment was Friedrich Schlegel, who offered this definition of the form (the definition is itself one of the series of 451 "Fragments" printed in 1798 in the Athenaeum, a literary review published by Schlegel and his brother August Wilhelm from 1798 to 1800):

A fragment should be like a little work of art, complete in itself and separated from the rest of the universe like a hedgehog.

Ein Fragment muss gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel.

The hedgehog (unlike the porcupine, which shoots its quills) is an amiable creature which rolls itself into a ball when alarmed. Its form is well defined and yet blurred at the edges. This spherical shape, organic and ideally geometrical, suited Romantic thought: above all, the image projects beyond itself in a provocative way. The Romantic Fragment draws blood only from those critics who handle it unthinkingly. Like its definition, the Romantic Fragment is complete (this oxymoron was intended to disturb, as the hedgehog's quills make its enemies uncomfortable): separate from the rest of the universe, the Fragment nevertheless suggests distant perspectives. Its separation, indeed, is aggressive: it projects into the universe precisely by the way it cuts itself off.

The literary form is generally aphoristic, and derives ultimately from the French maxims of the seventeenth century, perfected by La Rochefoucauld and

La Bruyère. The most direct source, however, was the late eighteenth-century polemicist Chamfort, whose Maxims and Characters showed that the form could be given a more provocative and cynical twist. This is clear enough in his most famous sentence: "Love in society is often only the exchange of two fantasies and the rubbing together of two epidermises."

The classical aphorism not only expressed its thought with precision; it also narrowed the sense of the words, focussed on their meaning. La Rochefoucauld was a master of this kind of focus:

Women can master their coquetry less easily than their passion. When our merit declines, our taste declines as well.

The only thing that should surprise us is that we are still able to be surprised.

Les femmes peuvent moins surmonter leur coquetterie que leur passion. (no. 334)
Quand notre mérite baisse, notre goût baisse aussi. (no. 379)
On ne devrait s'étonner que de pouvoir encore s'étonner. (no. 384)

The words become more precise here, and they lose some of the agreeable haziness that they acquire in everyday speech. We move towards a kernel of meaning: the force is centripetal. This is even true of the more poetical of La Rochefoucauld's maxims:

Neither the sun nor death can be looked at steadily.

Magnanimity despises everything in order to have everything.

Le soleil ni la mort ne se peuvent regarder fixement. (no. 26)
La magnanimité méprise tout, pour avoir tout. (no. 248)

The precision does not destroy the poetic resonance but intensifies it.

With Chamfort, however, the words often lose their definition as the thought gains in precision:

Everything I learned, I have forgotten: the little I remember, I guessed.

Tout ce que j'ai appris, je l'ai oublié; le peu ce dont je me rappelle, je l'ai deviné.

The words in this observation begin to expand as if with some kind of inward pressure: the direction is centrifugal. As we puzzle out the thought, the individual words—"learn," "forget," "guess"—begin to move to the margins of
their meaning, to connote more than they denote. This expansive movement attains its greatest power with the Romantic Fragment, and it entailed a renunciation of classical focus.

The fashion for publishing fragments began several decades before the fragments of Friedrich Schlegel, and works of considerable distinction were so presented. The important theories of Lavater, for example, appeared as Fragments on Physiognomy (1775–1778), and the most celebrated work of German literature, Goethe's Faust, was first made public as a fragment in 1790. These fragments acknowledged and proclaimed their unfinished form, although Lavater took an important step towards the more paradoxical Romantic conception when he affirmed that not merely the form but the very conception of his thought was necessarily fragmentary. Schlegel gave the genre a firmer basis when he implied that the fragmentary state was not a necessary evil but a positive virtue. It was above all a modern virtue: "Many works of the ancients have become fragments: many works of the moderns are already conceived as fragments" (Viele Werke der Alten sind Fragmentge geworden. Viele Werke der Neuen sind es gleich bei der Entstehung). Starting as a student of Greek literature, Schlegel felt that the perfection of the classical work was unattainable in his own day; in place of classical beauty, modern art had to be satisfied with the "interesting." Clearly, the "interesting," a more dynamic concept than the "beautiful," is necessarily imperfect, and Schlegel's aesthetics of the fragment justified a new and progressive sense of art.

The Romantic Fragment, imperfect and yet complete, was typical of the age in its effort to have its cake and eat it too. Each Fragment is, or should be, a finished form: it is the content that is incomplete—or, rather, that develops further with each reading. Schlegel's Fragments carry the seeds of their own development, and even the seeds of their own criticism:

The Germans, they say, are the greatest people in the world in respect to the elevation of their sense of art and their scientific thought. Indeed: only there are very few Germans.

Die Deutschen, sagt man, sind, was Höhe des Kunstsims und des wissen-
schaftlichen Geistes betrifft, das erste Volk in der Welt. Gewiss: nur gibt es sehr wenige Deutschen.

This both affirms and undermines the patriot's pride. If the affirmation still stands after the undermining has done its work, that is because the work begun is not finished: the fragment sets in motion a process to which the end is not in sight. When Schlegel claims that every man has one novel in him, and it doesn't matter if he writes it or not, the relation of literature to life, novel to biography, is made permanently ambiguous; and the ambiguity is not static but constantly shifting as one seeks to apply the thought. The more one ponders this fragment, the more difficult it becomes to fix the concept of "novel," which changes as it goes from art to life. Starting from the invention of the maxim in classical times, it is evident that all maxims were, ideally, presented for meditation, for continuous interpretation; but the Romantic Fragment implicitly shows the act of interpretation already in motion.

The Romantic Fragment is, therefore, a closed structure, but its closure is a formality: it may be separated from the rest of the universe, but it implies the existence of what is outside itself not by reference but by its instability. The form is not fixed but is torn apart or exploded by paradox, by ambiguity, just as the opening song of Dichterliebe is a closed, circular form in which beginning and end are unstable—implying a past before the song begins and a future after its final chord.

After the Athenaeum fragments, literary Europe was inundated by little collections of observations, maxims, and aphorisms by major and minor figures. Schlegel had already included fragments by the theologian Schleiermacher, by Novalis, and by his brother August Wilhelm Schlegel in his own collection. A separate set of Novalis, called Pollen Dust, was printed in the first issue of the Athenaeum, and Schlegel later added a new series, Idees. Many of these "fragments," particularly those of lesser writers, were ordinary observations, run-of-the-mill maxims, and Novalis had already objected that many fragments by Schlegel himself were not true "Fragments" at all. An aesthetics of the fragment was gradually diffused throughout literature, with a considerable influence in the other arts. In music Schumann was the greatest representative of this aesthetic. This may have been in part because his favorite reading came from the German authors of the first decades of the nineteenth century, Jean-Paul and E. T. A. Hoffmann. It was probably Hoffmann who had the greatest effect on Schumann, and Hoffmann was closest in practice to early Romantic theory: he stands midway among the members of the Jena circle and the next generation of writers, including Heine.

Open and closed

A song that ends on a dominant seventh chord is an example of the Fragment so obvious and so limited that it may lead us to overlook how the aesthetic works throughout much of Schumann's music, and in the music of his contemporaries as well. The second song of Dichterliebe, "Aus meinen Tränen," will carry us a step further. It has a final cadence on the tonic, and almost no ambiguity in defining its tonality, but in an important sense it has even less of a beginning or an end than the first song:
It has become the fashion, when performing Dichterliebe, to go from the first to the second song without pause. A short pause of two or three seconds would, I think, bring out the way that the opening song is both complete in itself and inconclusive, but in any case the second song begins by appearing to clarify the ambiguities of what precedes. The ambiguity of F sharp minor versus A major is resolved halfway through the first bar in favor of F sharp minor—and then shifts immediately and unequivocally to A Major! The opening bar takes off, in fact, from the ambiguity, plays with it; the effect depends on the previous song.

Schumann’s setting of “Aus meinen Tränen” is, on the surface, even simpler than Heine’s poem: the eight verses in two stanzas are reduced by the composer to four phrases in one stanza, and the vocal lines of the first, second, and fourth phrases are almost identical. The resulting primitive form AABA, however, is reflected subtly at the opening of the fourth phrase. Bar 3 has more notes than the corresponding bars 7 and 15, but this is only because Heine gives eight syllables to the line while the other verses have only five, and Schumann makes the minimum alteration in the melody’s rhythmic contour to accommodate the poem. By contrast, the extra syllables in the fourth phrase in bars 12 to 14 (nine, as opposed to seven in bars 1–3 and 4–6) are exploited by Schumann to create a more intense expression. It is, however, the rewriting of the accompaniment in bars 12 to 14 that transforms the already twice-heard phrase into something new, that creates the climax and makes it clear that this is the end of the song.

Except, of course, that the singer does not end—and that the final notes in the piano are absolutely perfunctory. Here, Schumann exploits with even greater effect the ambiguity of the location of the principal melodic line in voice or piano that we perceived in the first song. The voice doubles every note of the melody in the piano, with one exception—the last note of the repeated phrase I have labeled A. This phrase appears three times, and three times the singer stops with a pause just before the end. It is the instrument that rounds off the penultimate harmony each time, and each time with an unobtrusive pianissimo. I think it is evident that the pianist should always play the cadence in tempo after the fermata, even the final one—the ritardando applies only until the fermata, rounding off the vocal line rhythmically while leaving it incomplete harmonically. The last chord satisfies the formal requirement of resolving the dominant seventh chord that the first song withholding, but the poem and the song are clearly over with the fermata.

“Flowers grew from my tears and my sighs became a choir of nightingales. If you love me, my child, I shall send thee all the flowers, and the song of the nightingale will sound before your window.” Schumann’s setting emphasizes, not the movement from despair to hope, but the sense that the hope is not yet fulfilled. The singer ends each phrase as a question; the piano concludes without concluding. The second song prolongs the unsatisfied desire of the
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first, and the note on which the singer pauses three times and leaves suspended at the end is, in fact, a B, the last note of the first song left suspended in the piano. The resolution comes always too late, and it never comes to the singer.

The use of repetition is remarkable: three times the penultimate harmony is left suspended, and after the first two fermatas the pianist's cadence is so delayed as to be an upbeat to the next phrase. The reshaping of the final phrase leads us to expect a more elaborate cadence: the harmony gains in intensity with a new chromatic alto part that descends from G through F# and E to E, the texture is richer; and the dynamics, now opening pianissimo, not piano, shape the phrase with an expressive swell and diminuendo; above all, Schumann adds a pedal indication, which implies, with no doubt whatever, that the pedal should have been used sparingly or not at all until this bar, which should vibrate with a fullness of emotion. After all this reworking, the second half of the phrase reappears absolutely unaltered, except that the pause before the cadence is now more than twice as long. Schumann was a master at constructing a cadence which still leaves one of the polyphonic elements unresolved, but he never used the device more powerfully or more expressively than at this point. By playing off the voice against the piano, he shows amazingly that a dominant seventh can be followed by its tonic without reaching a truly satisfying resolution, and provides an extraordinary musical image of his text with the simplest means.

"Aus meinen Tränen" is complete and perfectly shaped, but without a satisfactory beginning or end. Its opening makes independent sense on paper, but in performance it seems above all to prolong the first song, "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai"—not merely to complement it, and fit with it the way the adagio of a sonata or symphony is related to the opening movement. The harmonic sense of the first bar of the second song depends absolutely on the previous song. Further, the A major cadence at the end of the first two phrases, which was so perfunctory after the fermata to appear like an upbeat to the following phrase, is equally perfunctory after the even longer final pause, and now seems a simple upbeat on the dominant to the D Major of the third song. This compromises the end as well as the beginning. The song fulfills the apparently contradictory aesthetic of the Fragment: it appears to be a separate, closed traditional structure that satisfies all the formal requirements, with a well-defined melody and V/I cadence, and yet it makes no sense in independent performance.

