BRAHMS THE AUTUMNAL
AND THE ROMANTIC AESTHETIC OF DISSOLUTION

Diego Cubero Hernández

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Jacobs School of Music,
Indiana University
December 2014

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dissertation Committee

_____

Frank Samarotto, Ph.D.

_____

Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, Ph.D.

_____

Blair Johnston, Ph.D.

_____

Halina Goldberg, Ph.D.

November 14, 2014

To my parents

Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by thanking my advisor, Frank Samarotto. I cannot overestimate his influence in my music education. Through the course of six years at Indiana University, I had the great privilege of taking eight courses with him, including three doctoral seminars and two independent studies. My research has benefited immensely from his theoretical ideas, the musicality of his approach, and his thoughtful comments.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the rest of the members of my research committee, who offered me valuable feedback at the early and late stages of this project. I owe a special thanks to Halina Goldberg for guiding my research on Romantic aesthetics during a semester-long series of weekly meetings. I am also indebted to Sandra Shapshay for graciously sharing her expertise in nineteenth-century philosophy and aesthetics throughout the course of an independent study.

To the Jacobs School of Music, I am grateful for supporting me through a number of generous fellowships and scholarships, including a one-year writing fellowship that allowed me to work full-time on my dissertation. I gratefully acknowledge Emily Ezust from the Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Archive for granting me permission to reproduce her translations of several poems, and G. Henle Verlag for giving me permission to reprint the title page from the manuscript of Brahms's E major Intermezzo, Op. 116 no. 4. Especial thanks also to Paul Sherrill for providing me with a translation of an excerpt from Adam Müller's essay "Etwas über Landschaftsmalerei."

During my time at Indiana University, I had the good fortune of being surrounded by kind and brilliant peers, including Chelsey Hamm, Matthew Boyle, Paul Sherrill, Michael

McClimon, Garrett Michaelsen, and Mitch Ohriner. Thank you for listening to my ideas and sharing yours with me.

I would not have been able to complete this project without the love of my family. I cannot thank enough my wife, Sandy, for all her patience, understanding, and support. I thank my son, Esteban, for bringing me the greatest joy during the final months of work in this project. Finally, I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Andrés and Magda, for all their help and guidance through the years.

Diego Cubero Hernández

BRAHMS THE AUTUMNAL AND THE ROMANTIC AESTHETIC OF DISSOLUTION

This study expands upon the common notion that Brahms's music evokes the autumnal by closely examining the source and significance of this expressive quality. It proposes that his works embody the Romantic ideal of dissolution through a number of specific compositional means. The findings complement prevailing views on the nature of Brahms's autumnal sound, bringing an important part of the composer's reception history in dialogue with key tenets of Romanticism and with a close analysis of the music.

As Chapter 1 demonstrates, scholars have long regarded the autumnal quality of Brahms's music as a product of the composer's belated position in music history. Chapter 2 seeks to complement this view by providing a philosophical context from which to better understand the significance of this aspect of his style. This chapter argues that dissolution was for the Romantics a means of intuiting the spiritual in the physical. This notion of decay underpins a century-long interest in ruins, twilight, and the distant, and provides the basis for the Romantic conception of inwardness and resignation as forms of self-dissolution.

The aim of the subsequent chapters is to demonstrate precisely how Brahms's music may be heard as expressive of this Romantic ideal. Chapter 3 discusses three different forms of thematic decay and the formal functions they assume in his music. Chapter 4 expands on Frank Samarotto's concept of sublimation to describe how upward impulses vanish in several of his songs depicting the sunset. Chapter 5 draws a parallel between Brahms's use of structural inner voices and the Romantic notion of inwardness as a fading within. Chapter 6 compares the blurring of harmonies in his works to the way objects fade seamlessly into one another in the background of Romantic landscape paintings. While each chapter focuses on a particular

compositional issue, the analyses draw on the finding of each previous chapter. To conclude, an analysis of Brahms's Intermezzo, Op. 118 no. 2, shows all of these techniques working together to imbue the music with a distinct twilight quality.

Table of Contents

List of Examples

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

This study expands upon the common notion that Brahms's music evokes the autumnal by closely examining the source and significance of this musical quality. It proposes that his works embody the Romantic ideal of dissolution through a number of specific compositional means. The findings complement prevailing views on the nature of Brahms's autumnal sound, bringing an important part of the composer's reception history in dialogue with key tenets of Romanticism and with a close analysis of the music.

1.1. Brahms the Autumnal

Scholars have long drawn attention to the twilight, melancholic quality of Brahms's works, generally regarding it as a byproduct of the composer's late historical position. The view of Brahms as an autumnal figure is arguably the most prevalent trend in the reception of his music since the end of the nineteenth century up until this day.

Friedrich Nietzsche, in 1888, was among the first to comment on this aspect of his style. Hearing his music as symptomatic of the steep artistic decline of the era, Nietzsche famously claimed that Brahms's is the "melancholy of incapacity," because, for Nietzsche, Brahms could not compose anything original but was rather an epigone of old styles. Once one removes all that he borrows, Nietzsche asserted, the one thing that remains specifically his is yearning.[1]

Two decades later, Rudolph Louis expanded on and revised Nietzsche's view of Brahms, portraying the composer under a more favorable light. Louis argues that it is the backwards direction of Brahms's musical thinking that spreads a deep wistfulness over all his works, "a

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967 [1886–88]), 187.

wistfulness that Nietzsche has renownedly characterized as the 'melancholy of incapacity.'"[2] Although Louis, like Nietzsche, accuses the composer of being at times a mere imitator of the classics, he argues that what expresses itself in this melancholy is not Brahms's artistic inability but rather his awareness of being born during a fundamentally uncreative and inartistic period. It is precisely "this sense of artistic decline, this feeling of autumn," according to Louis, "that comes through in the melancholy of Brahms's musical language."[3]

Dating from 1909, Louis's was one of the first published references to the autumnal quality of Brahms's music that were to become commonplace by the time of the composer's centennial. Even Adorno, who in his 1934 essay "Brahms Aktuell" sought to emphasize the progressive elements of his music, much as Schoenberg had done the previous year, acknowledged the "academic heritage" and "autumnal colors" of his music, describing the "Brahmsian sound" as a "laboriously dissolved muteness, the heavy breathing of an almost incessant aging of music."[4] Adorno, like Louis, thus heard Brahms's music as a reflection on the decline of a musical tradition, the end of music as Brahms knew it.

More recently, Robert P. Morgan has drawn a similar link between the waning days of common-practice tonality and Brahms's musical style. The focus of his essay is the late piano pieces, works that Walter Niemann had earlier characterized as "quiet autumn pictures" and as "ripe children of autumn."[5] Morgan hones in on this autumnal quality and argues that these

---

[2] Rudolph Louis, *Die Deutsche Musik der Gegenwart* (Munich and Leipzig: Bei Georg Müller, 1909), 148.
[3] Ibid. Translation adapted from Margaret Notley, *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 70.
[4] Theodor Adorno, "Brahms Aktuell," in *Gesammelte Schriften Band 18: Musikalische Schriften V* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984 [1934]), 201–203. Adorno's essay was published a year after Schoenberg's 1933 radio talk "Brahms the Progressive." Schoenberg published a reformulated version of his talk in 1947. For an English translation of Schoenberg's essay, see *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 398–441. Adorno's and Schoenberg's essays are a reaction against the predominant view of Brahms's as a backwards-looking, autumnal figure.
[5] Walter Niemann, *Brahms*, trans. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969 [1929]), 241.

pieces faithfully project "that twilight moment in the Western music's evolution where the traditional language of post-Renaissance composition is reaching the end of its long blossoming."[6] By discussing in particular the difficulty that each works seems to have in articulating its tonal structure, Morgan concludes that in this music Brahms appears to have come to the realization that tonal music can continue to exist "only by reflecting upon its state of disintegration," "upon the very difficulty of its continuing existence."[7] With its emphasis on the great effort needed for tonality to barely assert itself, Morgan's reading of the late intermezzi echoes Adorno's aforementioned description of Brahms's style as the strenuous, heavy breathing of an aging musical language.

Brahms was in fact well aware that music as he knew it was on its final gasp. Late in his life, he even spoke about the "end of music," positioning himself as the last member of an irrecoverable musical past.[8] As such, Brahms was, in the words of the musicologist Alfred Einstein, a posthumous musician during his own life.[9]

Far from affecting Brahms alone, this sense of belatedness was widespread among artists of his time. In his book *Late Idyll*, Reinhold Brinkmann explains that, like Brahms, other *fin de siècle* German artists such as the writer Theodor Fontane and the painter Adolph Mezel saw themselves as living during an epoch that they regarded as a late period, where the "basic preconditions of their understanding of life and their art were changing and thus called into question."[10] The result is a sentiment of melancholy, of loss, of permanent belatedness that is made manifest in their works through darkenings, interruptions, and structural breaks. In the case

[6] Robert P. Morgan, "6 Piano Pieces, Op. 118," In *The Compleat Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*, ed. Leon Botstein (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 195.
[7] Ibid., 194–95.
[8] Richard Specht, *Johannes Brahms: Leben und Werk eines deutschen Meisters* (Hellerau: Avalun-Verlag, 1928), 382.
[9] Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1947), 149–54.
[10] Reinhold Brinkmann, *Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms*, trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995 [1990]), 10.

of Brahms's Second Symphony—the focus of Brinkmann's study—what emerges from these darkenings and interruptions is a broken idyll and, with it, a feeling of loss.

Lawrence Kramer has similarly argued that the transformation of the opening moment in Brahms's Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115 from "a present beauty to a lost ideal" may be heard as expressing the widespread melancholy of the time.[11] As Kramer notes, the blissful clarinet melody heard towards the beginning of the work comes back but never in the same way, breaking down in the moment of recapitulation into a "failed illusion" and finally dissolving by the end of the movement.[12] The slow movement continues to mourn the lost bliss with the failed attempt to recall the idyllic theme turning into the clarinet's "gypsy" lament. It is perhaps the finale, however, that renders the absence most palpable. The last movement is a set of variations on the Quintet's opening theme, but the theme remains unstated up until the very end, appearing only once the music has collapsed into the gloomy key of B minor. "The long search," Kramer notes, "has only reconfirmed the transformation of a once-present happiness into an eternally lost object of desire."[13] The Quintet, like the Symphony, is a broken idyll.

The sense of loss that plagues the Quintet may be heard according to Kramer as reflecting the deep nostalgia that came to permeate modern life. With all its technological advances, modernism altered the basic preconditions of existence, eroding the sense of true community and thus of belonging. The result was a growing sentiment of alienation, "the feeling that life was at best a hopeless search for its own earlier radiance." "In this climate of feeling," Kramer notes, "the elder Brahms slipped easily into the role of an "autumnal figure,"" and his music "came to

[11] Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 46.
[12] Ibid., 47.
[13] Ibid., 62.

embody the prevailing nostalgia, "the transcendental homelessness," that would consolidate the experience of modernity as one of alienation."[14]

As Margaret Notley has argued, the wave of modernism that washed over Europe in 1890 coincided with the decline of the middle-class, Liberal culture with which Brahms closely identified himself.[15] The decline of Liberalism was another contributor to the view of Brahms as a person who had outlived his time. Contrary to its economic and political views, Liberalism was conservative in matters of art, promoting the superiority of the Classics and their logical working out of ideas. As Margaret Notley has convincingly shown, Brahms's late works project these values through their reliance on traditional tonal models and their overt emphasis on compositional craftsmanship or artifice.

Given that Viennese Liberalism was in decline during the late nineteenth century, it is perhaps not surprising that those very features that situate Brahms's music squarely within the Liberal tradition are those that were and continue to figure in discussions of the autumnal quality of his music. As noted above, by the turn of the century Nietzsche and Louis pointed already to the backwards orientation of Brahms's compositional thinking as a source of melancholy in his music. While showing that Brahms was more than the epigone that Nietzsche, Louis, and other anti-Liberal commentators made him up to be, recent scholars have similarly regarded the composer's turn to the past as contributing an element of nostalgia to his music. Julian Littlewood, for instance, has recently argued that Brahms's deep engagement with the past gives his works their distinct autumnal sound.[16] One of the ways in which Brahms's works engage

[14] Ibid., 65.
[15] Notley, *Lateness and Brahms.*
[16] Julian Littlewood, *The Variations of Johannes Brahms* (London: Plumbago Books, 2004), 344.

with and qualify the past is, according to William Mahrt, by distorting Classic conventions.[17] The most common and compelling of the distortions Mahrt cites occurs when Brahms conceals the beginning of the recapitulation by bringing back the theme in a varied form, hence creating a moment of delayed recognition that the recapitulation is underway. Mahrt points, for example, to the recapitulation in the first movement of Brahms's Fourth Symphony, where the opening theme re-appears at first unaccompanied and in augmentation. Among the many other examples of distorted recapitulations in Brahms's works, one could cite the one in the first movement of the Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115, which transforms, in the words of Kramer, the opening theme into a lost ideal. Likewise, Mahrt argues that these distortions convey a sense of reminiscence, which is so crucial a component of "the nostalgia so familiar to listeners of Brahms's music—of the autumnal mood tinged with melancholy, which is a characteristic expressive feature of his work."[18]

The use of artifice that Notley cites as reflective of Liberal ideals in Brahms's music is another way in which his works qualify the tonal tradition they draw upon. The recapitulatory transformations that Mahrt points are in fact often the product of overt artifice, of great intellectual achievement. For Robert Morgan, it is precisely this recourse to extraordinary artifice that reveals the difficulty of tonal music's continuing existence.[19] By Brahms's time, it seems, those tonal conventions that once were second nature came to require a great deal of compositional labor for their very assertion. Music, as Brahms knew it, was on its twilight moment and so too was the culture that continued to uphold its value.

---

[17] William Mahrt, "Brahms and Reminiscence: A Special Use of Classic Conventions" in *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honor of Leonard G. Ratner*, eds. Wye J. Allanbrook, Janet M. Levy, and William P. Mahrt (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992), 76.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Morgan, "6 Piano Pieces, Op. 118," 194–95.

Thus, we see that scholars have long drawn attention to Brahms's twilight sound, regarding it in one way or another as the result of the composer's belated musical and socio-political position. In short, his musical style was and continues to be heard as a sonic image of the waning era.

1.2. Purpose and Overview of the Study

For all the commentary that the autumnal quality of Brahms's music has generated, scholars have not consider its deep philosophical significance nor sufficiently explained the specific means through which his music conveys it. The present study fills this gap by situating Brahms's autumnal sound within the context of the Romantic worldview and showing how his music may be heard as embodying the Romantic aesthetic of decay.

Decay is a central component of the Romantic worldview. Representing at once a physical end and a spiritual becoming, the process of dissolution was for the Romantics a means of experiencing the spiritual in the physical—a mode of transcendence. As Chapter 2 shows, this idea finds expression in the romanticized depiction of ruins, death, the distant, and twilight in nineteenth-century artworks. This study proposes that with its distinct autumnal quality Brahms's music also reflects the highly spiritualized notion of dissolution cultivated by the Romantics. It does so, I will argue, through a number of specific compositional means that form part of a process of de-intensification affecting dynamics, rhythm, and often tempo.

Once Chapter 2 has provided the philosophical background from which to understand the autumnal quality of Brahms works, Chapter 3 examines three different processes of thematic decay and the formal functions they assume in Brahms's music. Chapter 4 then expands on Frank Samarotto's concept of sublimation to describe how upward impulses vanish as part of a process of de-intensification that depicts the imagery of twilight in several of Brahms's songs.

Chapter 5 draws a parallel between Brahms's use of structural inner voices alongside a process of thematic/dynamic dissolution and the Romantic idea of inwardness as a fading within. Finally, Chapter 6 compares the blurring of harmonies in many of Brahms's works to the way in which objects fade seamlessly into one another in the distant background of Romantic landscape paintings. While each chapter focuses on a particular compositional issue, the analyses draw on the finding of each previous chapter. To conclude, an analysis of Brahms's Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2, shows all of these techniques working together to imbue the music with a distinct twilight quality.

In arguing that his works reflect the Romantic notion of dissolution, this study complements the prevailing view of Brahms's autumnal sound as a product of the composer's overall belatedness. It suggests that in depicting the twilight of the tonal tradition, Brahms's works romanticized it and embodied the very means of its transcendence. His music, I shall conclude, expresses the never ending vitality of the waning tonal tradition as an object of reflection. Brahms's autumnal sound is not a sonic image of the passing of an era, but a moving eulogy.

Chapter 2

Dissolution as a Romantic Ideal

2.1. Introduction

By examining the significance of dissolution from a Romantic perspective, this chapter seeks to provide the philosophical context from which to better understand the autumnal quality of Brahms's music. It posits that dissolution was for the Romantics a form of transcendence, a means of experiencing the spiritual in the physical. This notion of decay underpins a century-long interest in ruins, the distant, and the sunset, and provides the basis for the Romantic ideal of inwardness and resignation as self-dissolution.

2.2. Dissolution in Romantic Art and Literature

Dissolution is a central component of the Romantic aesthetic. Its clearest manifestation may be found in the Romantic tendency towards the ruined. As Susan Steward notes, the notion that all the world will decay corresponds to the sensibility of the Romantic and the "cult of ruin."[1] Ruins occupy the "perfect position of verging into dissolution, yet not entirely sliding into it."[2] Existing at the threshold of non-existence, ruins embody dissolution; they render physical absence present. To engage an object as a ruin means precisely to become acutely aware of this absence, to experience what is palpable as a trace of what is not, as "a suggestion of a vanished whole."[3] Becoming only partially perceptible, the whole exists as an infinite ideal that is postulated

[1] Susan Steward, "Agon Garden," *Representations* 62 (Spring 1998): 112.
[2] Dylan Trigg, *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).
[3] Elizabeth Wanning Harries, ""Unfinish'd Sentences": The Romantic Fragment," in *A Companion to European Romanticism*, ed. Michael Ferber (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 361.

through the creative power of the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*).[4] As such, the ruin serves as a way of intuiting the ideal in the phenomenal. Its decay is a spiritual becoming.

While the ruins scattered around the Romantic landscape remain its most memorable trace, the ideal of dissolution finds expression in several other Romantic tendencies. Chief among these was the fascination with the distant. In the distance everything vanishes and becomes idealized. This we can generalize from Jean Paul Richter's description of the Romantic in his *Vorschule der Aesthetik*. After defining the Romantic as "beauty without limit," Jean Paul asserts that "it is more than an analogy to call the Romantic the undulant hum of a vibrating string or bell whose soundwave fades away into ever greater distances and finally is lost in ourselves and, although outwardly quiet, yet sounds within."[5] In other words, as the dying sound becomes less sensually perceptible, Berthold Hoeckner explains, "it is projected through the power of imagination into an ideal infinity."[6] In this way, the dying sound, like a ruin, bridges the gap between the perceptible and the imagined, between a limited outward reality and an inner spiritual totality.

Central to Jean Paul's notion of the Romantic as dying sound is not just a cessation of the physical but its gradual dissolution, such that the boundary between phenomenon and ideal becomes indeterminable. In the 1825 postscript to his *Vorschule*, Jean Paul stresses this point, elaborating on his understanding of the Romantic as dying sound:

> Like the beautiful without limit, this [Romantic poetry] is less a delusion of the eyes, of which the boundaries do not fade away as indeterminable as those of

[4] The Romantics saw the imagination as the faculty by which the phenomenal world is postulated and created. Only through the power of the imagination can the absolute be intuited. About the totalizing power of the imagination, Jean Paul Richter writes, "imagination writes all parts into wholes and transforms all parts of the world into worlds. It totalizes everything, even the infinite universe." *Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter's School for Aesthetics*, trans. Margaret R. Hale (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 28.
[5] *Horn of Oberon*, 61.
[6] Berthold Hoeckner, *Programing the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 55.

> dying sound. No color is as Romantic as a sound, since one is present at the dying away only of sound but not of color.[7]

Accordingly, the more gradually it decays and the less palpable it becomes, the more Romantic a phenomenon is. On this account, a dying sound is for Jean Paul more Romantic than color or poetry.

This is perhaps the reason why references to distant, dying sounds abound in Jean Paul's works as well as those of his contemporaries. One such reference may be found in Jean Paul's description of the Romantic in Ossian's poetry. "Everything in his poem is music," Jean Paul asserts, "but distant and thereby doubled and absorbed into the infinite, like an echo which charms not by a raw fidelity of reproduced tones but by an ever fainter mellowing of them."[8] Here, the distant dying sound serves as a metaphor for the ancient and fragmented nature of Ossian's poems, which survive only through James Macpherson's unreliable translations as less that faithful echoes of themselves.[9] Ossian's poems are thus literary ruins; they are, as Jean Paul suggests, faint echoes of what is no longer.

In his novels, Jean Paul returns again and again to the imagery of the dying sound. As Berthold Hoeckner has noted, distant sounds often evoke memories, as in the passage from his novel *Flegeljahre* where he writes that "the distant bells of the village were calling, like beautiful, dying-away times."[10] In another occasion, he gracefully intertwines the imagery of the dying sound with that of the sunset:

> From the thunderstorm he turned again toward the multicolored sunny countryside—a breeze from the east carried the sounds—swam with them to the

---

[7] Jean Paul, *Kleine Nachschule zur ästhetischen Vorschule*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ser. 1, vol. 16 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1938), 428. Translation adapted from Hoeckner, *Programing the Absolute*, 55.
[8] Jean Paul, *Horn of Oberon*, 61.
[9] The poems said to be written by a Gaelic bard named Ossian were first published by James Macpherson under the title *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*.
[10] Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ser. 1, vol. 10 (1934), 85. Translation adapted from Hoeckner, *Programing the Absolute*, 56.

> sun—on the flowering evening clouds the little echo, the lovely child, repeated quietly his playing….heavy and slumbering the sun swam on the sea—it was drawn down—its golden aura glowed away in the endless blue void—and the echoing sounds lingered and died away on the glow.[11]

Jean Paul thus links distant, fading sound with distant, fading light. Reflecting the sunlight no longer directly visible, the evening's twilight is, as the passage suggests, an echo of light that becomes ever more diffused until it finally dies away. Similar to a ruin, an echo, or a memory, the twilight is a remnant of what has faded in the distance but has not completely passed into non-existence. Extending, as it were, a phenomenon beyond itself, it is at once a physical presence and a form of transcendence.

Jean Paul's romanticized description of the sunset could have been written to accompany any number of Romantic landscape paintings depicting the sunset, including Caspar Friedrich's *Sonnenuntergang* (Sunset), reproduced in Figure 2.1. With the clouds elongated across the sky mirroring the islands stretched over the sea, the painting features Friedrich's overwhelming use of horizontal lines and lack thereof of vertical or diagonal ones, which nearly flattens the three-dimensional perspective into two dimensions. The result is that sense of boundlessness that Heinrich von Kleist remarked upon one of Friedrich's paintings and which lies at the heart of Jean Paul's notion of the Romantic as beautiful infinity.[12]

This sense of boundlessness is intensified by what Alice Kuzniar describes as Friedrich's fondness for luminous, evanescent backgrounds set on an elusive horizon.[13] The horizon is elusive because in the distance sea and sky fade seamlessly onto one another, creating a feeling of infinite regress. In his short essay "Etwas über Landschaftsmalerei" (Thoughts about

---

[11] Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre*, 77. Translation adapted from Hoeckner, *Programing the Absolute*, 56.
[12] Heinrich von Kleist, "Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelanschaft," in *Sämtliche Werk und Briefe*, vol. 2 (Munich: Hanser, 1977), 327. Kleist also notes that the painting has an Ossian-like effect.
[13] Alice Kuzniar, "The Temporality of Landscape: Romantic Allegory and C. D. Friedrich," Studies in Romanticism 28, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 87.

Landscape Painting), the nineteenth-century critic Adam Müller beautifully describes the blurry quality of the distant in Romantic paintings, comparing it to the faded quality of a distant memory:

> That which immediately surrounds a person—his cottage, the trees in his garden—all this appears in stark contrast concrete, defined and clear beside the formless, flowing ether; now his eye lifts up, so that it can command a greater distance, and the contours of earthly things become softer, the colors gentler: air and earth seem to run together; and they trade places with lovely intimacy: in the clouds the earth appears to step into the face of heaven, and in the seas and rivers heaven into the face of the earth—and in the farthest vastness the borders trail away, the colors fade into each other, what belongs to heaven, to earth, can no longer be told. Thus, regarded from the stark cliffs of the present, appears a person's distant, earliest childhood: heaven and earth in near relationship, but the memory of that day monochrome and as if weatherworn.[14]

Müller thus maps spatial distance into temporal. Much like distant, dying sounds evoke memories in Jean Paul's novels, looking into the infinitely receding horizon in paintings such as this is for Müller like looking into an image of a fading, distant memory.

Contributing to this sense of evanescence is the fact that the painting depicts the landscape under twilight. Since, as Clemens Brentano asserts in his ode to the night, everything that the light of day divides the night connects,[15] the twilight depicts the landscape at the threshold between the individualizing light of day and the totalizing darkness of night. With the boundaries beginning to fade, the painting shows a world dissolving into a boundless totality. As such, the landscape is seen vanishing both in space (into the distance) and in time (into the night).

[14] Adam Müller, "Etwas über Landschaftsmalerei," *Phoebus: Ein Journal fur die Kunst* 4–5 (1808): 71–73. Special thanks to Paul Sherrill for providing me with this translation.
[15] Clemens Brentano, *Die Gründung Prags. Ein historisch-romantisches Drama* (Peth: C. A. Hartleben, 1815), 244. The beginning of the ode reads: Holy night! Holy night!/ Star-enclosed heavenly peace/ All that was divided by the day/ is connected.

FIGURE 2.1. Caspar David Friedrich, *Sonnenuntergang* 1835. Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg

As Alice Kuzniar has argued, by privileging the portrayal of light in its ephemerality, Romantic landscape paintings make nature seem to vanish and awaken in the subject a desire for inner illumination.[16] Echoing Jean Paul's description of the Romantic as dying sound, one can surmise that in the sunset light fades away into ever greater distances until, lost in ourselves, it shines within. In the sunset, Jean Paul's romanticized notion of distant, dying sound finds its visual counterpart.

Seen through the eyes of the two *Rückenfiguren*, the sunset in Fredrich's painting appears nonetheless to be as much a reflection of a subjective inner state as it is a depiction of an outer reality. That this is meant to be the case is clear from Friedrich's comment that "the artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him."[17] As such, the distant vanishing light may be seen as reflecting the sense of self-diffusion that the two figures experience upon looking at the sunset. Fading further into the horizon, the subject fades deeper within.

This is precisely the case in the first of Novalis's *Hymns to the Night,* the sunset elicits in the onlooker a sense of self-diffusion. The hymn begins with the speaker rejoicing in the light of day, which "reveals the miraculous splendor of the kingdoms of the world."[18] When dusk falls, it awakens in the speaker a feeling of his own death as "Vistas of memory, youthful wishes, childhood dreams—the brief joys and vain hopes of a whole long life—come clad in grey."[19] But this grief over the passing of the light disappears with the day, and as the night comes the speaker exclaims, "How poor and childish the light seems to me now—how cheering, how

[16] Alice Kuzniar, "The Vanishing Canvas: Notes on German Romantic Landscape Aesthetics," *German Studies Review* 11, no. 3 (Oct. 1988): 363–64.
[17] As quoted in William Vaughan, *German Romantic Painting*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 66.
[18] Novalis, "Hymns to the Night," in *Anthology of the German Literature of the Romantic Era and Age of Goethe*, trans. Klaus-Peter Hinze and Leonard M. Trawick (San Francisco: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 182.
[19] Ibid.

blessed the departure of day."[20] In a remarkable passage that fuses distance and subjective depth, it becomes clear that the night draws us inward to a place of bliss deep within:

> More heavenly than those glittering stars seem to us the *infinite* eyes that night opens up *within* us. They see *further* than the dimmest star of those countless hosts; needing no light, they look into the *depths* of a loving heart, which fills a higher realm with unutterable joy.[21]

Experiencing in the darkness a feeling of profound joy, the protagonist implores the night to dissolve his own physicality in order for this moment to last eternally. "Now," he pleads, "consume my body with spiritual fire so that I may merge with you more intimately, like air, and the bridal night then last forever!"[22] A longing for the eternal becomes then a longing for death, of which the night gives us but a short foretaste.

Accordingly, in the hymn the sunset evokes in the onlooker at first a negative feeling of his own death which then gives way to a feeling of the infinite within. As such, the sunset affords a transcendent, death-like experience that awakens a longing for a night that lasts forever.

In his influential monograph, *On Religion,* the Romantic philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher espouses a similar view, making self-dissolution the path towards experiencing the infinite within:

> Observe yourselves with unceasing effort. Detach all that is not yourself, always proceed with ever-sharper sense, and the more you fade from yourself, the clearer the universe will stand forth before you, and the more splendidly will you be recompensed for the horror of self-annihilation through the feeling of the infinite in you.[23]

---

[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 183.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 68.

With its emphasis on inner experience, this passage reflects the highly spiritualized sense of inwardness cultivated by the Romantics.[24] It portrays inwardness as a fading away from the self that allows us to experience the infinite within. Schleiermacher compares this sense of self-dissolution to a simulacrum of death and describes the ensuing feeling of the infinite not as being earned or willed but rather as granted upon us (as recompense). While fading within is like dying, the feeling of transcendence appears then as if by an act of grace.

Schleiermacher's call to fade away from ourselves in order to discover the infinite within provides the subjective counterpart to the Romantic notion of distance as that which dissolves the particular into an infinite totality. In fact, after the passage quoted above in which he advises his readers to observe themselves, Schleiermacher urges them to look outside themselves to any object from an ever-greater distance so that they can "soon lose the finite and find the infinite."[25] Fading from ourselves is thus akin to seeing an object fading into the distance, where it is not so much the phenomenal that recedes from us, but us who gradually retreat from the world.

2.3. Schopenhauer, Will-lessness, and Self-Dissolution

The spiritualized sense of self-dissolution made manifest in Novalis's *Hymns to the Night* and in Schleiermacher's call to fade from ourselves in order to experience the infinite within finds its clearest expression in the writings of the Romantic philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Exploring the role of self-dissolution in Schopenhauer's thought will allow us to trace its connection to the idea of resignation while revisiting the themes we have touched upon thus far.

---

[24] This spiritualized sense of interiority had its roots in Pietism. Dating back to the seventeenth century, this form of Lutheran Protestantism saw inner experience as a way of accessing the divine and found in subjective depth a refuge of the ills of the world. This notion of inwardness proved highly influential for the Romantics, many of whom came from Pietistic families. For an excellent study on the Piestistic roots of Romantic interiority, see Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E.T.A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 22–50.

[25] Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 68.