This inner contradiction distinguishes the Fragment in music from pieces like the slow movements of Beethoven's Waldstein and Appassionata Sonatas which cannot be played independently (they act as introductions, and move without pause or cadence into what follows), or from works which could be performed independently, like the adagio variations of Beethoven's Sonata, op. 111, but which attain their full meaning only within the context of the whole work. "Aus meinen Tränen," like "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai," is both an independent form and nonsense if executed on its own—not merely poorer in meaning and disappointing in effect, but puzzling and even inexplicable.

From this principle Schumann was able to create a song cycle that is structurally an advance in technique, if not in value, over those by Beethoven and Schubert. In Beethoven's An die ferne Geliebte, the songs all run together without pause as a continuous series; by contrast, the individual songs of Schubert's cycles can be sung out of context, although their significance is deeper and fuller when they are performed as part of the cycle. Schumann combines both systems: Dichterliebe and Frauenliebe und Leben are made up of apparently independent songs which cannot be independently performed. Among the songs are some exceptions: "Ich glatte nicht," for example, from Dichterliebe, used to be popular in Lieder recitals (and, for all I know, still is). Several of the songs from Frauenliebe und Leben can be performed separately: the last song, however, is impossible on its own; the third, "Ich kann's nicht fassen," demands to be heard as a dramatic C minor trio between two songs in E flat major; and the little wedding march as a postlude to the fifth would sound strange outside the cycle, particularly as the inconclusive end on a bare sixth suggests that it will be followed at once by the succeeding piece.

It is facile to conceive of the Romantic Fragment only in terms of its ending; the idea behind it is considerably richer. The eleventh song of Dichterliebe (or thirteenth, if we retain the manuscript songs that Schumann cut on publication), "Ein Jüngling lieb ein Mädchen" (see next page), shows this more complex status:

A young man loved a girl
Who had chosen another man:
The other man loved another girl
And married her.

The girl took out of spite
The first good man
Who came along;
The young man was in a bad way.

It's an old story
But it remains always new
And to whomever it happens
It breaks his heart in two.

Liken by itself, this opens with a jolly swing to it, but only the first two bars have the character of a folk song, while the rest has a coarse air which is, like the poem, at once infectious and repellent. The tune is not only undistinguishable, it is ostentatiously commonplace, with several deliberately awkward moments, like the end of the first stanza (bars 11 and 12); in the last stanza
the repeated notes of the final bars of the vocal part (bars 29–31) are, moreover, positively ugly. Even if one puts a higher value on this song as an independent piece of music than I think justified, it is clear that for Schumann it could not exist outside the cycle. It is, in its angular and banal insistence, a deliberately bad song, but magnificent in its place. Its coarseness makes Heine’s facetiousness more profound as well as more dramatic. Taken by itself it might be a comic parody: in the cycle, its comedy is not humorous but deeply moving, above all because it makes no concessions to grace or charm.

Schumann is perhaps the first composer to transform a musical joke into a tragic effect, to use the banal or the awkward not merely for comic relief but seriously—this presupposes an ability to discover a genuine musical interest in the banal, or the ungainly, and we clearly have something of that here. It is a new kind of musical irony, far removed from the elegant Mozartian irony of Cosi fan tutte, or the bitter aristocratic irony Liszt found in Chopin. It may, in fact, have been Schumann’s comprehension of the seductive possibilities of the banal phrase which made him so repulsive to Chopin, but which makes him so modern, so much a precursor of Mahler, Berg, and Stravinsky. If “Ein Jungling liebt ein Mädchen” were more distinguished musically, it would not have so powerful an effect in its place in the cycle. This was a revolutionary achievement: the inspiration here is drawn directly from the words “It’s an old story, but remains ever new,” but the musical use of the commonplace has a force to which the words do not aspire. In any case, it was not Heine who taught Schumann the use of irony: he had already developed it in his piano music several years before, and it was in the great keyboard sets that he learned the technique of creating a cycle of fragments.

Words and music

The influence of Heine was, however, already a possibility in these earlier keyboard works. Before Schumann published any songs, he had been planning a series of Lieder without voice—poems of Heine’s for the pianoforte. It may even be that some of the melodies for this project appear in the piano sets or in the song cycles that succeeded them. In any case, the metamorphosis of speech into music—and, indeed, music into speech—implied by the unfulfilled project finds an equally subtle realization in the technique of Schumann’s songwriting, where voice and instrument—sometimes doubling each other, sometimes out of phase or with the melody passing from one to the other—realize a single unified line. Schumann is carrying out in musical form the relationship of music and language as it was conceived in the circle of Schлегel in Jena. The doctrine was presented in the Fragmente aus dem Nachblasse eines jungen Physiker, ein Taschenbuch für Freunde der Natur (Fragments from the Posthumous Papers of a Young Physicist, a Pocket Book for Friends of Nature), published in 1810 by Johann Wilhelm Ritter. The ideas on music in this odd and extraordinary esoteric work were, as we shall see, known to Schumann.

Born in 1776, Ritter lived to the age of thirty-four. His last years were romantically dissolute, and he died of tuberculosis in a manner more suited to the popular idea of a poet than a scientist. His thought centered to some extent on that mystical and shallow Romantic philosophy of science called Naturphilosophie, but some of his scientific work was genuinely important, in particular the discovery of ultraviolet rays and the use of the battery (recently invented by Volta) to separate water into hydrogen and oxygen: like many physicists of the time, he was fascinated by the phenomenon of animal magnetism. He was admired by Goethe as well as by Novalis and Schlegel, and his portraits of some of the members of the Jena circle in the introduction to his book are a precious witness to the character of that early avant-garde group.

The pages on music are found in the appendix to Ritter’s Fragments, and they identify music not only with speech but with consciousness itself:

The existence and the activity of man is tone, is language. Music is also language, general language, the first of mankind. The extant languages are individualizations of music—not individualized music but relating to music as the separate organs relate to the organic whole . . . Music decomposes into languages. This is why each language can in addition serve music as its accomplishment; it is the representation of the particular in the general; song is language in a double sense, the general and the particular at once. Here the particular word is raised to general intelligibility—above all to the singer himself. The folk of all languages understand music, all languages are understood by music itself and translated into the general. Nevertheless, man himself is the translator. It is to be remarked that his general language does not come from him; but it is itself given with his consciousness, and to this degree comes forward itself. For only in expressing himself is man conscious. This takes place invariably in general speech first; the particular follows. Thus every one of our spoken words is a secret song, for music from within continuously accompanies it. In audible song, the inner voice is raised as well. Song is praise of the creator, it completely expresses the moment of existence.

Des Menschen Wesen und Wirken ist Ton, ist Sprache. Musik ist gleichfalls Sprache, allgemeine, die erste des Menschen. Die vorhandenen Sprachen sind Individualisierungen der Musik; nicht individualisierte Musik, sondern, die zur Musik sich verhalten wie die einzelnen Organe zum organischem Ganzen. Die Musik zerfiel in Sprachen. Deshalb kann noch jede Sprache sich der Musik zu ihrer Begleiterin bedienen; es ist die Darstellung des Besonderen am Allgemeinen; Gesang ist doppelte Sprache, allgemeine und besondere zugleich. Hier wird das besondere Wort zur allgemeinen Ver
The idea that music is the first speech of mankind was almost a commonplace by the time Ritter wrote. A radical version of this dates back as far as Giambattista Vico's *Scienza nuova* of 1725: the most primitive form of speech is music and dance. Part of the impetus for the idea came from a recognition that the oldest witnesses to language are in verse, not prose; even for a writer as skeptical as Voltaire, prose is the later and more sophisticated form, verse the more ancient. For Johann Georg Hamman, the philosopher who inspired Goethe and the *Sturm und Drang*, poetry is older than prose just as gardening is older than agriculture. We may understand this by remarking that the aesthetic sense is the first condition of language as it implies the sense of order, the desire to arrange sounds into patterns, essential to the structure of speech. In the *Metakritik* of 1781, Hamman's attack on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, his expression is even more extravagant: he resolves Kant's paradoxes of space and time by incorporating space and time as preconditions of expression—or, as he writes, space is painting, time is music. In short, a temporal ordering is the initial musical structure, and a perception is not a passive event but an active expression. Awareness implies a representation to oneself. Perception of the world in time is already language, and music is its most general form. Hamman only carries the tendencies of his era to a surprising extreme, but he does not stand apart from the general line of thought, in which music was increasingly understood as a basic model of expression. Ritter's claim that music is given with consciousness is not far from Hamman.

What Ritter adds to this speculation is the conception of music as general speech, and of French, German, and so forth as individualizations of music. The separate languages are fragments of music, which, as he puts it, splits or decomposes into "different tongues." The idea of music as general language is picked up and developed by E. T. A. Hoffmann in his *Kreisleriana*, and was therefore certainly known to Schumann. Hoffmann paraphrases Ritter without naming him; he calls him only "an ingenious physicist" (eine ußrichter Physiker). The relation of music to language as the general to the individual is particularly apt as a description of Schumann's technique of songwriting, in which the general musical line is individualized only intermittently into words:

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the full line is either in the piano or passed from piano to voice. This technique would become the basis of the Wagnerian music drama, in which a general musical line is also intermittently individualized into words, but transcends both orchestra and voice; the technique of the complete phrase only incompletely realized by either voice or accompaniment is, however, largely developed by Schumann. The originality of this approach is that it radically transforms the traditional relationship of song to accompaniment.

In the simplest forms of this relationship, the piano provided either a harmonic underpinning of the melody or else—more primitive in effect, although a somewhat later development—a mere doubling of the vocal part with added harmonies. Indeed, often in the late eighteenth century only the instrumental part of the song had to be printed, and the singer simply executed the top line of the piano. This excessively naive form came with the imitation of folk style and with the effort, in the last decades of the century, to achieve a purely natural, unsophisticated melodic style. A more complex form was also practiced, which borrowed opening and closing instrumental sections from the aria (sometimes, indeed, these instrumental passages appeared to punctuate the inner part of the stanza, and this, once again, finds its model in the aria and the concerto). The piano may echo the close of the vocal melody, repeat the cadence; it may introduce the song with a tune of its own which can reappear like a refrain. It does not, however, invade the vocal melody or take over its functions. The principle in all of these types is the independence of the vocal melody, which is a coherent and satisfying whole in itself even when the prelude, postludes, and echoes are elaborate. The greatest innovation of Schumann is not so much (as is sometimes thought) the lengthy instrumental endings that we find in so many of his songs, but the incomplete destruction of the independence of the vocal form. The vocal melody can no longer stand on its own as an intelligible structure—at the same time, the melody is not fully represented by the instrumental part. The independence is not totally suppressed; Schumann is able to play with the ambiguity, sometimes to oppose voice and instrument, to identify them at other moments, and finally to have them realize the same musical line, but out of phase with each other.

This erosion of the traditional relation had already been initiated by Schubert, but less radically and far less systematically. There are, however, several of his songs where it is set out, beginning with an early setting (dated 27 February 1815) of Goethe's "Ich denke dein":

![Musical notation](Image)
The voice springs out of the introductory bars and completes them, carries forward the instrumental line, which, indeed, seems to illustrate the sunrise of the opening verse. The effect has its analogue in some of the accompanied recitatives of early nineteenth-century opera or oratorio, and it cannot, in fact, be repeated by Schubert in successive stanzas, which begin simply with the entrance of the voice. Much more clearly a development of pure song technique is the late "Im Frühling"; and this is, as well, closer to Schumann’s ambiguous play with structure, as the instrumental introduction appears initially to be independent, and is then integrated into the vocal line. The first stanza will show the mastery with which Schubert controls the shift of function:

It is not my purpose here to consider the way the sudden eruption of memory induces the exquisite change to the remote harmony of A major, and how the return of consciousness of the present brings back, with the pathetic change of mode to A minor, the simple return to the tonic, although these matters will concern us later. At this point I want only to emphasize the compromised independence of the four-bar introduction: the singer at first appears to ignore it, and strikes out on a new melody of his own; the introduction returns, however, with the singer’s first tonic cadence (in bar 10) as if it were an instrumental refrain—this time, however, it is not ignored by the singer but interrupted and carried forward to a different development. What is significant is not the reappearance of the introductory melody in the vocal part—that was already a commonplace device—but the interruption of the instrumental line in the middle of a phrase by the voice, an interruption that expands a two-bar phrase into three bars. We must not underestimate the effect of this interruption: the voice sounds as if it were initiating a new phrase as well as finishing an earlier one. As a result, the vocal phrase in itself appears rhythmically complete (bar 11 is an antecedent to bar 12) while harmonically and even melodically incomplete (bar 11 is a consequent to bar 10). Voice and instrument still remain in their separate musical spaces: the two musical lines are only partially fused.