In keeping with the Romantic dualism between the noumenal and the phenomenal, Schopenhauer conceives of this world in terms of will and representation. While the world as representation corresponds to outer appearances, the world as will corresponds to its inner essence. This essence is Will: a timeless and un-individuated blind striving that constitutes the truly real and absolute, and thus stands outside time and space. For Schopenhauer, the source of all suffering stems from the objectification and individuation of the Will in the world of appearance. This aimless, blind striving becomes individualized in the willing subject. "All *willing*" Schopenhauer argues, "springs from need, and thus from lack, and thus from suffering"[26] and, even when this need is momentarily satisfied, the fulfilled wish gives way to a new one and we strive and suffer anew. Hence, this constant striving is "fully comparable to an unquenchable thirst."[27]

If all suffering stems from the individuation of the Will in the willing subject, to escape the cycle of suffering one must transcend one's own sense of individuality by becoming a will-less subject of cognition. Adapting Kant's notion of disinterest in the object of aesthetic judgment, Schopenhauer considers aesthetic contemplation as a peaceful state where the will "vanishes entirely from consciousness"[28] and argues that it is this freedom from want that accounts for the pleasure we take in the beautiful and the sublime. With the quiescence of our will, Schopenhauer claims, peace comes upon us, "happiness and unhappiness have disappeared: we are no longer the individual; this is forgotten."[29] Aesthetic experience is thus a fading away of the self, a breaking of the boundary between the I and the not-I. It is this peaceful, will-less

[26] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 219; emphasis original.
[27] Ibid., 338.
[28] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York, Dover Publications, 1966), 291.
[29] Schopenhauer, *WWR*, vol. 1, 221.

form of perception that, according to Schopenhauer, "casts such a wonderful spell over things in the past or far away,"[30] for our imagination recalls only the object and not our willing. In short, the temporally and spatially distant brings about a feeling of self-dissolution. Although Schopenhauer does not develop this idea further, one notices here a parallel between objective representation and subjective state, where the fading objects in space and time reflects the subject's experience of self-loss.

While for Schopenhauer the feeling of loss-of-self characterizes all aesthetic experience, he distinguishes two different routes in which this experience may arise: through the beautiful, or through the sublime. The beautiful is that which freely induces this will-less state. The feeling of the sublime, on the other hand, arises when an object opposes our will as objectified in our body and yet we are able to consciously turn our attention away from this menace and quietly contemplate those very objects that threaten us. For Schopenhauer the sublime thus reveals our two-fold nature: as an individual who is nothing compared to the immensity and power of the world; and as the will-less subject of cognition on whom the world depends. In other words, in the sublime we transcend our pithy physical existence and come to feel one with the world. In a passage remarkable for its phenomenological immediacy, Schopenhauer beautifully conveys this idea:

> When we lose ourselves in the contemplation of the infinite extent of the world in space and time, reflecting on the millennia past and the millennia to come, — or indeed when the night sky actually brings countless worlds before our eyes, so that we become forcibly aware of the immensity of the world, — then we feel ourselves reduced to nothing; we feel ourselves as individuals, as living bodies, as transient appearances of the will, *like drops in the ocean, fading away, and melting away into nothing*. But at the same time, rising up against such a spectre of our own nothingness, against such a slanderous impossibility, is our immediate consciousness that all these worlds exist only in our representation, only as modifications of the eternal subject of pure cognition, *which is what we find*

[30] Ibid., 222.

> *ourselves to be as soon as we forget our individuality*….The vastness of the world, which previously disturbed our peace of mind, now rests *within us*.[31]

The passage captures the double valence of the feeling of the sublime: a threatening sense of self-dissolution that gives way to a feeling that the world lies within us. Schopenhauer's notion of the sublime thus echoes Schleiermacher's description of inwardness quoted earlier, where the horror of self-annihilation yields to a feeling of the infinite within. This double valence also characterizes the first of *The Hymns of the Night*, where the sunset brings a feeling of loss of life that gives way to a feeling of inner infinity. Each author stresses a loosening of the self as a way of transcending all individuality and feeling the absolute within. To express this idea we may elaborate on Schopenhauer's metaphor by saying that the subject feels like a drop in the ocean dwindling and vanishing into nothing, but the drop, as it ceases to exist in its individuation, becomes the ocean itself.[32] Hence, a loosening of the self is at once a process of dissolution and diffusion, annihilation and totalization, a turning into nothing individual and thus everything.

From the pleasure we take in aesthetic contemplation we can infer, according to Schopenhauer, "how blissful life must be for someone whose will is not merely momentarily placated, as it is in the pleasure of the beautiful, but calmed forever, indeed extinguished entirely except for the last glowing spark that sustains the body and is extinguished along with it."[33] Seemingly continuing the metaphor of the drop, he refers to this state as ocean-like calmness and deep tranquility.[34]

Only through ascetic resignation and self-denial, Schopenhauer argues, can one remain in this will-less, peaceful state. Ascetic resignation, like aesthetic contemplation, involves a

---

[31] Ibid., 230; emphasis added.
[32] If for Schopenhauer the drop corresponds to the individual will as objectified in the body, the ocean must symbolize the metaphysical Will.
[33] Schopenhauer, WWR, vol. 1, 417.
[34] Ibid., 439.

forgetting of the self that yields to a feeling of oneness. Hence Schopenhauer describes it as "a withdrawal of self, a retreat, a gradual disappearance of the will."[35] Elsewhere, as with the feeling of the sublime, he stresses its inward nature, referring to the "inner serenity," "profound calm," "inner joy" of those whose will remains silenced.[36]

If he who has completely withdrawn from himself sees beyond all individuality, all objects must seem to him like ephemeral appearances dissolving into nothing. Accordingly, Schopenhauer argues that for this person

> life and its forms merely glide before him as a fleeting appearance, like a gentle morning dream that floats by someone who is half-awake, where reality is already shining through and cannot deceive anymore. And just like this dream, life and all its form finally disappear without any violent transition.[37]

Even though Schopenhauer does not develop this point further, one can conclude from this passage that the gradual fading away of the particular reflects the corresponding state within the subject. To the person living in complete resignation and self-denial, every phenomenon is evanescent and fades away; each thing is to her a decaying ruin, a fading sound, an evening's twilight.

To be sure, Schopenhauer was not the only writer at the turn of the century to regard resignation as a path leading away from the constant turmoil of life to a state of inner peace. Already in 1778, Rousseau argued that people live in a constant pursuit of happiness in external things without ever achieving it and recommended resigning within to a life free from want. His last major work, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker,* is in fact an account of his own resignation after being persecuted and exiled. "Since then," he writes, "I have become unreservedly

[35] Ibid., 423.
[36] Ibid., 416–17.
[37] Ibid., 417–18.

resigned, and I have found peace again."[38] Anticipating Schopenhauer's view, resignation for Rousseau involves a complete deliverance from want and from the desire for change. It constitutes instead a state of idleness where the only desire is one for sameness. He thus claims that while external things bring intense but poor, fleeting pleasure, resignation brings absolute and perfect happiness, "in which the present lasts forever without, however, making its duration noticed and without any trace of time's passage."[39] For Rousseau as well as for Schopenhauer, resignation is a form of transcendence that frees us from all earthly interests and the constant turmoil of existence.

In his 1804 publication, *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, Jean Paul reaches a similar conclusion. Since "all striving is a struggle with the present," he contends, "the highest bliss for which we strive cannot be repeated striving…but the opposite, a pleasurable repose, the *far niente* of existence."[40] Rousseau had similarly referred to his state of idleness and resignation in the *Reveries* as a precious "*far niente*" and Schopenhauer refers to life as a "uselessly disturbing episode in the blissful repose of nothingness."[41] In every case, action becomes equivalent to suffering, and repose to contentment. Jean Paul elaborates on this duality, claiming that while "there is no unhappy repose, no week for silent sorrow, but only for joy," "even the slightest pain is active and aggressive."[42] In short, each author expounds a dichotomy between doing and being. Doing is active, outward, time-bounded, forward-looking, and painful; being is passive, inward, timeless, goal-less, and pleasurable. Within this dichotomy, resignation represents a switch from doing to being.

---

[38] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 4.
[39] Ibid., 68.
[40] Jean Paul, *Horn of Oberon*, 52.
[41] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays*, vol. 2, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 300.
[42] Jean Paul, *Horn of Oberon*, 52–53.

We encounter this same veneration of rest in Novalis's *Hymns to the Night.* For Novalis, the day is equivalent to doing in that it is restless, time-bounded, and affords no lasting happiness; while the night is restful, everlasting, and brings lasting joy. Hence, he affirms that "whoever has stood high on the world's great divide and looked over into the new land, into the dwelling place of night—truly, that person does not turn back to the activity of the world, to the land where light resides in eternal unrest."[43]

Furthermore, the *Hymns* portray the blissful repose of the night as being bestowed upon us, suddenly breaking away all of our earthly desires. In the third hymn, for instance, Novalis tells us how, after being distraught with suffering and continuing to cling to this fleeting life with endless longing there came a "twilight tremor, that in one stroke shattered the bonds of birth, the fetters of light." He continues, "away fled earthly splendor and with it my sorrow….you, night-rapture, slumber of heaven, came over me."[44] Similarly, for Schopenhauer the vanishing of our will, together with the ensuing state of inner calmness, comes not forcibly from one's own volition, but "suddenly, as if flying in from outside. That is precisely why the church calls it the *effect of divine grace.*"[45] Just as in the *Hymns* there comes from the distance a twilight shudder that suddenly breaks all earthly desire, Schopenhauer argues that such an effect of grace "reverses the whole essence of a person so that he no longer wills what he used to will."[46] Schleiermacher expresses a similar idea when he writes that the feeling of the infinite is given to us as recompense for the horror of self-annihilation. In each case, the experience of transcendence is not willed, but rather bestowed upon us, coming as if grace.

[43] Novalis, "Hymns to the Night," 184.
[44] Ibid., 183.
[45] Schopenhauer, *WWR*, vol. 1, 432.
[46] Ibid.

In the hymns, we may recall, the renunciation of all earthly and physical concerns includes the rejection of one's own body. This desire to detach oneself from the body is evident when Novalis implores the night to dissolve his body in order to make the night's rapture last forever. We find this same disdain for the body in *The Reveries*. There, after proclaiming that the internal life of the soul grows even more with the death of every earthly and temporal interest, Rousseau claims, "my body is no longer anything to me but an encumbrance, an obstacle, and I disengage myself from it beforehand as much as I can."[47] Moreover, for Rousseau, too, the renunciation of all earthly things, including one's body, is part of an effort to escape the constant flux of the world and thus to live in an eternal repose. Resigning within to a life of idleness represents then a simulacrum of death, an attempt to escape all materiality—including our own.

In the same vein, Schopenhauer conceives of resignation as a denial of the will-to-live. And, since the body is for him an objectification of this will-to-live, a denial of the will corresponds to a rejection of the body. He clearly expresses this idea when he defines resignation as

> a gradual disappearance of the will whose manifestation, the body, is subtly but in its innermost essence undermined by it. In this, the person feels a certain loosening of his bonds, a gentle foretaste of the death that proclaims itself as the simultaneous dissolution of the body and the will.[48]

Just as Rousseau and Novalis speak of trying to disengage oneself from one's body, Schopenhauer sees the silencing of the will as inwardly undermining it. This provides us, according to Schopenhauer, with a preview of death. Death marks the final dissolution of body and our will, giving us "the great opportunity no longer to be I."[49] A moment not to be dreaded but longed for, death represents the ultimate transcendence of our individuality as manifested in

[47] Rousseau, *Reveries*, 7.
[48] Schopenhauer, *WWR*, vol. 1, 423–24.
[49] Schopenhauer, *WWR*, vol. 2, 507.

our body and our will, and a deliverance from all the suffering caused by the individuation of the Will in the world of representation. Schopenhauer thus writes,

> When death finally arrives to dissolve the appearance of that will whose essence had already died long ago through voluntary self-negation, with the exception of the feeble remnant that appeared as the vitality of this body, this death is highly welcome and will be received cheerfully as a longed-for redemption.[50]

This longing for death is, of course, a prominent Romantic theme. The connection between the Romantic attitude towards death and other forms of decay has, however, received less attention. This connection is nonetheless clearly evident in many artworks such as Friedrich's painting *Abtei im Eichwald* (Abbey in the Oakwood), reproduced in Figure 2.2. The painting is sublime, a depiction of frailness. Next to the graveyard, a ruin of a gothic cathedral towers amidst a leafless forest under the twilight sky. Like the ruin, the evening twilight marks a moment that borders on dissolution without yet passing into it. And, as the light of the days past continues to linger like a memory over the looming night, the twilight sky brings together the qualities of past and future into an eternal now. Similar to the seamless blending of day and night in the twilight sky, Friedrich juxtaposes the living and the dead by depicting a group of monks processing amidst the cemetery, reminding us that we, like an evening twilight, will eventually vanish too. Everything in the painting is thus continuously dying away: the abbey, the day, and us.

[50] Schopenhauer, *WWR*, vol. 1, 409

FIGURE 2.2. Caspar David Friedrich, *Abtei im Eichwald*, 1810. Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

As bleak a picture as this may seem, for the Romantics "an encounter with death is paradoxically an encounter with the hidden principle of life," as Nicholas Saul has pointed out in a recent study on the topic of death.[51] Friedrich's painting captures this sentiment through the presence of the cross, a symbol of eternal life through death. In the *Hymns* Novalis also places death within a Christian context and claims that "Only in death was true life to be found; / You are that death, and first have made us sound."[52] Similarly, Saul notes that in Schelling one encounters the "paradoxical view that sickness itself…is but another form of life, and conversely that life itself is one form of illness, from which death represents recovery and redemption."[53] Accordingly, as Saul concludes, dying for the Romantics, though seemingly morbid, remained at the service of eternal life.

The paradox that Saul finds in the Romantic attitude towards death is the same that surrounds the Romantic notion of dissolution in general. It is precisely this paradox that Schopenhauer's discussion of nothingness seeks to disentangle. The concept of nothing, he notes, is a relative one that always refers to that which it negates. Given that the physical world, which for Schopenhauer corresponds to an objectification of the will, is normally what is taken to mean existence and whose negation corresponds to the general meaning of nothing, the opposite point of view would entail saying that this world is nothing and its opposite constitutes the truly real. Schopenhauer notes that this alternative reality cannot be positively cognized, but it can be subjectively experienced by those who have reached in themselves a full denial of the will and its objectification. Those in whom the will is freely negated and who wait for its last trace to disappear along with the body it animates, he asserts, "we are shown a peace that is

[51] Nicholas Saul, "Love, Death, and *Liebestod* in German Romanticism," in *Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. Nicholas Saul (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 169.
[52] Novalis, "Hymns to the Night," 189.
[53] Saul, "Love, death, and *Liebestod*," 166.

higher than all reason, we are shown that completely calm sea of the mind."[54] And, as we come to the realization that all suffering stems from will and its objectification, we are comforted in seeing "the world melting away with the abolition of the will, leaving only empty nothing before us" and driving away the "dark impression of that nothing that hovers behind all virtue and holiness as the final goal."[55] Schopenhauer thus concludes that for those who continue to will, what remains after the will has vanished is nothing, but conversely for those whose will is silenced this world is nothing.

By definition this transcendent reality cannot be positively represented in any physical medium, including art. It can be negatively depicted, however, through something that points to a sense of absence or nothingness. Accordingly, Alice Kuzniar has argued that "for the Romantics, the ideal landscape painting would be the blank canvas, one that points to the absence of what it depicts."[56] While this ideal remained a platonic one, the Romantics did achieve a sense of absence by depicting a world fading into nothingness. The ruin, the dying sound, the evanescent twilight, all awaken a sense of absence by pointing less to what they are than to what is no longer. Given the nothingness of this transcendent reality, the process of dissolution made manifest in each of these cases may be experienced from the opposing point of view as a spiritual becoming.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that for the Romantics the process of dissolution was one of transcendence. By depicting a world fading into nothingness, the Romantics sought to awaken a

[54] Ibid., 439.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Kuzniar, "Vanishing Canvas," 359.

feeling for a transcendent reality, where all individuality vanishes and we become one with the world. In short, physical decay is spiritual becoming.

This study proposes that this Romantic ideal is also made manifest in Romantic music, particularly in the autumnal quality of Brahms's works. Demonstrating precisely how Brahms's music embody this Romantic ideal is the aim of the following chapters.

Chapter 3

Turning into Ruins: Processes of Thematic Dissolution in the Instrumental Works

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 has explored the role of dissolution in Romantic thought. It is now time to examine the ways in which this Romantic ideal is made manifest in Brahms's music, focusing in particular on issues of thematic transformation. The chapter begins by defining several different processes of thematic dissolution, placing them in a Schoenbergian theoretical context, and continues on to consider the formal functions these procedures may assume within a given section. To conclude, an analysis of the first movement of Brahms's Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114 illustrates how these processes can shape an entire movement.