This incomplete fusion often becomes, with Schumann, not a passing effect but a basic principle of construction. In "Der Nussbaum" the first two bars, as in Schubert, appear to be an introduction:
When the opening reappears in bars 5 and 6, it seems like an answer to the half phrase in the voice; it completes the vocal line, and yet has the character of an instrumental refrain. Its rhythmical weight is dubious, half a consequent of what precedes, half initiation of a new phrase. The transposed reappearance in bars 9 and 10 now clarifies the new status: it completes the vocal melody, and has become “individualized” into words, to use Ritter’s terms. Most remarkable, however, is the shift in bars 31 to 40:

The opening motif, now given a new harmonic direction and played ritardato, is the beginning of a phrase, and the repetition in bars 33 and 34 in the voice is the answer. This is a reversal of the original musical sense, and the expressive power depends on the double meaning: the instrumental phrase is heard both as a separate unit and as either a completion or an antecedent of a vocal phrase. The ambiguity is drawn out further: bars 39 and 40 are at one and the same
time an intensified echo of the previous phrase (a technique derived from Schubert) and the beginning of a move back to the tonic that is completed instrumentally. Schumann juggles throughout with two-bar and four-bar phrase structures that depend partly on a relation of vocal melody to instrumental interjection. The vocal line is neither completely intelligible alone nor completely integrated without ambiguity into the general line; the song is a true Fragment.

In a passage that is a clear extension of Ritter's essay on music and language, E. T. A. Hoffman wrote:

But how often in the soul of the musician does the music sound at the same moment as the words of the poet, and, above all, the poet's language in the general language of music?—From time to time the musician is clearly conscious of having thought of the melody without any relation to the words, and it springs forth with a reading of the poem as if awakened by a magic touch.

Aber wie oft erklingt mit den Worten des Dichters im Innern des Musikers zugleich die Musik, und überall des Dichters Sprache in die allgemeine Sprache der Musik! Zuweilen ist der Musiker deutlich bewusst, schon früher die Melodie gedacht zu haben, ohne Beziehung auf Worte, und sie springt jetzt beim Lesen des Gedichtes, wie durch ein Zauberenschlag geweckt, hervor.

This was the most modern aesthetic stance of that age: it is not the words that are embellished and imitated by music—the proper ideal was now music becoming language, music as the precondition of speech that becomes individualized into words. As the novelist Wilhelm Heinse had already written in the 1780s: "it is not the music which is the dress of words, but words which are the dress of music" (Die Sproche ist das Kleid der Musik, und nicht die Musik das Kleid der Sprache), a surprising statement for the time, but far more banal later. It would be unjust to interpret this as a simple claim for the primacy of music. The goal was a fusion of words and music, but for this to be realized, the music must take precedence but not dominate: it had to appear to need no justification from the poetry, to establish an independent claim to existence. The fusion of music and poetry was supposed to result from a coincidence of meaning of two independent forms of expression. In practice, of course, this ideal fusion is attainable only intermittently, and either poetry or music must step down and be made to serve the other. This is the source of Schumann's constant play of ambiguity, where predominance is shifted back and forth between voice and piano. It is a form of irony, an attempt to express obliquely what cannot be acceptably stated in a more direct fashion.


The simplest version of this irony is the frequent out-of-phase doubling, where both voice and piano present the same melody but with slightly different rhythms: the vocal line given the inflections of speech, the instrumental line obeying other promptings, dragging behind or anticipating (as we have seen at the opening of the *Dichterliebe*). There are, however, more profound examples of such irony. One of the most striking is the coda to the third song of *Frauenliebe und Leben*, "Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben":

The poem has ended, and the singer only returns in bar 76 to repeat the first verse of the song with new music. It is part of the extraordinary pathos of this coda that the singer cannot execute the climax in bar 79; she must leave it to the piano. The sequence clearly demands that the ascent from F (bar 71) to Ab (bar 75) will rise ultimately to C (bar 79), but this is too high for the singer. (A successful execution of the high C by the singer would create an obtrusive operatic virtuosity completely out of style.) Even the pianist must strain to realize the sequence—or appear artistically to strain—as the arpeggiated grace notes in bar 79 give a sense of stretching to encompass what no normal hand can reach. We have here an absolute coincidence of words and music, but a coincidence reached by a paradox: "I cannot grasp it, cannot believe it" is
translated into music by the impossibility of realizing the conception vocally, although the singer returns as if to take over the principal line from the piano. But this line remains in the piano, and the singer has to fall back at the climax to a subsidiary and dissonant counterpoint. (If the song were transposed down to allow the singer to double the piano melody at the end with ease, all pathos would be lost.) When piano and voice move together again, it is only to realize the painful dissonance of A♭ against G in the piano part at bar 81, and this, too, is set in relief by Schumann in bar 82 where the piano and voice create emphatic parallel fifths. This is not the only place in Schumann where the significance arises from the impossibility of musical realization—but the effect is, we must affirm, essentially musical, enriched by the words but not totally dependent on them. It is part of the irony that the singer unnecessarily and imperfectly interrupts a pure instrumental coda: Schumann creates a literary effect entirely by musical means.

The emancipation of musical language

The new relation of music and language found in Schumann’s Lieder, and already implicit in some of Schubert, needed two long parallel developments to come into being, one in linguistics and one in music. Language was gradually reconceived not simply as the fundamental means of communication but as an independent system, a world of its own, as Wilhelm von Humboldt said,2 separate from the external world of reality and from the subjective world of consciousness; only through the world of language are we able to realize that the subjective and objective worlds were the same. In a way, like Schlegel’s hedgehog, language itself was a work of art independent of the reality that surrounded it, and which yet paradoxically implied that outer reality from within itself. Music in turn was also reconceived as a separate world of its own, not simply as the expression of words spoken or unspoken. These two developments need to be sketched if we are to understand how music could become an abstract model for language, and how the relation of text and music was profoundly reformulated in early nineteenth-century song.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a period of considerable speculation on the origin of language. Almost every philosopher had something to say: Locke, Rousseau, Condillac, Helvetius, Hamman, Herder, Fichte—all either tried to reconstruct the way language could have arisen in a primitive state or suggested that it was given, divinely or naturally, with human nature itself. There were, in fact, so many monographs on this subject that by the beginning of the nineteenth century the Academy of Sciences at Berlin announced that it would no longer accept papers treating of the origin of language.

The discussion had two aspects. The first was the replacement of the account in Genesis (in which God made a gift of language to Adam, who named the animals) by one more suited to the secularization of thought, an account that would seem both rational and probable. The other aspect is more complex: it has been remarked that a search for origins is a hidden request for a definition, an attempt to describe the nature of something, projected—however fictionally—in time as a narrative. The question of the origin of language is not properly answered by a place (Mesopotamia, say, or China) and a date, however remote. What was wanted was a decision on what point in the scale of sounds and signs made throughout the animal kingdom could one speak properly of language, from the buzzing of insects, the song of birds and their flashes of plumage, the barking of dogs and the wagging of their tails, to the wailing of human babies. How much structure is needed for any of these to be language? What exactly is the function of language; the representation of truth, the expression of beliefs and feelings, the communication of needs and commands, a means of enforcing social behavior and of ordering relations within the family and the tribe? Philosophers invented interesting stories about man in the state of nature to convey their answers to such questions. Fichte, for example, imagined one primitive man, frightened by a lion, returning to his fellows and roasting at them to convey the presence of danger. This sort of fable implied that language worked by naming objects, and that its function was social and practical. If, however, the original form of language was music and dance, as Vico had claimed, the function of language was aesthetic and expressive.

The appearance of Sir William Jones’s Sanskrit dictionary sent a shock into all linguistic speculation: it called attention to the relations among the Hindi, Germanic, Greek, and Romance tongues, implied their kinship. Sanskrit was quickly judged—mistakenly, of course—as the root of all these languages, the Ur-tongue from which they sprang. It is significant that, for the German Romantics, Sanskrit became a metaphor for natural language, uncorrupted by social pressures, undeformed by false ideals. “The true Sanskrit,” wrote Novalis, “would speak for the sake of speaking, because speaking is its desire and its being” (Die echte Sanskrit spräche, um zu sprechen, weil Sprechen ihre Lust und ihre Wesen sei).3 The rapid development of comparative linguistics drew attention away from the vocabulary and towards the phonetic and grammatical structure of different languages: this may seem paradoxical at first, but the study of the transfer of words from one language to another only emphasized the different systems into which they were integrated. Wilhelm von Humboldt, the first of the great comparative linguists, claimed it was foolish to search for the origin of language because a single word of a language implied the entire structure of which it was a part.


Humboldt, too, like Novalis, insisted on the independence of language; it has a life of its own, and cannot be completely controlled by the will of the speaker. Friedrich Schlegel's observation "Words often understand each other better than the people who use them" is only a witty version of something like the same truth. And this is the model for Ritter, who begins his discussion of music by observing, "Tones are beings who understand each other, as we understand tone. Every chord may already be a mutual tone-understanding, and come to us as an already created unity." In this view, music, like language, is an ordered system which precedes its many and various manifestations, and, as we have seen, for Ritter and later for E. T. A. Hoffmann, the basis of language is a musical order.

By the late eighteenth century, music, like language, had become understood more and more as an independent, self-sufficient system, less as an imitative art. The orthodox classical view for which the arts were imitations of nature was only too simply applicable to painting and sculpture, but had always run into difficulties with music. The standard solution to the problem was to recognize music as the imitation of sentiment. So basic is this position that in painting, the use of colors as a mimesis of sentiment was called the musical theory of color. (In a letter of Poussin, when one of his patrons complained that the colors of his painting of the Seven Sacraments were less appealing than those of Moses Found in the Waters of the Nile, he explained that different sentiments required different hues, like different modes in music.) The orthodoxy of imitation created little trouble during the Baroque era, when even a fugue could be unified and characterized through a single affect or sentiment. The inadequacy began to be felt during the latter half of the eighteenth century. It is not that imitation of sentiment is irrelevant to, say, a Haydn symphony, but that it had come to seem an inadequate way of approaching even the nontechnical aspects of such a work, its generation of increasing excitement and its final spacious resolution, its resemblance to a dramatic form. By 1755 Adam Smith, occupied for the moment with aesthetics rather than economics, could write that music was essentially not an imitative art at all, except in superficial ways in its simulation of cuckoos and babbling streams, and that a work of pure instrumental music gave "a very high intellectual pleasure not unlike the contemplation of a great system in any other science."

This implicit and flattering comparison of music to Newtonian physics was made possible by the recent triumphs of the pure instrumental style. Great works of pure instrumental music had existed before, from the lute composi-

4. Friedrich Schlegel, Über die Unverständlichkeit, third paragraph.

tions of the sixteenth century, the organ toccatas of Frescobaldi in the seventeenth to the suites of Couperin and the compilations of Bach in the first half of the eighteenth. Nevertheless, these were in most important respects unpretentious masterpieces: pure instrumental music ranked low—just above songs—in the hierarchy of musical genres, at the top of which were religious compositions and opera, occupying a position comparable to historical and religious pictures within the genre of painting. Keyboard music, for example, was either dance music, like the suites of Couperin and Bach (and dance music was a genre considered so low that when in the 1780s a musicians' union was formed in Vienna, it expressly refused to admit dance musicians), or educational music; even works as ambitious as Bach's Goldberg Variations were published as keyboard exercises, as were the most spectacularly virtuosic of Scarlatti's sonatas. The equally spectacular organ toccatas of Bach existed only as a peripheral accompaniment to religious ceremonies.