3.2. Processes of Thematic Dissolution

The use of the term dissolution to describe certain thematic processes can be traced back to Schoenberg's writings. "In undergoing dissolution," he claims "every theme or motive loses individuality (harmonic and rhythmic), becomes more ordinary, and ends up as a structure with relatively uncharacteristic features."[1] Similarly, in a different manuscript he argues that "in dissolution the most important thing is to let go as quickly as possible of everything characteristic, to allow tension to ebb and so neutralize the obligations of the earlier *Gestalten* as to liquidate."[2] Continuing to stress the neutralizing role of dissolution, he concludes that passage by stating that "in dissolution all motivic transformation strives to paralyze the tendency of the *Grundgestalten*." In keeping with this idea of neutralization, he later suggests counteracting the "tendency of the smallest notes" by using "a dissolving (=liquidation) procedure" whereby "one

[1] Arnold Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, ed. Severine Neff, trans. Charlotte M. Cross and Severine Neff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 105.
[2] Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique and Art of Its Presentation*, ed. and trans. Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 253.

or more attacks are omitted, then [omissions occur] in another part of the bar, etc., until [the smallest notes] are rooted out."[3]

From this and other passages it is difficult to ascertain the relationship between dissolution and liquidation; while sometimes they are treated as synonymous, in other instances Schoenberg appears to distinguish between the two but without clarifying the difference. This inconsistency is perhaps due to the fact that the term dissolution appears mostly in the initial drafts of two unfinished monographs. What is clear is that dissolution and liquidation are for Schoenberg related to one another, if not completely identical, and that dissolution includes those procedures by which everything characteristic disappears, tensions ebb, and musical drive dwindles. Dissolution thus corresponds to the opposite of intensification, as Christopher Wintle has argued.[4] In each case, dissolution is defined in the negative; intensification positively.

The primary way to create intensification and achieve a climax is, according to Schoenberg, through condensation. "Condensation," he notes, "is the moving of contents close together (to each other) so that each [component] occupies a smaller space; or rather the space in question is more densely filled with content."[5] Later on Schoenberg explains that "condensation almost always occurs in all dimensions: harmony, melody, rhythm, and dynamics."[6]

Although in the notes for his unpublished book *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction and Form* Schoenberg sought to have a more detailed discussion of dissolution under the sections subtitled "[What is the meaning of] dissolution," and "the methods of elaboration and dissolution,"[7] he never specified what methods produce dissolution. Yet given

[3] Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, 178.
[4] Christopher Wintle, "Was ist Steigerung (What Intensification Means)" *Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie* 8, no. 2 (2003): 102.
[5] Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 251.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, 105.

that condensation creates intensification, one can conclude that reducing thematic content engenders dissolution. Building upon this premise, this chapter argues that the dissolution of thematic content may arise from breaking the theme into fragments, spreading the theme over a larger span of time, or eliminating the characteristic features of the theme. I refer to these procedures as fragmentation, diffusion, and liquidation, respectively. Similar to how condensation occurs in several dimensions, essential for the effect of dissolution is a de-intensification in nearly all parameters. As we shall see, the processes of thematic dissolution in Brahms appears as part of a larger process of decay affecting several musical parameters, often involving a decrease in dynamics to *p* or *pp*, a dwindling of surface rhythmic activity, and the use of downward chromaticism.

Fragmentation:

William Caplin employs the term fragmentation to describe the contraction in the length of melodic/formal units.[8] His definition corresponds then to Schoenberg's notion of condensation as the moving of contents closer together. Just as condensation is made manifest in several dimensions, fragmentation, according to Caplin, often involves an acceleration of harmonic rhythm, an increase in rhythmic activity, and so forth.

Here I use the term fragmentation to describe a rather different thematic process, whereby a theme breaks into its constituent segments.[9] What is fragmented then is not the temporal span, but the theme itself. The segmentation of the theme may come about by adding longer spans of time between each segment or by omitting a part of the theme altogether.

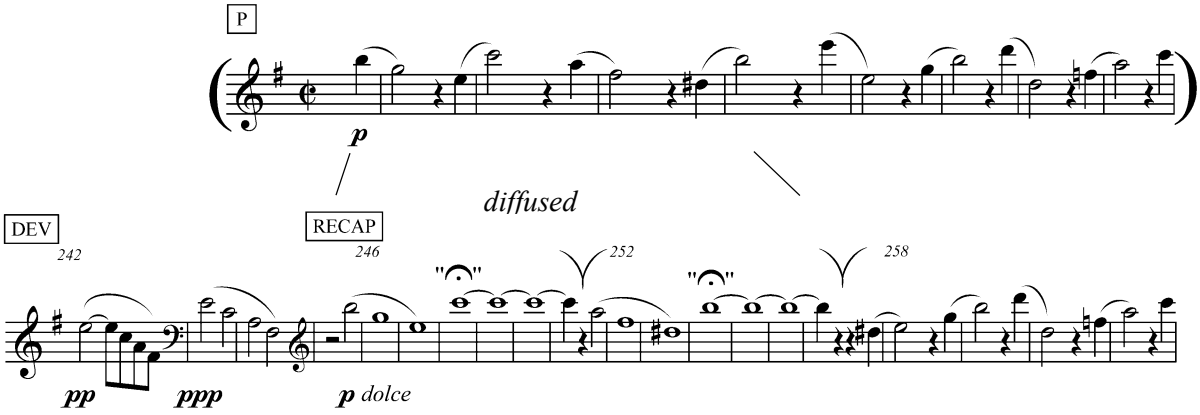
---

[8] William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 255.

[9] At the risk of confusion, I employ the term "fragmentation" to describe the breaking of the theme in its constituent segments because of the significance of the fragment as a Romantic aesthetic category. Ruins are fragments. To describe the contraction in the length of melodic/formal units I shall use the term "condensation."

The result in the first case is an expansion of the time-span taken by a given part of the theme. Using Schoenberg's language, one may say that a given time span is less densely filled with content. This extra space may be filled by elongating a note from the theme in the form of what Peter Smith calls a quasi-fermata.[10] Such is the case in the recapitulation of the first movement from Brahms's Symphony no. 4. Example 3.1 illustrates the four-note descending gestures heard previously towards the middle of the opening theme repeating over and over again at the end of the development. By m. 243, the characteristic rhythmic shape of this motivic cell finally dissolves into a half-note pulse. Continuing the process of rhythmic decay, the opening theme returns in m. 245 in whole notes and *dolce* piano. Long gone are the energetic quarter-note pickups that gave the theme a characteristic metric dissonance. The once flowing theme also becomes fragmented into four-note segments each separated by a quasi-fermata. Each segment may be heard as a remnant of a theme now vanished.

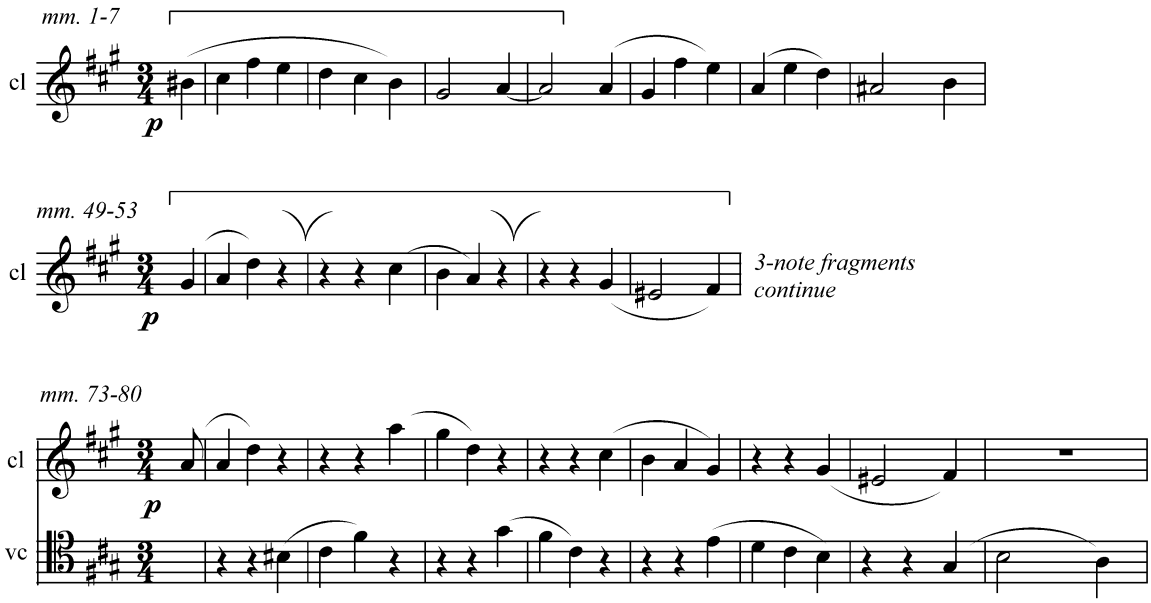
EXAMPLE 3.1. Brahms, Symphony no. 4 in E minor, Op. 98, I, fragmentation of the primary theme



[10] Peter H. Smith, "Liquidation, Augmentation, and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps," *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 3 (1994): 254.

In other occasions the fragments of the theme may be simply separated by rests. Consider, for instance, the passages from the third movement of Brahms's Clarinet Trio, Op. 114 shown in Example 3.2.[11] On top is the beginning of the cantabile melody heard at the opening of the movement. This same melody returns in m. 49 in the relative minor, but the theme is now fragmented into three-note segments separated by rests, as shown in the example. The three-note segments continue for most of the passage, and in m. 73 the fragmented melody is heard in the clarinet while the cello follows quasi-canonically, like a distant echo. Finally, before the return of the opening section, the theme appears in its initial rhythm making the connection between the different transformations of the theme clearly audible.

EXAMPLE 3.2. Brahms, Clarinet Trio, Op. 114, III, fragmentation of the opening theme

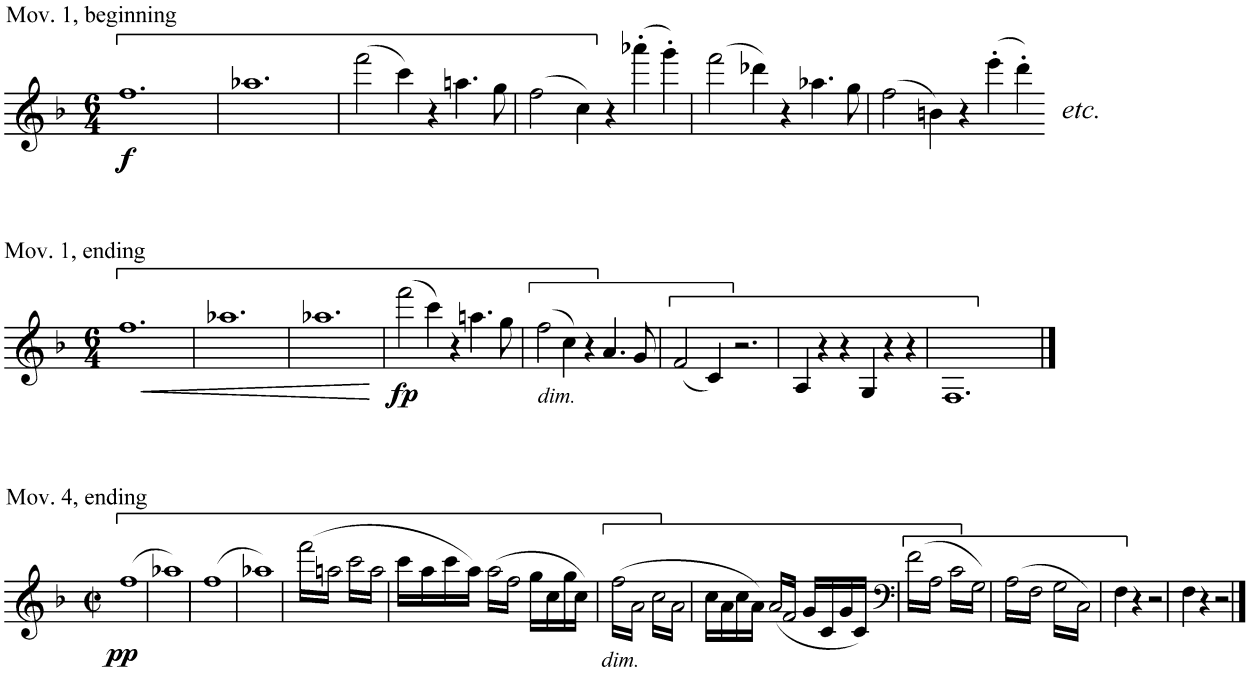


More common still is the omission of part of the theme. The most celebrated of such instances is the return of the opening theme at the end of the first and the last movements of Brahms's Symphony no. 3. As shown in Example 3.3, in the first movement a strong crescendo

[11] All examples are given in concert pitch.

announces the return of the powerful opening theme, but after the forte-piano all that remains is the opening fragment, repeating ever softer until it dissolves onto indistinct pizzicatos. More striking is the return of this same fragment at the end of the symphony, glimmering pianissimo through the hazy tremolandos, like a distant object vanishing in the horizon. This ending, as Walter Niemann points out, suggests a mood of resignation and "an atmosphere of serene, tranquil submission."[12]

EXAMPLE 3.3. Brahms, Symphony no. 3 in F major, Op. 90, fragmentation of the opening theme



While the Third Symphony presents one of the most poetic uses of this technique, the fragmentation of a theme down to its opening gesture is a common procedure in Brahms's music. It is especially frequent in closing sections, where it appears alongside a decay in dynamics, surface rhythm, and other parameters. As is the case with the portrayal of ruins in Romantic paintings, it is not solely the fragmentation of the theme but the musical light in which the

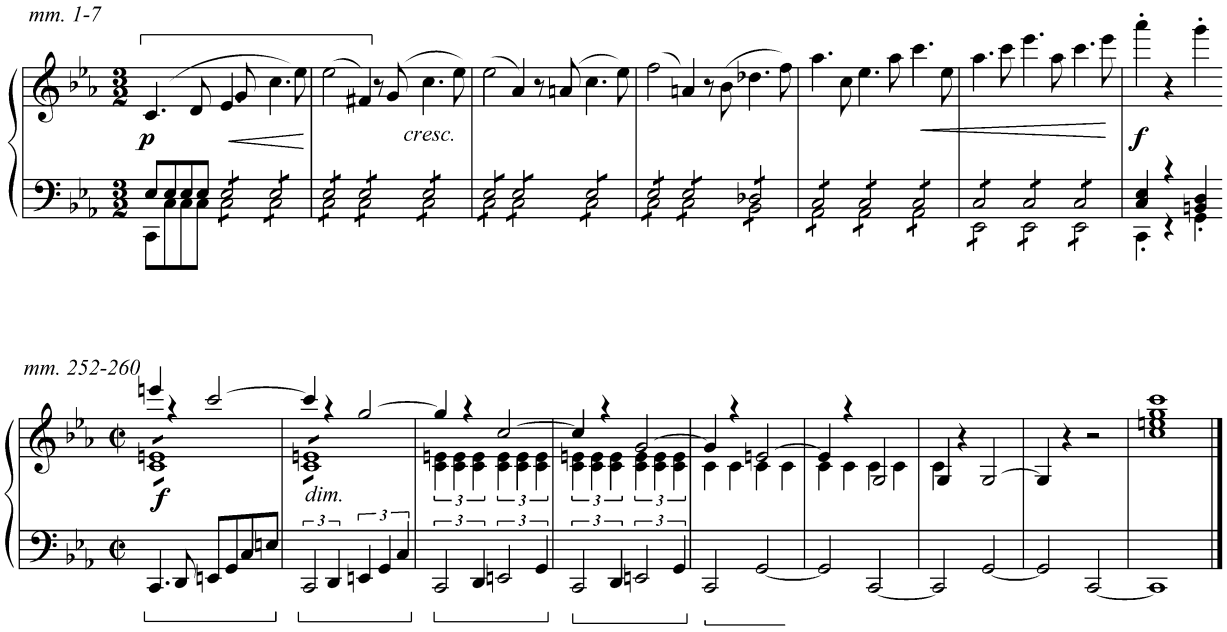
[12] Niemann, *Brahms*, 340.

thematic remains are cast that infuses these passages with a sense of absence, guiding the listener's attention not only to what has become of the theme but also what it is no longer.

The omission of part of the theme is closely related to a striking form of fragmentation in Brahms's music that consists in the gradual elimination of notes from the theme, often leaving behind but a single dyad. The durations previously taken by the eliminated notes are left vacant in the form of rests or filled in by stretching out those notes left from the theme. In any case, the reduction of the melody to fewer and fewer notes does not lead to a faster recurrence of thematic segments; instead, the rate of recurrence remains the same with larger spaces between or within each fragment.

The final bars from the first movement of Brahms's Quartet in C minor, Op. 51 no. 1, provide an example of such a process. Example 3.4 shows the return of the movement's opening gesture in the coda. At the beginning of the movement, the arpeggiation of a tenth from C to E♭ gives rise to a powerful melodic ascent, culminating forte on the high G. In the coda, however, this energy is lacking. Instead, following a neighboring motion from ♭II to I in mm. 251–52, the ascending gesture starts to dissolve note-by-note until all the remains is a C-G dyad that lingers on like a ruin amidst a Romantic landscape. As the primary theme breaks away, the dynamics decrease from forte to piano and the throbbing rhythm in the inner voice gradually slows down from eighth notes to quarter notes. Hence, the dissolution of the primary theme forms part of a wider process of decay that concludes with the shift from the turmoil of C minor to a serene and transcendent C major.

EXAMPLE 3.4. Brahms, String Quartet in C minor, Op. 51 no. 1, I, fragmentation of the opening theme



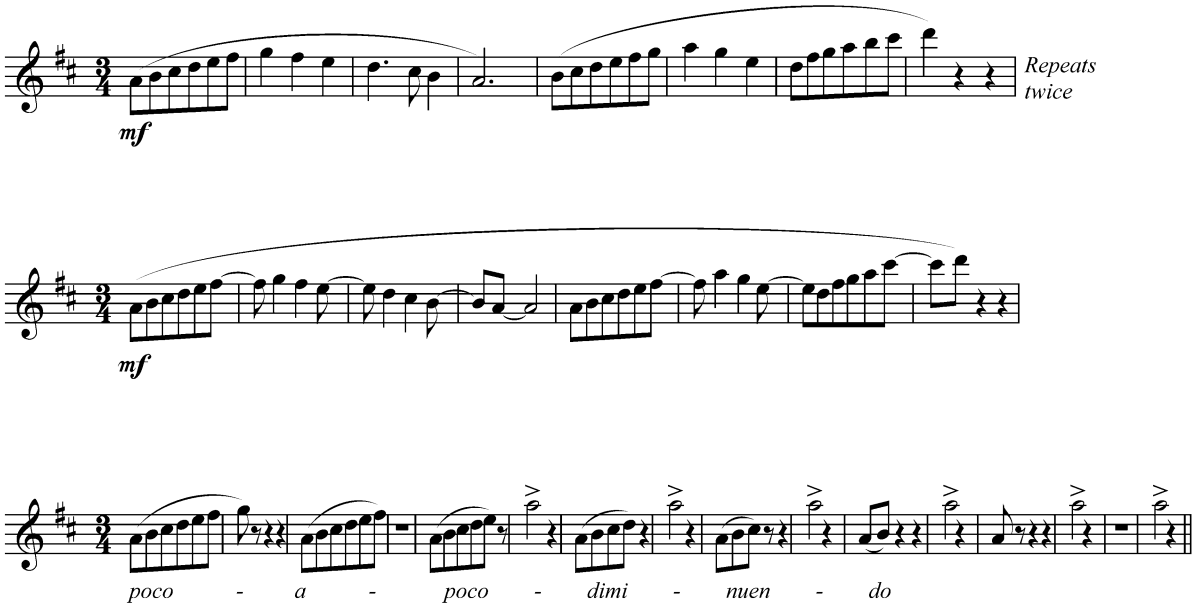
Pointing to the gradual decay of the C minor theme in the coda, however, only captures one side of the listening experience. Just as important to the theme's dematerialization is its spiritualization. This involves audiating those notes that have faded away, such that the theme, while no longer physically present, continues to sound in our imagination. The experience of the process of thematic decay thus recalls Jean Paul's description of the romantic as a distant sound that "fades away into ever greater distances and finally is lost in ourselves and, although outwardly already quiet, yet sounds within."[13]

A direct link between this thematic process and Jean Paul's notion of the distant, dying sound may be found in the last piece from Schumann's *Papillons*, Op. 2. As Berthold Hoeckner notes, Schumann associated different pieces from the cycle with various passages from Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre*, choosing as the motto for the cycle the last sentence from the novel: "Enchanted, Walt heard the vanishing sounds still speaking from afar, for he did not notice his

[13] Jean Paul, *Horn of Oberon*, 61.

brother vanishing with them."[14] The vanishing sounds refer in particular to the melody Vult plays on his flute as he leaves his brother Walt. The music suggests this image through the gradual decay of the stepwise melody heard towards the end of the last piece of the cycle. As shown in Example 3.5, the "flute melody" repeats twice in its entirety before it begins lagging behind. Following this rhythmic displacement, the opening ascent from A to G begins disappearing note-by-note until only silence remains. As in the Brahms example, a gradual diminuendo accompanies the dissolution of the theme.

EXAMPLE 3.5. Schumann, *Papillons*, Op. 2, Finale, fragmentation of theme



As a close friend of the Schumanns and an avid reader of Jean Paul's novels, Brahms was surely familiar with Schumann's *Papillons* and its hidden program. It is likely then that Brahms borrowed his use of this thematic process from Schumann along with its connection to Jean Paul's notion of dying sound. Notwithstanding the relevance of this biographical connection, however, it is easy to experience this thematic process in either Brahms's or Schumann's music

[14] Berthold Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute*, 57.

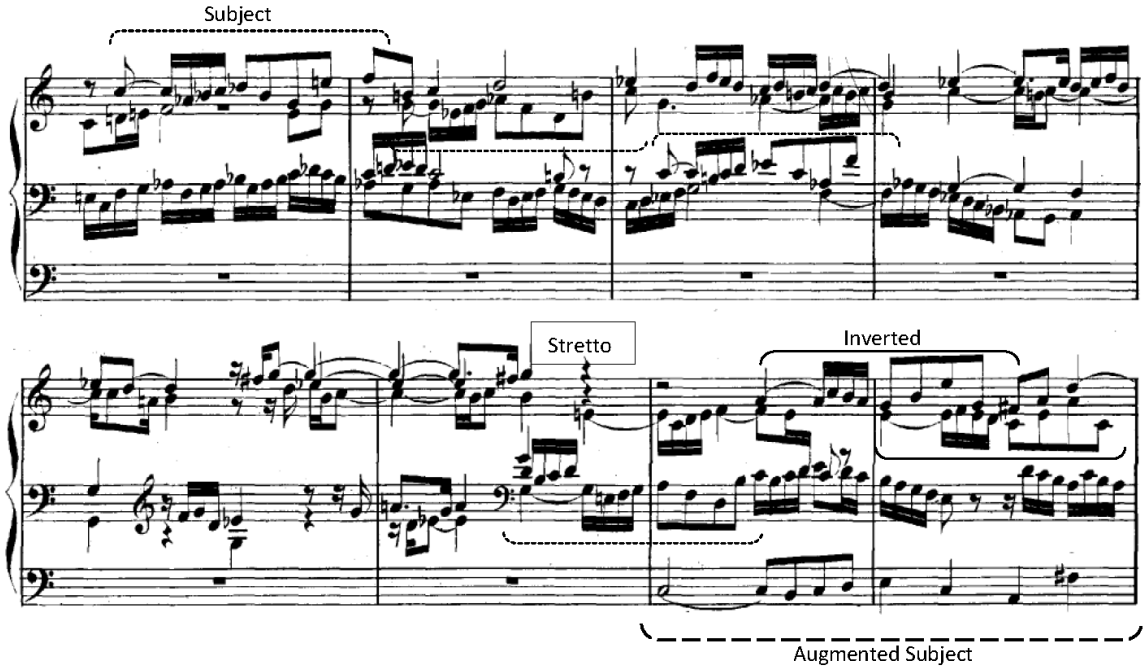
as a gradual fading away of the theme, allowing for a salient connection between this experience and the rich significance of the distant, dying sound cultivated by the Romantics. In Brahms's music, this thematic process is most common at endings, where it typically effects a quiet, transcendent shift from minor to major.

Diffusion:

Closely related to the process of fragmentation is that of diffusion. In general, the term diffusion describes a process whereby a substance spreads out and becomes less concentrated, as when a drop of red dye dissolves in water or a fragrance spreads through the air. (As one may recall, this image served as a guiding metaphor for Schopenhauer's notion of annihilation and loosening of the self.) The change is a passive one requiring no input of energy. A similar process occurs in Brahms's music when a theme or a part thereof spreads over a longer span of time than before. Rhythmically the technique is none other than that of augmentation. But, by using the term "diffusion" rather than augmentation, I attempt to capture a particular way of experiencing this rhythmic change and to draw attention to the wider musical context that makes this experience possible.

A comparison between J.S. Bach's use of augmentation in his organ fugue in C major BWV 547 and Brahms's use of this same technique in the last movement of his Third Symphony clarifies the difference. Bach's example illustrates the common usage of augmentation to create a climatic event towards the end of a fugue. As shown in Example 3.6, the fugue subject enters in augmentation in m. 30 amid an energetic stretto and as the culmination of a gradual textural crescendo harkening back to the beginning of the fugue. Within this context, the subject seems not to become diffused, but rather to grow in size and power.

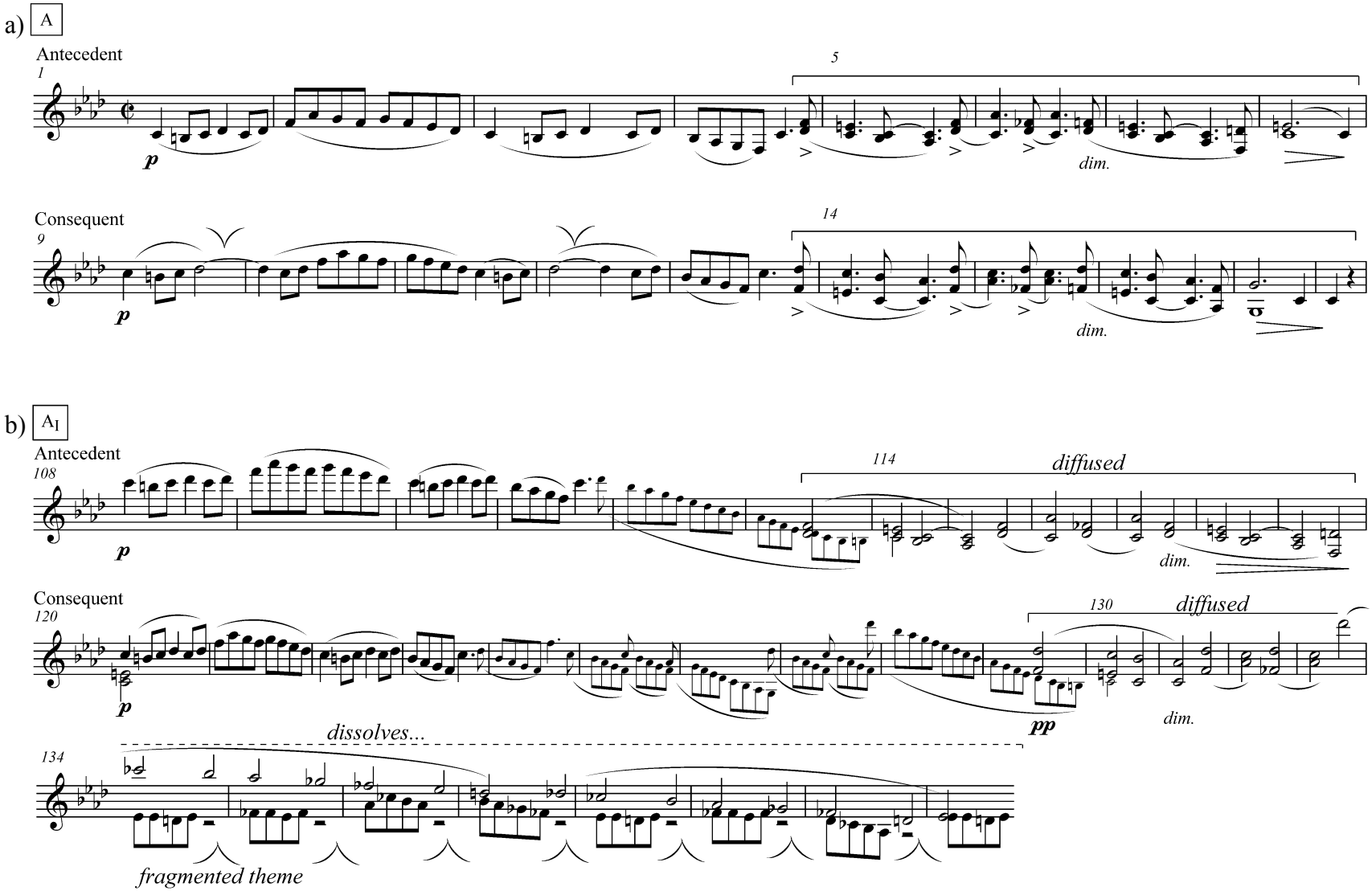
EXAMPLE 3.6. J.S. Bach, Organ Fugue in C major, BWV 547, augmentation of the subject



The context surrounding Brahms's use of augmentation in the finale of his Third Symphony is quite different from that of the fugue. The upper staff, marked a), in Example 3.7 reproduces the movement's opening theme, b) its subsequent elongation. The theme is a parallel period with each phrase quietly fading away by the end. When the theme returns in mm. 108–126, the second half of each phrase is heard now slower and devoid of its energetic off-beat accents. In the case of the consequent phrase, the process of de-intensification continues with the liquidation of the melody into an indistinct descending melody that floats over a fragmented opening theme.