It was the gradual spread of the public concert that emancipated music from its dependence on court and church and made pure instrumental music the explicit vehicle of the sublime. (By public concert I mean only those for which admission was charged, free open-air band concerts being, for example, a very different kind of function.) The true money-maker at public concerts throughout the eighteenth century was the oratorio, particularly those by Handel, but pure instrumental works gradually filled an increasingly large place on the programs. This development was accompanied by a change in aesthetics, the new conception of a work of art as an independent object with no function except that of inducing contemplation or delight. The insistence on the independence of the work of art that one finds in Kant, and then in Schiller, became a commonplace in the nineteenth century. It was peculiarly suited to instrumental music, which was considered for a time an ideal model for the other arts, a kind of ultimate or absolute to which painting and poetry could only strive in vain.

No doubt the emancipation from court and church created only the illusion of independence. The public concert and the sale of sheet music made demands as constraining as the ceremonies of court and church. There was, however, an important difference. It had never been a reproach to a composer that he correctly tailored his religious music to fit the demands of the Church, that his art was subservient to his devotion: on the contrary, towards the end of his life, Haydn was widely criticized by his contemporaries, who complained that his masses were insufficiently religious and contained passages of trivial music. The moral status of court art was slightly more ambiguous: poets, for example, were expected to provide gross flattery, painters to embellish their aristocratic sitters. It was not clear, however, that no shame was attached to this; when Ronsard, in 1564, dedicated his new volume of poems to a friend (the historian Pierre Paschal) rather than to an aristocratic patron, he boasted of the moral superiority of his action. Nevertheless, composers of music had never been
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accused of unnatural glorification of those in power (although, in point of fact, many court cantatas—even when we consider only the music and not the text—are certainly as base a form of flattery as any Renaissance dedication or preface). Fulfilling the economic demands of the public concert, however, was a different matter. For the late eighteenth-century mind, religious music should express devotion and piety, court music pomp and elegance; but the new symphonies and concertos written for public performance with paid admissions were not intended to express making money—or even to represent too evident a striving for popular success. Courting popularity has always been thought even more demeaning than courting private favor, and works of art created specifically to make money are considered more shameful than those produced only for self-expression.

The sincerity of the artist now becomes a criterion of artistic value. This is a natural result of the work conceived as an independent aesthetic object. The work has its own law, its own reason for existing; it is produced by the artist not for a purpose but because he must—"out of an inner necessity" would be the catchphrase. For the Romantic artist, self-expression is not self-serving or even personal; it often, indeed, entails a sacrifice of the self. This gives us the impetus behind avant-garde ideology, which arose in fact at the very end of the eighteenth century. When the work of art is initially rejected by the public, this provides its moral credentials; it demonstrates that the work was not created for popularity or for money, and justifies its success with posterity. The difficulties in this position were immediately evident: Wordsworth, for example, was inspired to claim that the original work is forced to create its own audience. No one has ever been completely comfortable with the contradictions that this view entails, but two centuries have not provided a better answer.

Instrumental music was the ideal representative of this illusion of art as divorced both from social function and from established religion. The imitative weakness of music became its trump card: music has significance, makes sense as language does, but its powers of reference are feeble. It refers only with difficulty beyond itself, and seems to create an independent world of its own, divorced from reality but richly meaningful. This independent world of instrumental music was the marvel and the envy of the other arts, and it gave music a prestige it had probably not had since the time of Plato. The new prestige is decisively expressed in 1799 by Friedrich Schlegel in fragment 444 of the Athenaeum:

It generally strikes many people as strange and ridiculous if musicians talk about the ideas [= themes] in their compositions; and often it may even happen that we perceive that they have more ideas in their music than about it. Whoever has a feeling, however, for the wonderful affinity of all the arts and sciences will at least not consider the matter from the superficial and so-called natural point of view, according to which music

should be nothing more than the language of sentiment, and he will find a certain tendency of all pure instrumental music to philosophy not inherently impossible. Must not pure instrumental music itself create its own text? And is not the theme in it developed, confirmed, varied, and contrasted in the same way as the object of meditation in a philosophical series of ideas?

Es pflegt manchem seltsam und lächerlich aufzufallen, wenn die Musiker von den Gedanken in ihren Kompositionen reden; und oft mag es auch so geschehen, dass man wahrnimmt, sie haben mehr Gedanken in ihrer Musik als über dieselbe. Wer aber Sinn für die wunderbaren Affinitäten aller Künste und Wissenschaften hat, wird die Sache wenigstens nicht aus dem platten Gesichtspunkt der sogenannten Natürlichkeit betrachten, nach welcher die Musik nur die Sprache der Empfindung sein soll, und eine gewisse Tendenz aller reinen Instrumentalmusik zur Philosophie an sich nicht unmöglich finden. Muss die reine Instrumentalmusik sich nicht selbst einen Text erschaffen und wird das Thema in ihr nicht so entwickelt, bestätigt, variiert und kontrastiert wie der Gegenstand der Meditation in einer philosophischen Idee Reihe?

Earlier in the eighteenth century, with Mozart, for example, the technical German word for "theme" was Gedank ("idea"), and Schlegel ennobles the art of music by taking this literally rather than metaphorically. In the final sentence, however, he uses the less ambiguous word Thema, and gives it a new intellectual resonance.

This makes music an abstract model for thought, a structure that underlies logic and language, a form of pure reason that precedes language, if such a thing may be said to exist. Schlegel's observation is directly inspired by late eighteenth-century sonata style, and by that element which is most evident to the listeners at a public concert: the treatment of the theme. The terms "entwickelt, bestätigt, variiert und kontrastiert" variously mingle the functions of development, recapitulation, and exposition, and we can see how sonata form came eventually to seem so fundamental a pattern, as if it contained the basic elements of reason—in the 1830s A. B. Marx's original term for sonata form was the "form of free development."

The high prestige of music was not confined to German Romantic thought. Coleridge goes farther than Schlegel and makes instrumental music the model for historical process, or, rather, a model for the representation of history.

Certainly there is one excellence in good music, to which, without mysticism, we may find or make an analogy in the records of History. I allude to that sense of recognition, which accompanies our sense of novelty in the most original passages of a great Composer. If we listen to a symphony
of Cimarosa the present strain still seems not only to recall, but almost to renew; some past movement, another and yet the same! Each present movement bringing back as it were, and embodying the Spirit of some melody that had gone before, anticipates and seems trying to overtake something that is to come: and the Musician has reached the summit of his art, when having thus modified the Present by the Past, he at the same time weds the Past in the present to some prepared and correlative future. The Auditor's thoughts and feelings move under the same influence: retrospection blends with anticipation, and Hope and Memory, a female Janus, become one Power with a double Aspect. A similar effect the Reader may produce for himself in the pages of History, if he will be content to substitute an intellectual complacency for pleasurable sensation. The Events and Characters of one Age, like the Strains in Music, recall those of another, and the variety by which each is individualized, not only gives a charm and poignancy to the resemblance, but likewise renders the whole more intelligible.

This, from The Friend of 1809, is almost as remarkable for its ignorance as for its brilliance: Cimarosa is certainly the wrong composer, as he does not seem to have written many symphonies—and even if we consider the opera overtures under that head, they would not represent an important or typical achievement. It suggests that Coleridge's observation about music comes to him secondhand rather than from immediate experience, that he is partly repeating what he has been told about music by informed amateurs, and chooses Cimarosa for an unfortunate illustration because of his contemporary fame. In fact, this makes the passage doubly valuable as it represents not so much Coleridge's personal reaction but informed contemporary opinion, and reveals the way a cultivated public listened to a symphony and how much they were aware of the inner relationships of a work. For this awareness the radical developments of the late eighteenth-century style were responsible and had created a heightened consciousness of listening. I must emphasize that for Coleridge it is not the conventional aspects of a piece that recall other moments but "the most original passages of a great composer"—and here he is clearly reflecting the most enlightened musical opinion, as we can see from the articles on Beethoven by E. T. A. Hoffmann a few years later. The application to history, however, must be Coleridge's own property: it is typical of his invention. A few years later, historiographer J. G. Droysen realized that the writing of history was a formal procedure, not a simple setting down of fact or reflection of reality; a history of the Reformation, for example, was like a novel by Sir Walter Scott, with a clear beginning, middle, and end, although a moment's thought will make us aware that the causes of the Reformation reach endlessly back in time and that, insofar as it has existed as a definable entity, it has never ended. Coleridge had anticipated this historiographic position and, indeed, gone beyond: history for him was a formally independent aesthetic structure like a work of music, a way of ordering experience artistically. The most original passages in Haydn and Beethoven, for example, are shocking and yet logical, unexpected and yet prepared: the historian must similarly find a way to preserve the sense of the unexpected event, and then show how it arose and how it will project into the future. It was pure instrumental music that made Coleridge's insight possible, and he conceived this view of music not as a mystical sense but as a generally available public experience. The abstract forms of music had come to seem very grand.

It was the meaningfulness of music which had become essential to its grandeur; it accounts for its unique prestige. When Constable's pictures were first exhibited abroad at the Paris Salon of 1824, he wrote to his friend Archdeacon Fisher:

My wife is now translating for me some of their [the French critics'] criticisms. They are very amusing and acute—but very shallow and feeble. Thus one—after saying "it is but justice to admire the truth—the color—and general vivacity and richness"—yet they want the objects more formed defined, &c., and say that they are like the rich preludes in music, and the full harmonious warblings of the Aeolian lyre, which mean nothing, and that they call them oratious—and harangues—and highlown conversation affecting a careless ease—&c., &c., &c.—Is not some of this blame the highest praise—what is poetry? What is Coleridge's Ancient Mariner (the very best modern poem) but something like this? However, certain it is that they have made a decided stir and have set all the students landscape painting—they say on going to begin a landscape, Oh! this shall be—a la Constable!!!

"Which mean nothing"! The reproach of the French critics was Constable's title to glory. In the attempt to make landscape painting speak for itself, create its own world with no reference to history or picturesque narrative, the recent example of instrumental music served to many artists as a stimulus, a promise of success.

By the earliest years of the nineteenth century, music had become the most prestigious of the arts. Even before Hegel asserted that music was the archetypal Romantic art, J. W. Ritter had made a similar claim: in 1806, towards the end of the strangest of his publications, an essay called "Physics as an Art," addressed to the Munich Academy of Sciences, he wrote that music "seems to be for recent times or for the future what architecture once was for older times.

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This aesthetic does not completely destroy the relation of part to whole, of art to reality, but disturbs it and puts it into question. To make sense of Coleridge's fragment *Kubla Khan*, we must first accept it as sublime nonsense. Hazlitt wrote of it: "It is not a poem but a musical composition. We could repeat the opening lines to ourselves not the less often for not knowing the meaning of them." Charles Lamb, too, said in a letter to Wordsworth (April 26, 1816) that Coleridge read *Kubla Khan* aloud "so enchantingly that it irradiates & brings heaven & Elysian bowers into my parlour while he sings or says it, but there is an observation. Never tell thy dreams, and I am almost afraid that Kubla Khan is an owl that won't bear day light, I fear lest it should be discovered by the lantern & clear reducing to letters, no better than nonsense or no sense." *Kubla Khan* is not only the most famous English example of the Romantic fragment but an ideal specimen: it seems complete to most readers in spite of—or because of—the prose introduction about the man on business from Porlock who prevented Coleridge from finishing it. The man from Porlock, however, is forever part of the poem, and helps to justify the eccentricity of form as well as contribute to it.