Accordingly, whereas the augmentation of the theme appears in the Bach as the culmination of a process of intensification, in the Brahms it forms part of a process of rhythmic and dynamic decay. In contrast to the Bach, then, the elongation of the theme in the Symphony

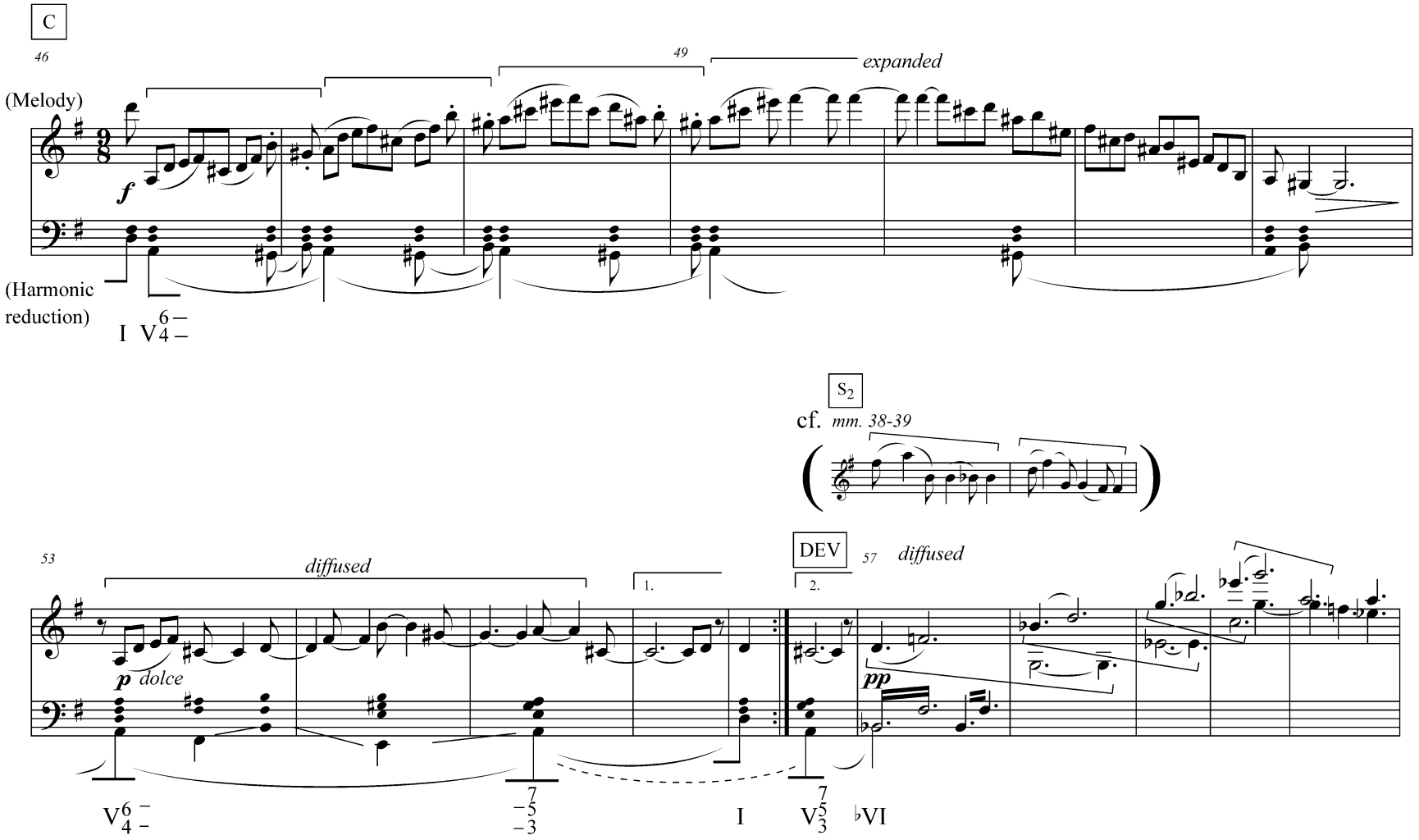
EXAMPLE 3.7. Brahms, Symphony no. 3 in F major, Op. 90, IV, diffusion of the opening theme



may be heard as the result of a passive process, where the melody seems not so much to grow as to dissolve in space. If Bach's C major fugue illustrates the common use of rhythmic augmentation, the example from the Third Symphony reveals the quality this technique takes in Brahms's music, a quality I attempt to capture by the term "diffusion."

While in the symphony the change in pace occurs suddenly, producing a sharp rhythmic disjunction midway through the theme, in other works this change unfolds gradually. Consider, for instance, the closing theme from the first movement of Brahms's String Quintet in G major, Op. 111, reproduced in reduction and with annotations in Example 3.8. The closing theme enters forcefully after a sudden crescendo in m. 45. While the harmony alternates between a cadential 6/4 chord and a neighboring, diminished-seventh chord, the violin continues repeating the same melody increasingly higher. Unable to bring about the expect cadence, the theme suddenly loses its intensity in m. 52 and then returns piano and dolce, gradually slowing down until finally melting into that awaited cadence in D major. The second time around, however, the process of diffusion continues past the exposition onto the beginning of the development, connecting one section to the other. The development begins with a deceptive cadence to B♭ with the tremolandos of the opening theme playing pianissimo rather than forte. The tremolandos accompany not the opening theme, as one would expect, but the return of the secondary theme heard in m. 38. Example 3.8 shows, however, that the theme has become fragmented and diffused, each three-note gesture spreading now over two bars instead of two beats, first in the viola and then, like an echo, in the first violin. This sweet sojourn lasts for several measures before a forceful crescendo takes us back to the turmoil of the development.

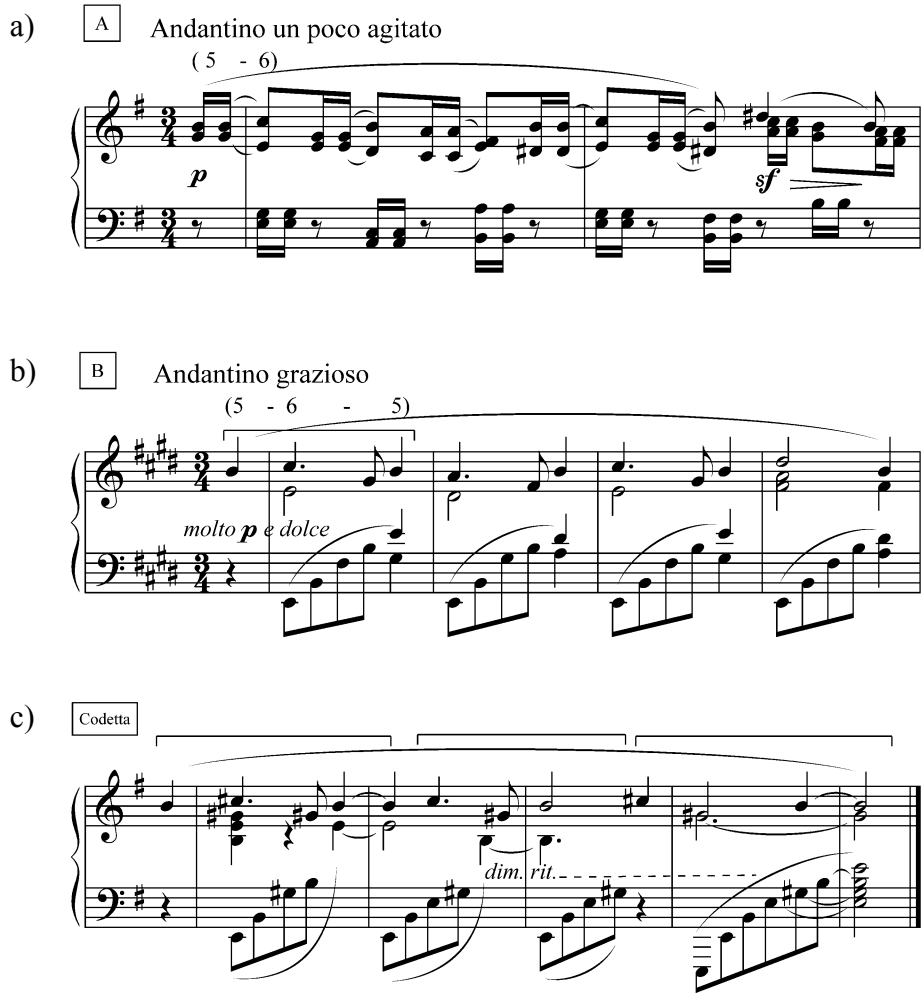
EXAMPLE 3.8. Brahms, String Quintet no. 2 in G major, Op. 111, I, diffusion of the closing theme and the second theme



The elongation of a given theme may occasionally also take the form of a new theme altogether. This is case in Brahms's Intermezzo Op. 119 no. 2. The A section comprises several variations in toccata style of the agitated theme reproduced in Example 3.9. The upbeat-downbeat gestures contribute to the agitato quality, together with the unresolved upper neighboring C on the downbeat of mm. 1–2. The B section sees, nonetheless, a transformation of the agitato E minor theme into a cantabile melody that moves twice as slow and in the parallel major, as shown below. With this thematic transformation, the active upbeat-downbeat gestures give way to passive downbeat-upbeat groupings, and the neighboring C can now resolve back to B (See Ex. 3.9b). Finally, Example 3.9 illustrates how by the end of the B section, and later of the Intermezzo as a whole, the opening three-note fragment of the theme becomes ever more diffused until completely fading away, like an evening's twilight.

If many of the examples of diffusion also involve fragmentation, it is because these two procedures are closely related: both involve a lessening of thematic note density. In the case of fragmentation this is achieved through a decrease in the number of notes from the theme within a given time span. On the other hand, diffusion involves keeping the number of notes of the theme constant but spreading them over a longer time span. More important than the logical connection between these two thematic processes is the fact that Brahms treats them in similar ways, employing both techniques as part of a larger process of decay that includes dynamics, surface rhythm, and other parameters.

EXAMPLE 3.9. Brahms, Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 119 no. 2, diffusion of the opening theme

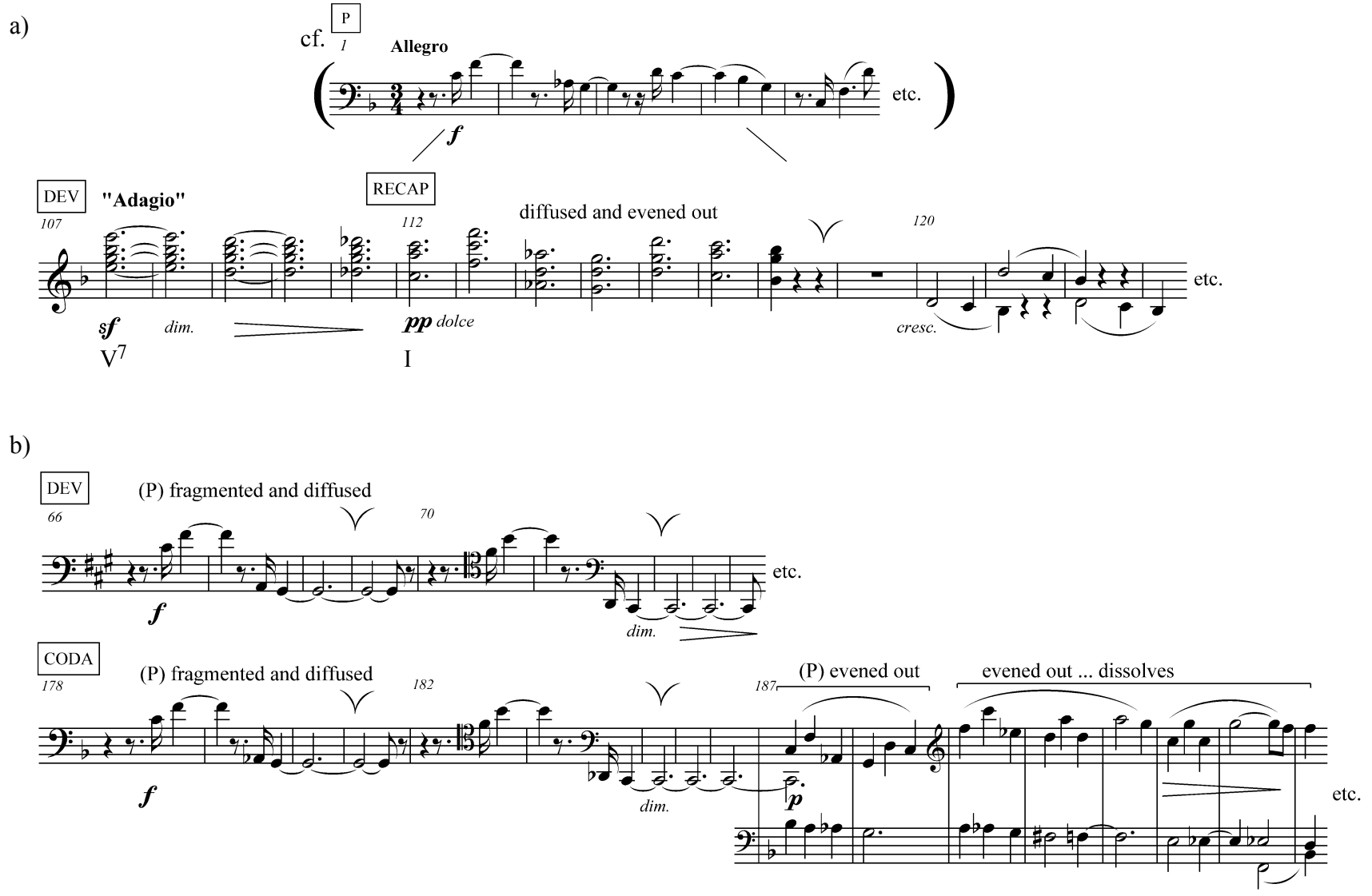


Evening out:

Another way to diminish the physical presence of the theme is by dispensing with its characteristic qualities. While there are various ways of doing this, a common procedure that Brahms employs involves reducing the theme's rhythmic shape to an unmarked pulse stream. In so doing, the particularity of the theme fades away leaving behind only a shadow of itself.

Take, for instance, the recapitulation from the first movement of Brahms's Cello Sonata in F major, Op. 99. Example 3.10a shows the powerful opening theme returning in longer note values and dolce piano rather than forte, simulating an Adagio tempo.

EXAMPLE 3.10. Brahms, Cello Sonata no. 2 in F major, I, dissolution of the primary theme



Furthermore, as the theme becomes diffused, its angular rhythms fade away onto an unmarked half-note pulse stream. As Peter Smith describes it, the theme is now "a ghost of what it was" that appears amid an "ethereal stillness."[15] A similar description would be apt for the recapitulatory passage of Brahms's Fourth Symphony discussed above, where the theme also appears elongated and evened out.

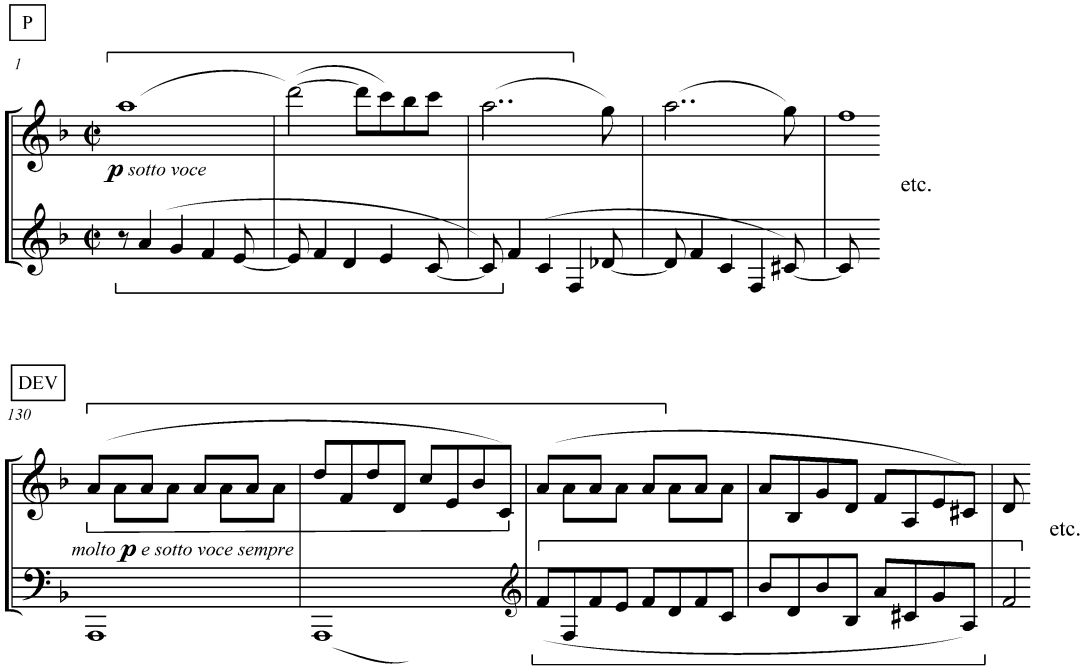
While the processes of diffusion and evening-off may appear alongside one another, this need not always be the case. Let us return, for instance, to the cello sonata, focusing our attention in a passage from the coda. As shown in Example 3.10b, the coda, much like the development, begins with the powerful opening dyads of the primary theme. After repeating this four-note motive on the dominant, the cello holds the final C as the music quickly decays from forte to piano. Then, continuing to hold the C, the cello plays a fragment from the opening theme in straight quarter notes beginning in m. 187. Two bars later, the piano plays a similar evened out version of the theme that dissolves onto an indistinct compound melody, while the left hand continues a resigned chromatic descent from C to E♭.