The attempt partially to detach the elements of an art from their representation of a reality, however fictive, runs through the period and across frontiers. The initial literary model was perhaps the experiments of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, where the narrative even incorporates the marbled endpapers of the novel. Sterne was followed with admiration by Diderot, who interrupts an anecdote of his hero in *Jacques le Fataliste* after only a page to claim that, as the author, he could make the reader wait for the rest of the story for a year or even two or three years. Clemens Brentano went still further in his novel *Gudit*, which he wrote in 1801 as the youngest member of the Schlegel circle in Jena. In the second volume, the hero on a walk with the narrator remarks, "There is the pond I fell in on page 146 of the first volume." When the narrator dies, the characters finish the book and write memorial poems for him. These paradoxical self-references—examples can be found in many other literary works of the period—are like the surprising moments of recollection that Coleridge judged so profound in pure instrumental music, but they are even more a parallel to the wonderful play with structure and function that characterizes the music of Haydn and Mozart. The same effect of satisfying paradox is found, for example, in Haydn's Quartet in D Major, op. 50, no. 6, which begins with a final cadence as its opening theme.

This kind of displacement of function is essential to late eighteenth-century musical style: shifting a theme from tonic to dominant, the most common device of the period, is an alteration of the sense upon which the entire structure may depend. The use of these effects in literature, however, enforces a dislo

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cation of reference which seems to tear the work, at least momentarily, away from any possible outside reality: it becomes a fragment, a complete form ripped from a larger context. Unlike music, language always appears to have a reference outside itself. The musical inspiration of much Romantic literature is betrayed by the terminology of the period: in 1811 E. T. A. Hoffmann asserted that the first Romantic composers were Haydn and Mozart. This is a reasonable claim when we remember that one of the ideals of Romantic art was the creation of a coherent world which does not depend on reality or simply reflect it, but runs parallel to it: the independence of a work of art, music, or literature may be legitimately thought of as a form of Romantic alienation. Yet for most of the important works of what is generally considered Romantic style today, the independence of the work is never cut but always ambiguous, even compromised.

Tieck’s *Puss-in-Boots (Der gestiefelte Kater)* of 1797, for example, incorporates what are apparently members of the public into the play, and when one of them remarks, “The play itself seems to be a play within a play,” we may reflect that what we see is a play within a play within a play, like a set of Chinese boxes. “Tell me,” the King says to Prince Nathanael von Malinski, “How do you speak our language so fluently, since you live so far away?” The prince replies, “Be quiet, or the audience will notice that there is something unnatural.” These tricks are derived from the Baroque drama, above all the works of Jonson and of Beaumont and Fletcher (acknowledged by Tieck as models), where the allusions to the stage are as frequent as they are in Shakespeare and Calderón. In his *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, however, Walter Benjamin observed that the Romantic revival of these deliberate destructions of stage illusion have a new purpose: in the Baroque they served to show that life is an illusion, like a play; in the Romantic period they attempt to give a new status to the work, to persuade us that art is real life. This is a pretension to which no previous age aspired, but it is revealed by even the smallest details of the most original works. “More in my next letter” (*Nachstens mehr*) are the last words of Friedrich Hölderlin’s novel *Hyperion*, and we conclude that the book is to continue indefinitely into a reality beyond the last page, as the first song of the *Dichterliebe* extends into an undefined future.

**Experimental endings and cyclical forms**

The extraordinary stylistic changes of late eighteenth-century music may have provided much of the inspiration for the literature of the turn of the century, but the literary forms that resulted were deeply eccentric. It was these works—paradoxical, anticlassical, often with startlingly unbalanced proportions—which in turn influenced the music of the generation of composers that followed. The most clearly affected by literature and art were Schumann, Berlioz, and Liszt, but neither Mendelssohn nor Chopin remained untouched by literary developments, like the revival of Celtic and medieval poetry, as the overtures of Mendelssohn and the Ballades of Chopin explicitly demonstrate. With Chopin, however, we must not look for a specific literary work as a narrative model but for a new tone, a new atmosphere and new structures: the literary influence does not result in a program; the music does not refer beyond itself. Just as poets and painters had attempted to recreate with words and paint the freedom and the abstract power of music, so the generation of musicians born around 1810 tried to capture the originality of form and the exotic atmosphere of the literature and art they had grown up with. The appearance of the Fragment in its most obvious form—a piece that begins in the middle or does not have a proper grammatical end—is only the simplest example of the new spirit of experiment, and the way it breaks down the established conceptions of what a work of music ought to be relates it to the major stylistic developments of the time.

The opening song of the *Dichterliebe* is not the only example of an independent piece that ends with the most naive form of the Fragment, a simple dissonance like a dominant seventh chord. One of the independent sections of Berlioz’s *Le roi* is rounded off in the same way. Liszt’s setting of Victor Hugo’s “Il est un charmant gazon,” composed in 1844, has a lovely inconclusive ending with a dominant seventh chord over a tonic pedal. When Liszt published it in 1860, he added another optional two-bar cadence for the pianists frightened by the fragment:
Another song written a year earlier, "Ich möchte hingehen" on a poem by Georg Herwegh, ends with a tonic chord, indeed, but approaches it with little sense of cadence and undercuts the final chord by removing the fundamental bass note and leaving an emphatic 6/4 chord.

This fragment has great power, and the conclusion is justified by the final verse, "The poor heart of man must break in pieces."

The beautiful early version of Harmonies poétiques et religieuses of 1834 ends with Liszt's favorite diminished seventh chord:

and there is a similar ending to the austere last version published in 1883 for baritone of Petrarch's sonnet no. 104. Liszt was, however, unusual in remaining faithful throughout his life to the early Romantic forms and to their spirit.

It would be simplistic to limit a discussion of the Fragment to pieces with unconclusive final chords. The concep was capable of broader interpretation, and even the final cadence could be a tonic triad and still convey a sense of subtly opening up the ending. The Nocturne in B Major, op. 32, no. 1, by Chopin begins unpretentiously with a lovely two-bar phrase, repeated at once and prettily decorated:

Andante cantabile.

10 Remounted sonnet 90.
This does not allow one to suspect the final page:

The increased passion is only a partial preparation for the astonishing operatic recitative that follows, which seems both unprovoked and satisfying, as it completes without resolving. Chopin often placed the climax near the end, but here the climax takes place after the nocturne is strictly over. Previously Schubert had also experimented with minor endings to pieces in the major mode (although in this nocturne the final chord is not exactly minor, as the triad is removed to leave only an octave tonic still sounding).

The literary prestige of the Fragment accounts for the popularity of sets of musical miniatures in the early nineteenth century, but it remained for Chopin and Schumann to exploit the full possibilities of the miniature. Schumann’s piano cycles, like Carnaval and the Davidsbündlertänze, are based on the recurrence of the same motifs throughout the work. The precursors of this technique are the Baroque suites of dances and of characteristic pieces (the
suites of Handel and the Ordres of Couperin, for example), where successive dances often begin with the same motif. Schumann was also clearly influenced by the eighteenth-century variation set, in which a progressive complexity of texture often determines the treatment of the theme (sometimes with a less complex section at the center, as in Bach’s Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor for Organ). The Improvisations on a Theme of Clara Wieck, op. 5, with its free treatment of Clara’s theme, prepares the piano cycles to come. In Schumann, however, the order of the pieces is never a simple progression: caprice and imagination play determining roles.

Chopin’s Preludes, op. 28, seen from the outside as a simple collection of disparate short pieces, is the most impressive example of a set of tiny Fragments. It is often considered a “cycle”; it achieves unity apparently through the simple addition of one piece to another. It is clear that a complete performance of opus 28 was not thinkable during Chopin’s lifetime, either in the salon or in the concert hall; nor is there any evidence that Chopin played the whole set privately for a friend or pupil, as Bach is said to have played the entire first book of the Well-Tempered Keyboard for a student. Jeffrey Kallberg has argued eloquently that only individual preludes or small groups of preludes were intended by Chopin as the effective presentation, and this was, indeed, the way that Chopin himself actually performed them. Today’s fashion of playing them as an entire set does not allow us fully to appreciate the extraordinary individuality of the single numbers.

Nevertheless, the aesthetics of the fragment would suggest that the opposing demands of the opus as a whole and of each individual prelude are intended to coexist without being resolved. The conception of a unity that transcends any possible mode of presentation is not one that was foreign to the Romantic period—or, indeed, to the Baroque of the early eighteenth century, as (among many other examples) the third part of Bach’s Klavierübung can attest. The series of chorale-preludes arranged in the order of the text of the ordinary of the mass, preceded by the St. Anne’s Prelude and followed by the St. Anne’s Fugue as a frame, is a wonderfully satisfying intellectual form that can have had no relevance for performance at the time, whatever audiences of today might be prepared to accept.

The Preludes of Chopin are modelled on those of the Well-Tempered Keyboard in many ways, above all by their purely systematic ordering. Chopin’s scheme is as simple as Bach’s rising chromatic scale: all the major keys ascend ing the circle of fifths, each one accompanied by its relative minor mode (that is, G major, A minor, G major, E minor, D major, etc.). Like Bach’s first Prelude, Chopin’s will always be understood as an opening piece. However, unlike Bach’s final Prelude and Fugue in B Minor, Chopin’s final Prelude in D Minor is conceivable only as an ending—remarkably so, since its last bars

present a sonority that is not fully a closure but seems to project beyond the work:

In addition, the tonal sequence chosen by Chopin is much more satisfactory in terms of successive listening than Bach’s chromatic scale. Each prelude is harmonically related to the previous one, and Chopin often exploits this relationship strikingly when he begins a prelude with the last melodic note of the preceding one.

He appears to proclaim this as a kind of manifesto at the very opening of the set, as the second prelude is intelligible above all as a modulation from the final E of the opening prelude to its own A minor cadence:

This affecting, mysterious Fragment consists of four almost symmetrical four-bar melodic phrases, each one framed by interludes of the accompaniment as in the Lieder of Chopin’s contemporaries, and this gives an extraordinary flexibility to the rhythm (see chapter 4). Although the opening note of the second phrase is slightly shortened, and that of the third phrase lengthened, the melody is regular, while the interludes of accompaniment give a new rhythmic form which does not affect the melody, seemingly independent. This builds into the prelude the rhythmic freedom generally left to the performer and demonstrates the new identity of composition and realization.

The piece opens with the final E of the first prelude. Much ink has been spilt over the question in which key the second prelude begins: Heinrich Schenker’s answer of G major is the most cogent, as that is certainly the first complete cadence, and also the dominant of the preceding C major Prelude. Nevertheless, to Chopin, here as elsewhere, line is more basic than harmony, and he arrives at A minor above all through the two lines of treble and bass, which are partially identical (the parallel octaves are impressive) and partially out of phase:

Both treble and bass by the ninth bar descend to the A, which will become the tonic, and the bass remains there briefly instead of going to the expected D,
while the melody, in a perfect echo of the first phrase, moves down to F₄. The expressive inner voices remain steady, creating this chord

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{F₄} \\
\text{G₄}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{E₄} \\
\text{D₄}
\end{array}
\end{array} \]

which remains basically unaltered as treble and bass exchange their notes:

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{D₄} \\
\text{C₄}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{B₃} \\
\text{A₃}
\end{array}
\end{array} \]

The bass then descends chromatically to the dominant, and the melody impels its motif downward in thirds to the tonic cadence:

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C₃} \\
\text{B₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{A₃} \\
\text{G₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{F₃} \\
\text{E₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{D₃} \\
\text{C₃}
\end{array}
\end{array} \]

Both melody and bass descend essentially from E to E, and transform the meaning of this note from the third of C major to the dominant of A minor; the process is the occasion for the most mysterious poetry, grave and moving. Perhaps the principal element of expression is the exquisite inner-part writing which holds everything together at the crucial moment of transformation:

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{E₃} \\
\text{D₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C₃} \\
\text{B₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{A₃} \\
\text{G₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{F₃} \\
\text{E₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{D₃} \\
\text{C₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{B₃} \\
\text{A₃}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{G₃} \\
\text{F₃}
\end{array}
\end{array} \]

In passages where the texture and harmony appear most radical and most ambiguous, Chopin's counterpoint (which, as he remarked to Delacroix, was the "logic" of music) is the controlling agent.

Chopin expended great subtlety to ensure a convincing movement from one prelude to the next. It is a technique that he had recently worked out in the Etudes, above all opus 25 (although already in opus 10, the third Etude, in E major, was originally marked to be followed attaca by the fourth, in C sharp minor). In the Preludes there is a wonderfully nuanced play of contrast of character and sentiment; two pieces of the same tempo and type never follow each other immediately. A few of the Preludes, certainly, make little sense played as single works: the C sharp Minor Prelude, half mazurka, half improvisation, is too slight, and the F Minor too unaccountably violent played out of context. Others sustain an independent performance with great effect. I think that we must accept that the Preludes are conceived only paradoxically as a whole, and yet that modern performances of the entire set bring out aspects of the work certainly present in, and even integral to, its conception, but which Chopin did not consider essential to its realization in sound.

To the extent to which the Preludes are a cycle—that is, a work in which the significance as well as the effectiveness of the individual numbers depends on their place within a larger order—they are the most radical of all the Romantic examples. The unity does not depend upon thematic relationships; there are, in fact, motivic parallels between one prelude and another, but the musical power never depends in any important way upon even a semiconscious awareness of these recurrences (what significance they might have lies largely in defining Chopin's melodic style). There is no harmonic closure to the Preludes; the scheme that ties them together is purely additive, and the last prelude is only affectively, and not tonally, an ending to the whole set of twenty-four. In the sets of short piano pieces by Schumann—the Papillons, the Davidsbündlertänze, the Humoreske—there is, not a specific narrative program, but the suggestion of a program, an implied narrative that cannot be spelled out but that carries the music along and helps to hold the work together. The Preludes, however, imply nothing of the sort; throughout his life, Chopin's outmoded sense of musical decorum always resisted any attempt to impose an explicit notmusical sense on any of his works.

The Preludes have been compared to the short modulations that pianists of the time used to improvise in order to introduce the tonality of the next piece; but they do not modulate or resemble in any way the improvisations that, when I was a child, I heard Josef Hofmann and Moritz Rosenthal employ in their recitals. In fact, in the strict sense, Chopin's Preludes are not preludes at all: they may certainly be used as brief preludes to more substantial works, but they are not primarily intended to function that way. The title "prelude," puzzling to some, both acknowledges the debt to Bach—Chopin knew the only way he could rival Bach's famous twenty-four—and asserts the original character of each of Chopin's own twenty-four, at once provisional and beautifully complete. The provisional character of each prelude does not appear well when the piece is used to introduce a different and longer work, but does when it is played on its own or introduces the next prelude of the set. Although inspired by the Preludes of Bach, they are more concentrated, more intense, laconic. Like a fragment of Schlegel, each one is a miniature—separate, individual, and complete in itself—that implies and acknowledges a world outside.

Before Chopin and Schumann others had composed miniatures, notably Beethoven and Schubert—although Schubert's are comparatively long-winded; the Moments musicaux constitute a beautiful set, but the individual numbers are not strikingly enriched by their context. Several of Beethoven's Bagatelles make little sense or little effect played separately, above all opus 119, no. 10, in A major and no. 2 in C major: their fragmentary quality is a comic effect. Chopin, on the other hand, has wit and irony but little humor, and his Preludes, even the grotesque ones, are never funny; when modest, they are elegant and graceful, and the most eccentric ones are deeply serious.

The comic fragments of Beethoven have the same relation to the poetic
fragments of the next decades that Mozart's use of the whole-tone scale in *A Musical Joke* bears to Debussy's works:

Mozart may have enjoyed the whole-tone scale, but he certainly thought it was funny and out of tune. Those Bagatelles of Beethoven's that are serious, such as opus 119, no. 11, in B flat major, may be played as separate pieces without loss of significance. The last set of his Bagatelles, opus 123, is a true cycle, but the individual pieces are no longer miniatures.

"Cyclical form" is an ambiguous as well as a vague term: it has another meaning in addition to that of a set of apparently independent pieces that must be understood and performed as a whole. Traditionally it also signifies a large work in which an earlier movement reappears as part of a later one. The return of part of the scherzo of Beethoven's Symphony no. 5, in the middle of the finale, is perhaps the most famous example, but it is not the first essay of its kind: that would probably be Haydn's Symphony no. 46 in B Major, where a few phrases of the minuet come back towards the end of the finale. In spite of the examples in Beethoven and Schubert, fewer than a dozen, this remained a relatively infrequent form until the late 1820s, when it became common practice with Mendelssohn and Schumann, and inspired the later attempts by Brahms and Tchaikovsky.

In this sense, cyclical form is not a form at all but the disturbance of an established form. A return is not cyclical if it is required by tradition—if it is expected, in short; a cyclical return must be a surprise. When the accepted form demands a return, then we have a sonata reprise, or a *da capo* aria, or a minuet with trio, or a replaying of the theme at the end of a set of variations. A cyclical form makes an earlier movement intrude on the domain of a later one. It is this dislocation of an accepted form which had such an appeal to the

Romantic composer: it enabled him to use a traditional form but give it a more personal urgency. In a cyclical form the return may be unjustified by traditional formal requirements, but it must nevertheless be justified by the context and by the musical material: it must appear to be not rhetorical but organic. This double aspect—a disruption of a standard form which seems to grow out of the music, to be necessary more for reasons of sensibility and inner development than of tradition—had a natural aptness for an aesthetic of the fragment: the return is both an intruder from outside the new movement and a necessary part of its inner logic.

This is already clear with the earliest examples: it is not the beginning of the minuet that returns in the finale of Haydn's Symphony no. 46 but the second phrase—which closely resembles the main theme of the minue—\(^1\) and indicates a kinship between the two movements. Haydn delivers to us the secret of cyclical form with wit and good humor and with none of the poetic and pretentious seriousness it was later to have: the interruption breaks down the individual movement, but by so doing draws attention to a larger unity.

The same forces are at work in the scherzo's eccentric return in the finale of Beethoven's Symphony no. 5: once again it is not the opening bars of the scherzo that return but the second theme—and it is this theme which clearly recalls to every listener the opening of the first movement. The interruption slightly dislocates the structure of the finale and brings out the relationship between first, third, and fourth movements. Moreover, the return occurs not at the end of the movement but just before the recapitulation. This fulfills an important convention of finales, due most notably to Mozart rather than Haydn, and followed by Beethoven: the use of rondo form, or else the introduction of the characteristics of rondo form into a binary sonata form—in particular, the appearance of a new theme at the subdominant in the central section with the development. The tonic minor, being in the flat direction, can serve as a substitute for the subdominant: the return of the scherzo creates a larger unity, fulfills a traditional structural need, and yet breaks down the individual form unexpectedly, both by the use of material from another movement and by the sudden shift of tempo and meter. It also prepares the recapitulation in the finale in a way that parallels the opening of the movement, as the scherzo was joined to the finale without pause, and the introduction to the finale is repeated at this point.

These "cyclical" interruptions undergo a radical transformation at the hands of the Romantic composer: in the most significant cases they no longer occur after a fermata, bringing the movement to a momentary halt, but are integrated seamlessly into the texture. They are still surprising, as we unexpectedly come upon music from an earlier movement, but the point of junction is cleverly

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concealed. This is already clear with Schubert, above all in the Trio for Piano and Strings in E flat Major, op. 100, but the supreme model was provided by the sixteen-year-old Mendelssohn in his octet. The opening theme of the scherzo,

reappears in the finale, but we find ourselves back in the scherzo almost without being able to put our finger on the exact point that it returns. The finale is marked *presto*, and it is clear that the tempo must be exactly double the tempo of the scherzo—in fact, it is really the same tempo, as we should take the basic eighth-note texture as equivalent to the sixteenth notes of the scherzo:

It is a later theme that will be the essential vehicle of the return:

This theme has the same underlying structure as the main theme of the scherzo, and Mendelssohn is able to go from one to the other in the development section of the finale without altering the texture. In addition, the harmony of the opening theme of the scherzo is identical to the first theme of the finale:

and Mendelssohn can combine both principal themes of the finale with the scherzo:
What is astonishing is the complete ease with which a synthesis accomplished. The integration into the new movement is now total, although, at the same time, the earlier movement is still heard as a quotation.

The sense of the cyclical return as both inside and outside the finale relates it directly to the Fragment. Perceived both as a quotation from an earlier movement and as a theme derived from its new context, the cyclical return simultaneously attacks and reaffirms the integrity of the individual musical structure: it displays the double nature of the fragment. This early masterpiece by Mendelssohn remained the model for most of the later experiments in cyclical form, but only rarely was a similarly convincing simplicity achieved.

Ruins

The development of the fragment is clearly influenced by the contemporary taste for ruins. Already present in Renaissance and Baroque times, this taste had undergone a significant transformation over the centuries. During the Renaissance, the ruin was appreciated both for its moral significance and for its eccentricity, as well as for its bearing witness to a sacred past. The most beautiful and picturesque ruins in fifteenth-century painting, Italian as well as Flemish, are found in representations of the Nativity: the ruins are a sign for the synagogue, the Old Law, partially destroyed and left incomplete by the new Revelation. The picturesque quality of ruins gradually tended to outweigh the moral and historical significance, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, architecture began to introduce the more dramatic effects of ruins into new construction: dropped keystones in the work of Giulio Romano, broken pediments with Francesco Borromini. These techniques are like the heavy rustication on the Italian palaces of the Renaissance, ways of directly incorporating Nature into Art. The artists appear to rejoice in the momentary destruction of an established figure: the broken edge has the charm of novelty; reality intrudes and is domesticated by artifice.

The fashion for the picturesque ruin in the eighteenth century, however, brings a different note: the fragment is no longer the introduction of Nature into Art but the return of Art, of the artificial, to a natural state. In the ruins of Piranesi and of Hubert Robert, architecture begins to recede into landscape, to merge with the process of growth. Piranesi exaggerates the heroic proportions of his ruins: they induce a tragic sense of resignation, of melancholy. They dwarf the little human figures that wander about them, and they often sink under the weight of the vegetation that begins to cover them. To induce this melancholy, contemporary gardeners began to construct ruins in their landscapes, just as the eighteenth-century English garden banished symmetry and attempted by artificial means to appear even more natural than Nature.

The final stage arrived in the last decade of the eighteenth century, when it became clear that the ruin of the work of art, including works of literature, was not only inevitable and natural but welcome—at least to some degree. A new style permanently alters, and even partially destroys, the value and significance of preceding ages: after Beethoven, the music of Mozart would never sound quite the same again. Attempts to recapture the initial contemporary effect will always remain an important critical activity, but they can never completely succeed. It is not clear that we need to deplor this. The works of our own time will eventually be subject to similar misinterpretation. It should be understood that literature is designed to function that way. In 1794 Schiller wrote in a review of Friedrich Marthisson’s landscape poetry: “The real and express content that the poet puts in his work remains always finite; the possible content that he allows us to contribute is an infinite quantity” (Der wirkliche und ausdrückliche Gehalt, den der Dichter hineinlegt, bleibt stets eine endliche; der mögliche Gehalt, den er uns hineinlegen überlässt, ist eine unendliche Grösse). Schiller acknowledges here that the artist cannot completely control public understanding; he can at best guide the directions in which it is to go. The most responsible artist, in short, creates the work in terms of its inevitable ruin. It might be said that the ruin is now no longer an unhappy fatality but the ultimate goal of the work. When Sir John Soane designed the Bank of England early in the nineteenth century, he presented the governors of the bank with three oil sketches so that they could see what they were paying for (bankers are not naturally adept at reading architectural plans): the first sketch showed the Bank brand-new, shiny and bright; the second portrayed the structure after it had mellowed for some years, developed an attractive patina and some Ivy; the final sketch imagined the Bank in a thousand years as a noble ruin. The governors were being urged to build this ruin for posterity. (It has, in fact, been ruined in a very different sense by the meddling of later architects.)