Another example of evening out may be found in Brahms's Violin Sonata in D minor, Op. 108. The most celebrated aspect of the first movement is its unusually static development section, with its continuous dominant pedal and sotto voce dynamics. Just as striking is the transformation of the primary theme in the development. Example 3.11 illustrates the way in which the violin's compound melody at the beginning of the development combines the movement's opening theme with the piano accompaniment into a continuous eighth-note pulse. This evened out version of the primary theme pervades most of the development, appearing both in the violin and the piano. Towards the end of the development, however, the theme dissolves onto an indistinct chromatic chain of descending parallel sixths beginning in the violin and

[15] Smith, "Liquidation, Augmentation, and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps": 249.

continuing slower and ever quieter in the piano until the whole of the development finally vanishes. Together with the subdued dynamics and the static dominant harmony, the thematic transformation of the primary theme suffuses the development with a sense of absence. It, like a ruin, draws our attention to what is no longer, awakening a feeling for the nothingness of physicality.

EXAMPLE 3.11. Brahms, Violin Sonata no. 3 in D minor, Op. 108, I, evening out of primary theme



3.3. Thematic Dissolution as Formal Function

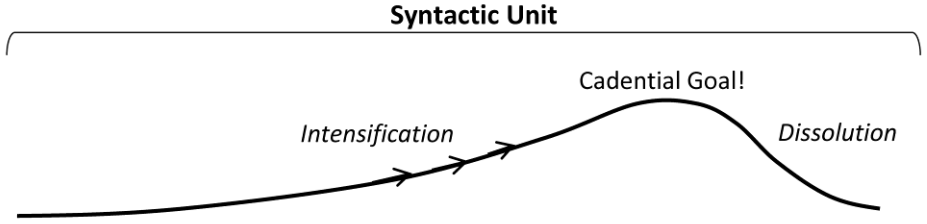
This section explores the interaction between those processes of thematic dissolution discussed above and formal syntax, discussing first the most conventional formal function of dissolution and examining then two categorical deviations from this convention in Brahms's works.

In general, for a given syntactic unit, the level of intensity gradually increases on the way towards the cadential goal and ebbs with or near the cadence, as shown in Figure 3.1a. The

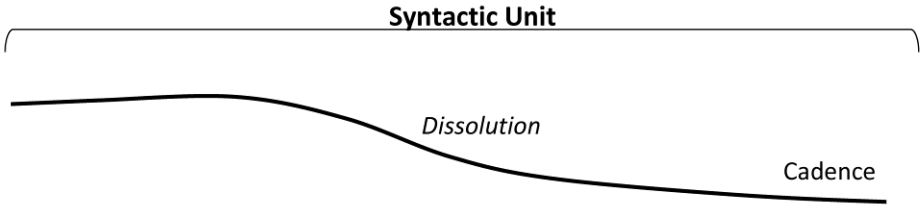
ensuing energetic shape has been variously called a "dynamic curve," "narrative curve," and "intensity curve."[16] The phase of intensification has thus a beginning/continuation function. It represents a vectored motion towards the cadential goal, even if this goal is thwarted.

FIGURE 3.1. Dissolution as a formal function

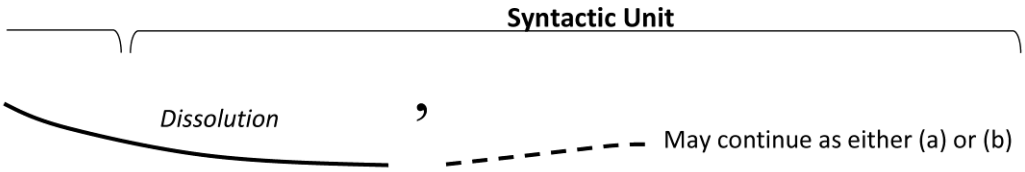
a) The process of dissolution begins at or near the cadence and functions as a short appendix



b) The process of dissolution begins long before the cadence and continues until the end



c) The process of dissolution ends midway through the syntactic unit; it may often be heard as carrying on from the previous section



[16] Leonard Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Leonard Ratner, *Romantic Music, Sound and Syntax* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992); Kofi Agawu, "Structural 'Highpoints' in Schumann's 'Dichterliebe.'" *Music Analysis* 3, no. 2 (July 1984): 159–180; Austin Patty, "Pacing Scenarios: How Harmonic Rhythm and Melodic Pacing Influence Our Experience of Musical Climax." *Music Theory Spectrum* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 325–367.

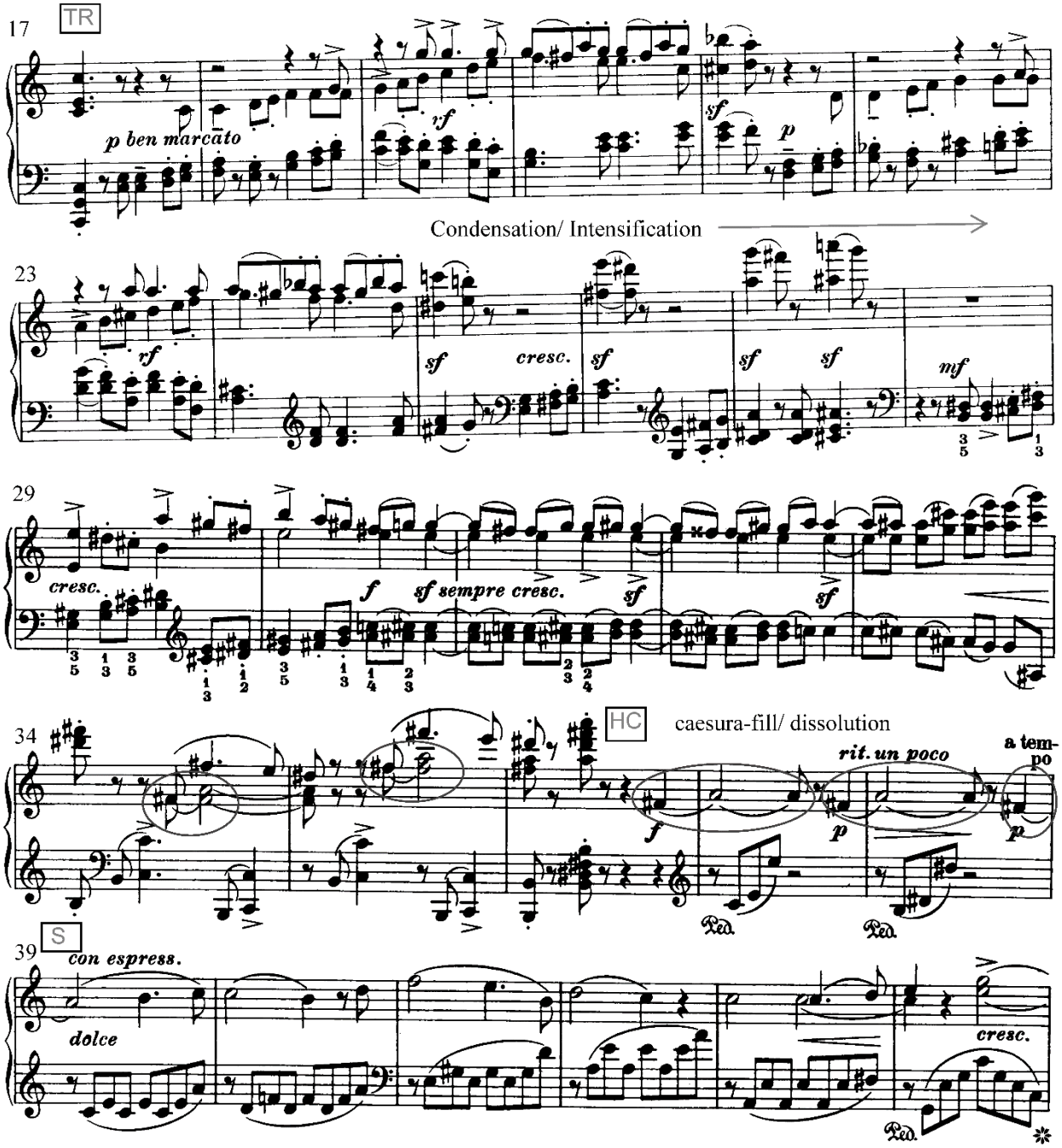
Appearing with or near the cadence, the phase of de-intensification and its accompanying thematic processes does not look forward toward a new goal. Functioning essentially as a suffix, the phase of decay can be left out and the energetic cadential arrival at the end of a syntactic unit would simply give way to a new, quiet beginning.[17]

Passages that unfold according to Figure 3.1a are so common in the repertory that there is little need for an example. For a brief illustration from Brahms's music, however, we may turn to the transition section from the first movement of his Piano Sonata in C major, Op. 1, reproduced with annotations in Example 3.12. After a strong arrival on tonic, the transition begins piano, moving sequentially upward and becoming continuously louder until it reaches a powerful half cadence in m. 36. Following the arrival on V, a fragment of the cadential melody echoes ever softer, and the melodic gesture, E to D♯, heard twice in mm. 34–35, becomes diffused across mm. 36–37 as the harmonic rhythm slows down to one chord per bar. The second theme then begins with the F♯-A dyad heard at the end of the transition, linking the two sections together.

The energetic arch of this passage is typical of transitions as well as other sections. Here, dissolution appears in its typical role as an appendix. In Brahms's music, however, dissolution often plays a different formal role. The following section focuses on two categorical deviations from the more conventional use of dissolution outlined in Figure 3.1a, both of which involve an expansion of the phase of decay beyond that of a post-cadential moment. These deviations are illustrated in Figures 3.1b and c. In the first of these (b), the process of dissolution still unfolds until the end of the syntactic unit but begins long before the arrival of the structural goal of the section. Accordingly, its defining characteristic is that the structural arrival comes about through a long process of dissolution rather than intensification.

[17] This dynamic view of form lies at the heart of Hepokoski and Darcy's view of sonata form as a set of vectored processes that drive toward generic cadences.

EXAMPLE 3.12. Brahms, Piano Sonata no. 1 in C major, Op. 1, I

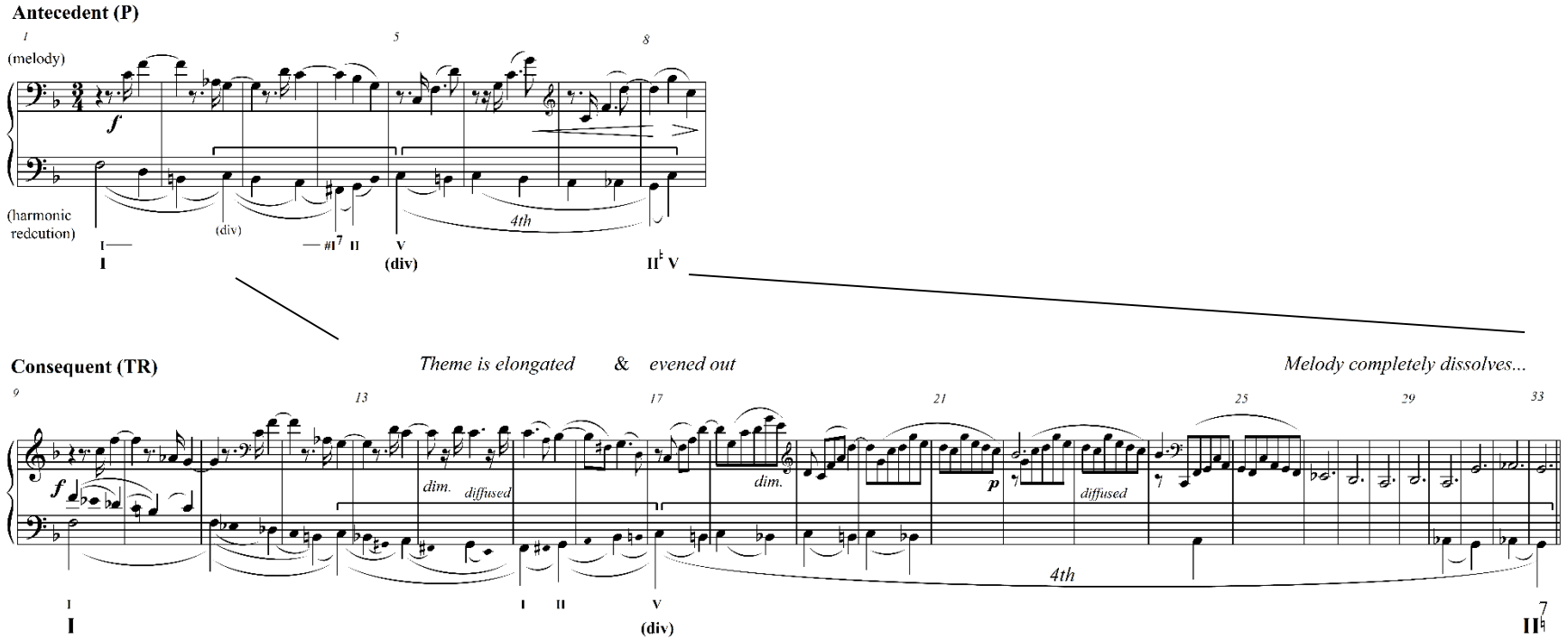


Compare for instance the transition from the first movement of Brahms's Cello Sonata Op. 99 to that from his Op. 1 sonata discussed above. The grand staff in Example 3.13 reproduces the opening theme of the cello sonata above a harmonic reduction of the passage. The

movement begins with a powerful antecedent phrase ending on V in m. 8. The next phrase starts off as a parallel consequent that functions as the transition. This is, of course, a common procedure, which Hepokoski and Darcy refer to as a dissolving-consequent.[18] But, while the examples they cite undergo a process of intensification as the consequent turns into the transition, the transition in the cello sonata does quite the opposite. Beginning forte, the theme begins to lose energy starting in m. 13, as the cello repeats the D-C thematic fragment ever quieter while the piano plays a diffused version of the bass descent heard back in mm. 3–4. As if taking a cue from the bass, the cello plays in mm. 14–15 the melodic descent from C, through Bb, to G twice as slow as in the antecedent phrase. The process of dissolution then continues with the liquidation of the second half of the primary theme beginning in m. 17. Brahms liquidates the theme by evening off its angular dotted rhythms into an indistinct eighth-note pulse. While the theme dissolves, the bass expands the chromatic fourth-descent from C to G heard at the end of the first phrase from three measures to over fifteen bars, as shown with the brackets in this example. By the moment the bass finally settles on a G dominant chord in m. 33, the melody has completely vanished leaving nothing but accompaniment. Accordingly, while the typical dissolving-consequent type of transition enacts a process of becoming, to borrow Janet Schmalfeldt's Hegelian perspective, the transition of the cello sonata enacts the Romantic ideal of dissolution.[19]

[18] James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 102.
[19] Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8–12.