Earlire writers, Montaigne most strikingly, were intermittently conscious that posterity would read into their works meanings that they had never intended and that they could not even imagine, but they saw this as something odd, as a curious weakness and limitation of the human mind. Montaigne observed:
But fortune shows us indeed even more clearly the part that she has in these works [of literature and painting] by the graces and beauties that are found in them not only without the intention but even without the consciousness of the workman. An apt reader often discovers, in the writing of someone else, perfections other than those that the author had put in and perceived himself, and lends to the work richer meanings and appearances.

Mais la fortune montre bien encore plus évidemment la part qu'elle a en tous ces ouvrages, par les graces et beautés qui s'y treuvent, non seulement sans l'intention, mais sans la connaissance même de l'ouvrier. Un suffisant lecteur découvre souvent des écrits d'autrui des perfections autres que celles que l'auteur y a mises et apperceues, et y preste des sens et des visages plus riches.  

Montaigne welcomes these happy misinterpretations as gifts of fortune, wonderful but arbitrary accidents. For Schiller and for the first generation of Romantic authors, however, it was a natural process, and they tried to exploit it. Since the ruin of the work was inevitable, the artist could capitalize on this by building into the writing the principles of its own destruction. Many of the literary forms of this period are provisional—not only experimental but impossible to repeat, above all in the creations of Tieck, Novalis, and Hölderlin, as well as those of Byron, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. These works often seem to proclaim the difficulty of maintaining their artistic integrity, and they hint to the reader of the ways they may be eroded. Novalis, in the last of the Fragments published under the title Pollen Dust, remarked:

The art of writing books is not yet invented. It is, however, on the point of being invented. Fragments of this kind are literary seeds. There may indeed be many a barren grain among them: nevertheless, if only a few were to sprout!

Die Kunst Bücher zu schreiben ist noch nicht erfunden. Sie ist aber auf dem Punkt erfunden zu werden. Fragmente dieser Art sind literarische Samenreiser. Es mag freilich manches taube Körnchen darunter sein; indessen, wenn nur einiges aufgeht!

This fragment itself is not only provisional, tentative, but glories in its refusal to reach the definitive; and it is given to us with a premonition of its own death, imminent or deferred, with the prospect of its ruin.


Disorders

The Romantic fragment and the forms it inspired enabled the artist to face the chaos or the disorder of experience, not by reflecting it, but by leaving a place for it to make a momentary but suggestive appearance within the work. The sense of chaos, its creative role, was seen by some of the early Romantics as essential to modern art. Many of Friedrich Schlegel's notes from the years 1797 to 1802 are speculative fragments (they remained unpublished until recently)  

on the relation of art and chaos, concerned above all with the most characteristic of modern Romantic forms, the novel (Roman). One statement of 1798 is decisive:

Form of the novel a refined artistic chaos.

Roman in der Form ein gebildetes künstliches Chaos.

Somewhat later in 1802, this is extended in summary fashion to contemporary style in general, and relates the sense of chaos to a representation of the organic:

Vegetation = chaotic is the character of the Modern.

Vegetabilisch = chaotisch ist der Charakter der Modernen.

Chaos has become a metaphor for the biological disorder of a nonmechanistic universe, the disorder of everyday experience. It is above all a signal of the problem of representing such a universe within an artistically ordered form.

The chaotic was not the fragmentary (since the Romantic fragment was "complete in itself and separate from the rest of the universe"): Schlegel in fact explicitly opposed them. The opposition was not a perfect one, however, as two notes of 1798 on style betray:

Rhyme must be chaotic, and yet as chaotic with symmetry as possible.

From this can be inferred the system of Romantic meter.

Der Reim muss so chaotisch und doch mit Symmetrie chaotisch sein als möglich. Darin liegt die Deduction des romantischen Syllabenmasses.

In other words, a rhyme must appear to be a happy accident, not a forced imposition of the poet: yet it imposes a symmetrical order. The combination of chaos and symmetry seemed to grant the Romantic critic of poetry his usual

pleasure of having his cake and eating it too. Schlegel extended this combination to prose as well:

The principle of Romantic prose exactly like that of verse—symmetry and chaos, quite according to the old rhetoric; in Boccaccio both are very clearly in synthesis.

Das Prinzip der romantischen Prosa ganz wie das der Verse—Symmetrie und Chaos, ganz nach der alten Rhetorik; im Boccaz diese beiden in Synthese sehr deutlich.

The most successful Fragments preserve the clearly defined symmetry and the balance of the traditional forms but allow suggestively for the possibility of chaos, for the eruption of the disorder of life. This previson acts like the quills of the hedgehog, which both sharpen and blur the perfect definition of the animal's shape.

As Schlegel wrote in the Athenæum:

You can only become a philosopher, not be one. As soon as you think you are one, you stop becoming one.

Man kann nur Philosoph werden, nicht es sein. Sobald man es zu sein glaubt, hört man auf, es zu werden.

Apparently simple, this Fragment is symmetrical, well balanced, and closed in expression—but it invites and even forces the reader to crack it open by speculation and interpretation. Its outward balance demands to be transformed into a more fruitful disorder. The form is closed and rhetorically conventional but the awakened resonance is open.

The technique of the Fragment was, for a brief time, an unstable but successful solution to the problem of introducing the disorder of life into art without compromising the independence and integrity of the work. In music, the Romantic Fragment similarly leaves a place—ambiguous and disconcerting—for an unresolved detail which undermines the symmetry and the conventions of the form without ever quite destroying them. The most famous of Chopin's Fragments is the Prelude in F Major, from opus 28, with its poetic ending on a dominant seventh chord:

It may seem astonishing that the accented E at the end does not weaken the tonic chord. On the contrary, the four-times repeated V7 cadence made the last bars absolutely final; the E only makes it mysterious—an extraordinary achievement as there is nothing mysterious about the common dominant seventh chord. This is not merely an effect of sonority, although the accent on the E makes it ring like a bell; the dissonant note serves to prolong the final chord beyond the confines of the little form.

It could be maintained that in this prelude the ending on a dominant seventh chord does not arrive unprepared. There is a surprisingly heavy frequency of dominant seventh chords in this short prelude (in bars 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 21), and the way the last note in the left hand
delicately alters the sonority in bars 8 and 12 makes them very similar to the final bars. It is true, therefore, that the final chord is prepared, but it is in no way palliated or excused. One might even speak of a shock value unaffected by the passage of a century and a half if the effect were not so lovely and so delicate. But if the B does not weaken the final tonic, it does serve to expose that tonic as an artificial symmetry, an arbitrary convention, to suggest a different world of musical experience outside the formal traditions that Chopin’s contemporaries knew and that we still largely recognize today. The B is clearly an intrusion that enlarges the significance of the form and makes the final tonic chord uncanny. It is an ideal example of the alienation that was the defining characteristic of Romantic style for Novalis: “to make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar.”

Quotations and memories

Schumann was even more attached than Chopin to the effect of a note, a phrase, or even a section that seems at first hearing to arrive from outside the form. With “Florestan,” the second part of his double self-portrait in Carnaval, he made it a part of his signature. Florestan was the extrovert, violent, and capricious side of Schumann’s personality, and his portrait is interrupted after the first phrase by a reminiscence of one of Schumann’s earliest published works:

What is revolutionary here is not the introduction of a quotation from another work but the way it is made to sound like a quotation. If Schumann’s directions are faithfully carried out, the phrase will appear to be an intruder from somewhere else, even to those who have never heard another work by Schumann. The quotation, marked Adagio and leggero, is isolated by the radical changes of both tempo and sonority. It is also an intruder that breaks up the
normal four-bar period. On its first appearance (bars 9 to 10) it is so brief as to seem inexplicable, not a significant independent phrase but just a simple scale. The second appearance (bars 19 to 22) changes everything: the scale is revealed as the beginning of a well-defined melody, a slow, expressive waltz. Both appearances interrupt a much faster waltz, passionate and raging, and both interruptions are fragments, the first so fragmentary as to be not quite intelligible.

It is the puzzling too-short first quotation that gives sense to the second. Initially the quotation is an imperfectly understood phrase, only half remembered. Then the memory becomes clearer, so much so that Schumann can now identify it as “(Papillon?)” —but with a question mark. The sudden change to a slow tempo and light soft touch make the phrase come in a sort of half light and as if from a distance: the question mark is not so much a cryptic note by the composer as a direction to the pianist, telling him how to play the phrase. This page is one of Schumann’s finest experiments in musically the sensation of memory; a few years later he was to put this to good account on a larger scale in the song cycles.

Composers before Schumann had exploited contrasts of tempo and character within a single movement (the first page of Beethoven’s Sonata for Piano in E Major, op. 109, is a famous example). Schumann’s genius was to make the contrast puzzling, tentative, only gradually intelligible. As “Florestan” continues, in fact, the contrast is progressively eliminated. Only the first appearance of the memory breaks the four-bar period, which is then preserved through the rest of the piece. As it proceeds, Schumann integrates the rising and falling scale of the memory with the more characteristic shape of the opening motif. The two voices in the right hand of bars 31 and 32 suggest the opening of “Papillon?” and incorporate it into the initial turbulent texture, and the identity is made even more evident by bars 42 and 43. The memory is completely absorbed into the present, and the piece ends fortissimo on a dominant ninth chord as a simple fragment in an access of passion. Afterwards, the first four bars of “Coquerte” provide a cadence.

The triumph of the musical Fragment is the first movement of Schumann’s Phantasie in C Major, op. 17, originally titled “Ruins” in manuscript. Schumann himself felt that this movement was the most powerful manifestation of his genius. It is certainly his most successful and most original essay in a large form. While the song cycles, along with the Davidsbündlertänze, Kreisleriana, and Carnaval, are equally impressive achievements, they are collections of fragments. The first movement of the Phantasie reveals the aesthetic of the single Fragment magnified, with a sweep and energy that occurs nowhere else.

Like “Florestan,” this movement is based on the quotation of a phrase from outside the work but absorbed into it; as in “Florestan” the full quotation is delayed. Both the absorption and the delay are spectacular in the Phantasie in C Major. Most of the themes in the first movement are based on the quotation, but we must wait to hear this until the final page of the movement. Once again, Schumann’s ability to create an effect of quotation marks in music is astonishing. When the phrase finally arrives, we recognize it as the source of so much of the material already heard, but it appears as a new theme in a new slow tempo—and with the first satisfying resolution to a tonic chord in root position that we find in the movement. The quotation is therefore the point of rest and the center of gravity.

Like the quotation in “Florestan,” this last page of the first movement of the Phantasie is a reminiscence—but this time of a melody by another composer. It is the beginning of the last song of Beethoven’s An die ferne Geliebte. Most of Schumann’s contemporaries with a knowledge of recent music would have recognized the source—certainly Liszt, to whom the Phantasie was dedicated and who had transcribed An die ferne Geliebte for piano. In any case, Schumann alerts his public to the presence of a secret by the epigraph to the Phantasie published in the first edition, four lines of verse by Friedrich Schlegel:

Through all the sounds that sound
In the many-colored dream of earth
A soft sound comes forth
For the one who listens in secret.

Durch alle Töne tönet
Im bunten Erdentraum
Ein leiser Ton gesogen
Für den der heimlich lauscht.

The “secret tone” is the phrase of Beethoven, and the Phantasie was, in fact, written to raise money for a monument to Beethoven at Bonn. Schumann wrote to his distant beloved, Clara Wieck, from whom he was still separated by order of her father: “For hours I have been playing over and over again a melody from the last movement of my Phantasie... Are you not the secret tone that runs through the work? I almost think you are.” This was a very proper and suitable thing for an artistic young man to write to his fiancée. Intrepid biographical critics pay no attention to the “almost.” Too firm an identification of an element in a work with an aspect of the artist’s life does not further understanding but block it. The work is not intended to convey the artist’s experience as directly as a telegram, or to substitute his memory for ours: it is made to be filled with our experience, as a vehicle for the feelings of all who perceive it. Nothing shows this more clearly than Schumann’s letter to Clara: as a listener to his own music, not as a composer, he has understood how his love for Clara can be poured into the mold of his work. The melody from the
last movement about which he writes to Clara must be this one, marked “Etwas bewegter”:

It is the only one that could conceivably be played over and over again for hours. It, too, is more cryptically a quotation from Beethoven; the source, as we know from Schumann himself, is the Seventh Symphony, and it probably comes from the following passages in the first and above all second movements (quoted here from Liszt’s transcription for the piano):

a)

It is typical of Schumann’s musical thinking to construct this complex network of references outside his music—to quote Beethoven, and then to have Beethoven’s distant beloved refer to Clara. But this should give a clue to the nature of Schumann’s achievement. It is not Schumann’s music that refers to Clara but Beethoven’s melody, the “secret tone.” Above all, at the end of Schumann’s first movement, the quotation from Beethoven appears not as a reminiscence of another composer, but as at once the source and the solution of everything in the music—up to that final page. The reference becomes self-reference: the phrase from Beethoven seems as much to derive from what has preceded as to be the source. In fact, one cannot take the full measure of Schumann’s accomplishment in this work without observing that the quotation from An die ferne Geliebte sounds as if Schumann had written it. This is only in part because Beethoven has, in his wonderful song cycle, anticipated many aspects of Schumann’s style, or because Schumann had recognized himself in Beethoven’s work, but above all because the entire movement of Schumann is a preparation for, and development of, the concluding phrase. That explains why the phrase will appear as something remembered even to those who have never heard the Beethoven cycle: it is played in its original form only at the end, but recalls, now resolved and stabilized, all the excitement and tension that has gone before.

Only the first two bars of Beethoven’s melody are quoted by Schumann:

It is easy to hear that in Schumann’s opening melody
the motif

comes from Beethoven's

But Schumann's opening is even more clearly derived from the fourth bar of Beethoven's original melody

which Schumann does not quote at the end of the movement. In the Phantasie, the quotation functions as the point of rest, the final moment of stability, the arrival at the tonic. Schumann's purpose is not the revelation or the acknowledgment of a source outside the work but the integration of the source into the work. This entails the familiar contradiction—the Fragment is complete in itself—but the puzzle is only one of logic, not of sensibility:

The melody of Beethoven's unquoted bars 3 and 4 outlines the triad of D minor, the supertonic minor (ii) of C major, and determines at the very opening the large-scale structure of the movement. The harmonic structure is, in fact, so idiosyncratic that it is worth describing briefly; it will help to explain both Schumann's extraordinary success and why it was so difficult to repeat. The D minor chord over a dominant pedal opens the work (Theme I), and C major is defined only by implication:

After a single sforzando on the dominant G, the D minor chord is blurred in the accompaniment (piano), but clearly outlined by the melody (fortissimo). After a new theme (II), a lyrical version of the main theme (I) closer to the original Beethoven melody appears in D minor, and this harmony is now established in its own right with the dominant pedal on G removed:
Still another version (I°), even closer to the Beethoven song, continues the D minor:

This leads to a second playing of the lyrical versions I° and I° now in the subdominant major, F, the relative major of D minor:

As I have observed, the chord of the tonic major in root position is evaded by Schumann until the end of the piece. After a short stretto in faster tempo, the opening theme reappears on a tonic pedal, but still unresolved, with the dissonant harmony of D minor insistently present; and it is rounded off with a half cadence and a fermata, which serve to prolong the tension of the “exposition”:

As a secondary tonality of an exposition, the subdominant is very rare and absolutely unclassical. It is, however, established directly out of the harmony of the opening bass, and it leads directly to the chord of its own supertonic (G minor) and back to D minor in a series of broken phrases. We return to C major and the opening theme by a simple sequence of rising subdominants: D minor, G minor, C minor.
This is the extreme point of contradiction: the harmony of this cadence is both tonic C major and dominant G major and neither. It is a dominant seventh chord on G with the tonic C underneath it as a bass—and then an expressive C minor scale places the G in the bass, but with a B which attempts to nullify the dominant seventh chord, and achieves this with the G minor “in the style of a legend” for four bars—only to return to the tonic minor. This extraordinary cadence is the culmination of Schumann’s earlier play with dissonance, weakening both tonic and dominant with supertonic minor and subdominant.

The ambiguous cadence explains the succeeding pages. A sonata exposition, which the Phantasie mimics (and it was originally to be called a grand sonata), generally leads to a full cadence on the dominant, and is followed by a development section: the first part of a ternary form on the other hand, generally ends with a tonic cadence, and is followed by a contrasting central section. “Im Legendton” is both a contrasting section, in slower tempo almost entirely concentrated in the tonic minor, and a development section which works principally with themes II and I.

The “recapitulation” is no more orthodox. It begins at bar 129, and after a few phrases the rest of the “exposition” is played transposed down a whole step: the supertonic D minor becomes the tonic minor, and everything in F major reappears in E flat major. The opening theme returns at the end, and is now resolved—for the first time—by the quotation from Beethoven’s An die ferne Geliebte.

This kind of analysis in the style of a railway timetable (“We arrive at the tonic pedal at 119 and depart at 129”) is generally neither interesting nor enlightening. It serves here, however, to demonstrate unusual emphasis on the subdominant or flat area—F major, D minor and C minor—and the way these harmonies are derived from the character of the opening theme and the Beethoven song. In Classical technique the subdominant area is used to reduce tension, to prepare resolution; Schumann paradoxically employs it with astonishing mastery to increase and prolong tension. He can do this because the tonic C major has been fully established but never affirmed by its triad in root position. Resolution in this movement is almost always into a dominant pedal, into the minor mode, or into a tonic pedal in which an intrusive dissonance prevents the C major triad from asserting itself before the end.

In spite of the apparent acceptance of Classical sonata proportions and structure, the Phantasie does not work like a Classical or even a post-Classical sonata. It does not contrast themes of different character; it does not oppose tonic and dominant (or tonic and mediant) and intensify and resolve the opposition; it does not start at a point of rest, move dramatically to a greater intensity and return to a state of equilibrium. It begins with great tension, descends towards resolution and is frustrated, moves to a point of greater tension, and initiates the process over and over again. The structure is like a series of waves, starting with the climax, losing momentum each time, and then beginning again. Except in the slower middle section, the music does not build to a climax; on the contrary, it continually threatens to collapse, to split into pieces—and does in fact break down gradually starting at bar 70, into a series of fragments:
work, however, and illuminates the originality of the large conception. Schumann’s radical innovation was a new large sense of rhythm conceived as a series of waves of energy, crucial to later composers like Wagner and Strauss. This innovation justifies the original title “Ruins.” To encompass this form, however, it was necessary to reveal the basic material only at the very end when all tension has evaporated. The combination of this new feeling for rhythm with an idiosyncratic version of Classical form can clearly be accomplished only once; it was not a conception which could be either developed or repeated. It is the acceptance of the Fragment that enables Schumann in this one large movement to achieve a new sense of musical continuity.

At first Schumann intended to bring back the phrase from *An die ferne Geliebte* at the end of the last movement of the Phantasie, turning this even more persuasively into a Fragment: the melody is now an intruder from another movement as well as from another composer. In this original ending the quotation reappears with a change of harmony in bar 145 that introduces the chord

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{which had played such a crucial role:}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{335}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{338}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{341}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{344}
\end{align*}
\]

The accented A’s and the fermata at the end of the arpeggios lead directly into the A which initiates the quotation from Beethoven. When these arpeggios appeared at the opening of the movement, this A was the climax and the first note to be sustained:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Langsam getragen, Durchweg leise zu halten. m. j. so.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Adagio.}
\end{align*}
\]

Schumann’s original ending turned this brief moment of melody into a complete theme, and one that was familiar to us from the opening movement. Before publication he opted for prudence, struck out this poetic final page, and added three bars of perfunctory arpeggios in its place:

If an editor had made this change, we would call him a vandal. The Fragment was always a difficult concept to maintain, hovering between compromise and provocation.

A quotation is, of course, a memory made public, but the phrase by Beethoven in Schumann’s Phantasie acts within a complex hierarchy of memories. As it originally appeared in Beethoven’s song cycle it was already a memory, a final song that reminded us so much of the opening song that it became the opening song almost without our realizing that a transformation had taken place. In the first movement of Schumann’s Phantasie, it is now a memory both of the Beethoven cycle and of all the themes of Schumann’s movement derived from it and resolved by it. As it stands in the manuscript version of the last page of the final movement, it is a memory both of the Beethoven song and of Schumann’s first movement, and it is subtly reharmonized to recall the first movement more persuasively. The manuscript ending of the finale, in spite of the careful way it is prepared by the very opening bars, creates a momentary break in the form of the last movement, only to imply the greater unity of the work as a whole.
There is nothing novel about quotations in music, or in the use of another composer's tune as the basis of a composition. What is radically new here is the mode of integration, the way Schumann makes Beethoven's melody sound as if it were derived from its new context, as if Schumann's music could expand organically to produce a scrap of Beethoven. The Romantic Fragment acknowledges what is alien to it and incorporates it. The phrase of Beethoven is made to seem like an involuntary memory, not consciously recalled but inevitably produced by the music we have just heard. A memory becomes a fragment when it is felt as both alien and intimate, when we are aware that it is as much a sign of the present as of the past.

Absence: the melody suppressed

An imperfect, incomplete memory is doubly a fragment. Schumann's Frauenliebe und Leben ends with a memory—but one that has been mutilated at the moment of greatest pathos. After the death of her husband, the woman sings:

I withdraw silently into my inwardness,
   The curtain falls
There I have you and my lost happiness
   You are my world
Ich zieh' mich in mein Innes still zurück,
   Der Schleier fällt
Da hab' ich dich und mein verlorne Glück
   Du meine Welt

and the piano alone replays the first song quietly, the memory of the woman's first sight of the man she would marry:

It is, however, not quite the first song but only the accompaniment, and, significantly, no distinction is made here between the piano's initial bar of introduction in the opening song and the beginning of the sung melody.

The accompaniment of an entire stanza is played without any alteration. In the opening song the piano doubled most of the singer's notes—until the climax, when the piano drew back and left the melody entirely to the voice:

SINGTIMME.

PIANOFORTE.
are hidden within it as

\[ \text{music notation} \]

It must be emphasized, nevertheless, that in the postlude this bar does not reach to the level of intelligible melody; there is a gap here that must be filled by the listener. The postlude is a memory, and part of the memory is missing: it has to be recalled, willed to return—as it inevitably is. Schumann has forced the listener to acknowledge the eternal imperfection of memory and to complete the song. The end of the cycle is not a return but the ghost of a return, a fragment or shadow of the original. The voice no longer exists, and with it has died part of the melody. It was an extraordinary inspiration in the opening song to withdraw the piano's doubling of the melody at the climax, leaving the woman's voice isolated. In the postlude, to make this moment of the greatest pathos in the opening song disappear is a stroke of genius. It is at once the least and the most important moment: least important, because most easily recalled and supplied by the listener; most important, because its absence is deeply frustrating. In the end, the unexpected void is more affecting than the original melody.

When the accompaniment is played by itself, the melody appears to retreat into an inner voice in bars 11 and 12 and to disappear entirely in bar 12, to return again only at the end of 13.

The disappearance is not quite perfect: the melody continues to exist as a memory. I do not think any auditor forgets the wonderfully expressive phrase having heard it twice in the first song. "Taucht aus tiefstem Dunkel" are the words here—"rises from deepest darkness"—and the motif actually rises in the listener's mind out of the void left by the piano in the postlude. The accompaniment, it is true, offers a stimulus, the notes

\[ \text{music notation} \]