EXAMPLE 3.13. Brahms, Cello Sonata no. 2 in F major, Op. 99, I, de-intensification of the opening theme during the transition



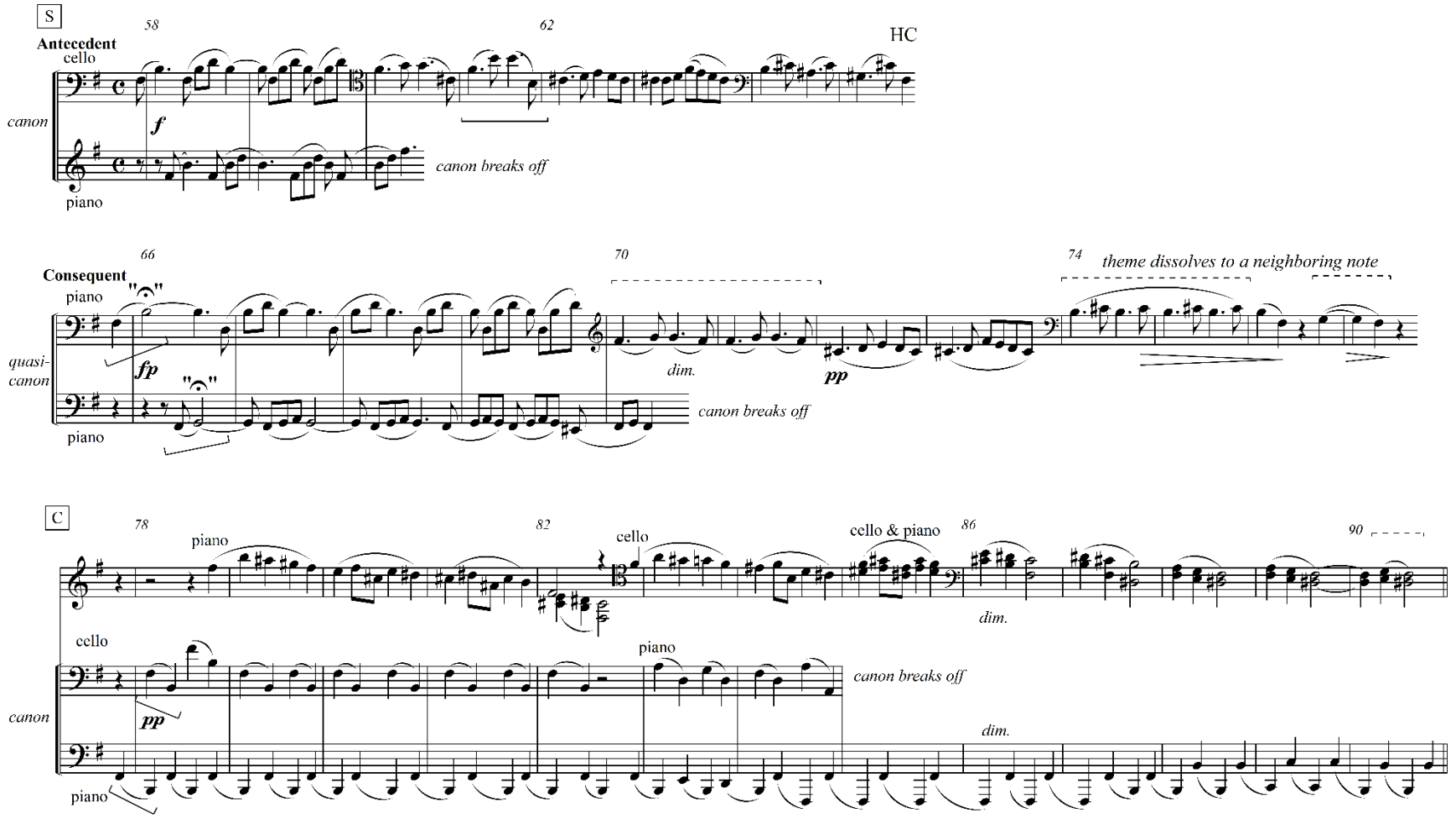
Thematically this transition may be grouped with the dissolving-consequent kind; its intensity curve, however, fits best the type that Hepokoski and Darcy refer to as the "de-energizing transition."[20] Instead of the energy-gain and forward drive characteristic of most transitions, this type features reduced dynamics and diminuendos, rarely reaching a medial caesura. In the music of Brahms, we may add to this dynamic decay the use of the thematic procedures outlined earlier in the chapter. But while Hepokoski and Darcy point to the wider use of the de-energizing transition around the second half of the nineteenth century, the fact that this is part of a wider aesthetic shift affecting nearly all other sections has not received due attention. Particularly common in Brahms are what one may refer to as de-energizing second themes.[21]

Consider, for instance, the second theme from the first movement of Brahms's Cello Sonata in E minor, shown in Example 3.14. This powerful, quasi-canonic parallel period appears as the culmination of a long process of intensification begun during the transition. After the antecedent reaches an energetic HC in m. 65, one expects the consequent to unfold similarly and drive to a powerful PAC. But as the example illustrates, the consequent gradually dies away. Beginning with the forte-piano in m. 66, the theme's head motive becomes diffused in the form of a quasi-fermata. Then, as if the energy needed to follow in an exact canon had already been spent, the piano's left hand ascends not to B but to a neighboring G♮, resolving back to F♯ in m. 70. Taking a cue from the *dux*, the melody in mm. 70–71 embellishes the F♯ through a neighboring G instead of climbing to the high B. Similarly, the end of the theme dissolves into an indistinct C♯-B neighbor figure before the whole section fades away into a long tonic chord for the beginning of the closing theme in m. 78.

[20] Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 44

[21] Second themes conventionally unfold according to Figure 3.1a. William Caplin (1998) notes, for instance, that in the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven second themes generally begin quietly and become more intense as they approach their final cadence. The cadential energy then recedes in the closing section.

EXAMPLE 3.14. Brahms, Cello Sonata no. 1 in E minor, Op. 38, I, dissolution of second theme



The process of dissolution continues into the closing section with the second theme's assertive upward-fourth yielding to a passive descending fifth from F♯ to B, as shown with brackets in Example 3.14. Though still moving canonically, the head motive is now so indistinct that the canon sounds instead like a drone. Above this drone, the closing melody gradually dissolves into a neighboring motion from G to F♯, much as the second theme did earlier. Accordingly, one can trace a long dynamic curve spanning from the transition to the end of the exposition, with the phase of decay beginning in the middle of the second theme.

Despite appearing in different formal locations, the dissolutions of the second theme from the E minor Sonata and of the beginning F major Sonata have some striking similarities. Both begin with a powerful antecedent phrase followed by a parallel consequent that gradually dissolves. In each case, the phase of decay unfolds long before the structural arrival, where one would expect the music to keep or even increase its level of intensity, resulting in a rather attenuated sense of cadential arrival. Yet, the music does not seem to convey a sense of narrative failure, as *Elements of Sonata Theory* would have it. To the contrary, it seems to serenely fade away like an evening's twilight.

If those passages that undergo a process of intensification in order to reach a cadential goal (fig. 3.1a) may be heard as enacting our constant striving after goals, those that dissolve long before reaching a goal (fig. 3.1b) suggest an attitude of resignation. Rather than working toward achieving a structural goal, the music in the latter cases surrenders and structural arrival simply arrives, as if from without, like an act of grace. This reading is in keeping with the Romantic notion of dissolution as a pathway to experiencing the absolute, for as one may recall from Chapter 2 the Romantics generally regarded the feeling of transcendence as coming suddenly from without. Accordingly, one may regard the model shown in Figure 3.1a as

mirroring human endeavor and that in Figure 3.1b as one of resignation and divine intervention. While the former is a reflection of Enlightenment values, the latter is of Romantic.

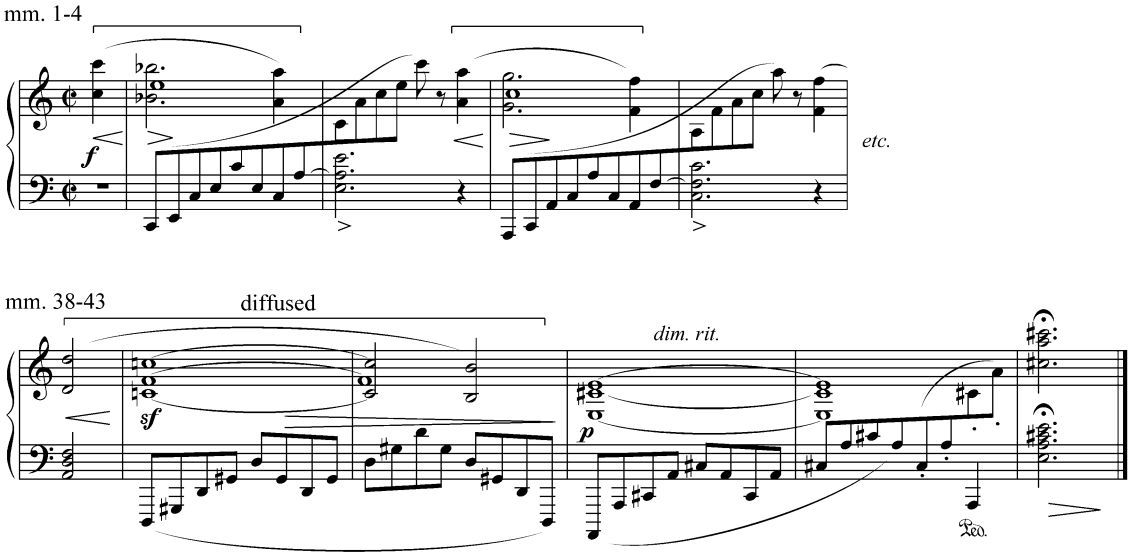
This hermeneutic interpretation certainly rings true with the passage from the E minor Cello Sonata discussed above. There, the arrival of the B major section after a long process of thematic decay sounds less as something earned as it seems to be granted by grace. The use of the drone fifths to cue the pastoral topic supports this spiritual reading, for the pastoral topic is, as Robert Hatten has convincingly argued, a common signifier of spirituality in the music of Beethoven and the later Romantics.[22] The dissolving horn fifths at the end of the closing theme may in fact be heard as the sonic counterpart to the image of the distant, vanishing landscape discussed in Chapter 2 through which the Romantics sought to portray the nothingness of worldly existence and awaken a feeling for a transcendent reality.

More common than the pastoral topic is the appearance of a quiet upward arpeggio after a long process of dissolution in Brahms's music. Like the pastoral topic, this upward gesture typically appears in the major mode and carries spiritual overtones. Refer briefly, for instance, to the ending of his Intermezzo Op. 118 no. 1, shown in Example 3.15. The work begins dramatically *in medias res* with a set of three-note gestures descending through a 7–6 sequence. The intermezzo maintains this level of intensity all the way into the coda, but at the end the three-note motive quietly dissipates across three bars, as the brackets in the example indicate. The music then arrives on an A major tonic chord that moves upward ever quieter and slower as if fading into the ether. Characteristic of this transcendent gesture is its *portato* markings. Robert Hatten notes that *portato* articulation generally has a consoling effect, for it involves a series of

[22] Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994), 91–111.

calming, mono-rhythmic touches like the ones we use to reassure one another.[23] This consoling touch contributes to the character of the A major arrival as being bestowed from above.

EXAMPLE 3.15. Brahms, Intermezzo Op. 118 no. 1, dissolution and transcendent upward gesture



Despite beginning long before the point of cadential arrival, the process of dissolution in Figure 3.1b appears at the end of the given syntactic unit, as it conventionally does. Figure 3.1c describes a rather different situation. Here, the process of dissolution culminates in mid-syntactic unit, often creating a formal disjunction. Since the process of dissolution generally unfolds until the end of a syntactic unit, its culmination midway through can blur formal boundaries. In fact, as shown in Figure 3.1c, the process of decay may be heard in many cases as spilling over from the previous section, creating an overlap between them.

This is particularly common of Brahms's recapitulations. In his article "Liquidation, Augmentation, and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps," Peter Smith provides several examples where the process of decay heard at the end of the development continues past the beginning of the recapitulation, noting that this creates a blurring of the point of recapitulation and a formal

[23] Robert Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 2004), 149.

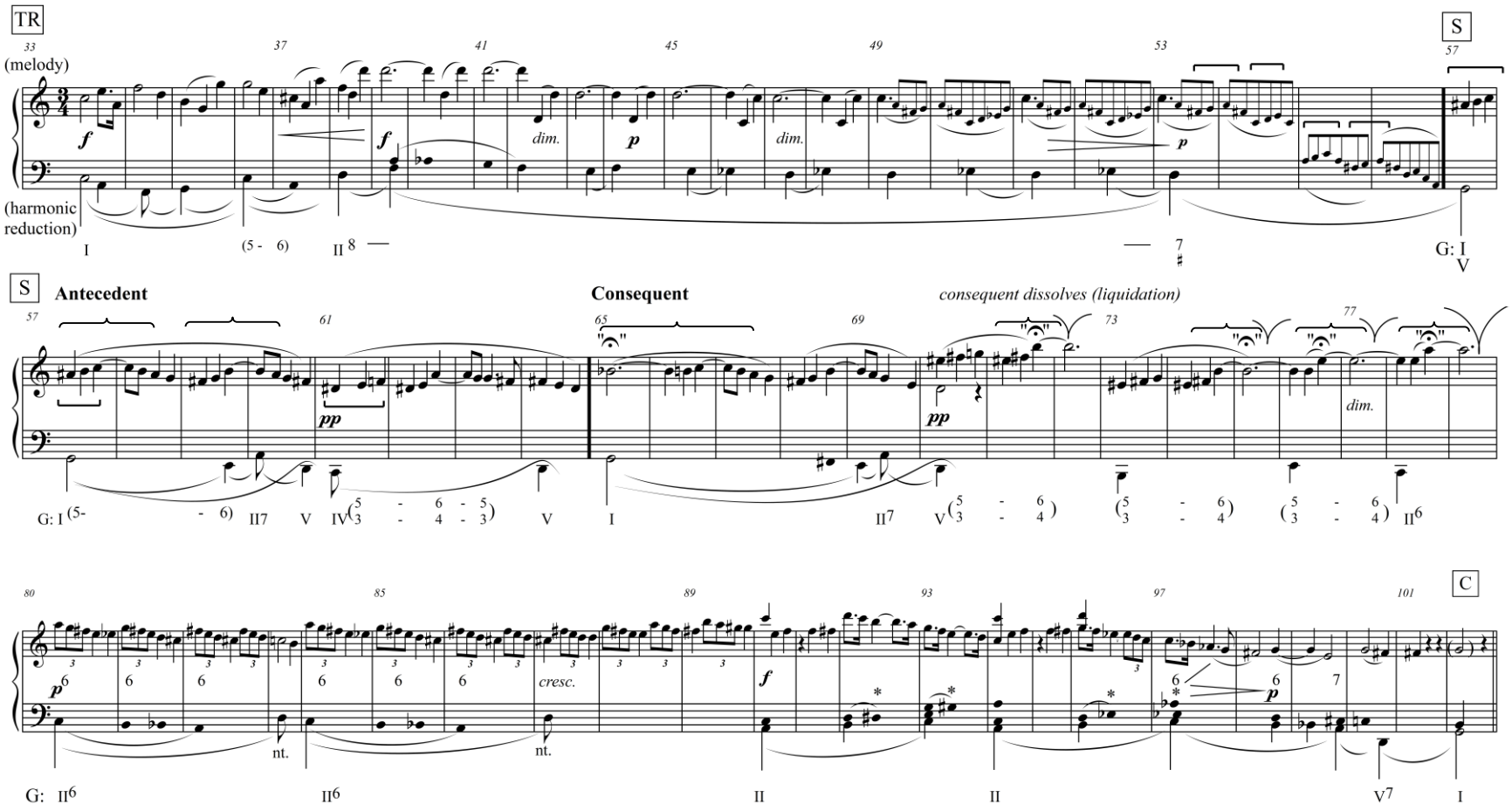
overlap between the re-transition and the recapitulation.[24] Smith illustrates this issue with examples from the first movements of the C minor Quartet, Op. 51 no. 1; the Cello Sonata Op. 99; the Fourth Symphony Op. 98; and the Piano Quintet, Op. 60. In all of these cases, the recapitulation begins with a diffused version of the primary theme.

As with the case of the de-intensifying transition, the recapitulatory issue that Smith points out is common to other sections of the form, especially secondary themes. Consider, for instance, the transition and the second theme from the first movement of Brahms's Piano Trio in C major, Op. 87. Example 3.16 shows the melody along with a harmonic reduction of these two sections. The transition begins forte, following on the footsteps of the energetic and expansive opening theme, but after only six bars the melody dissolves into a set of octave Ds, heard first in the upper register and then repeating ever quieter an octave lower. As the repeating Ds fade away, the bass yields chromatically downward, sinking into a quiet D dominant chord in m. 49. The de-intensifying transition finally dissolves when the repeating ascending-third motive in the melody slows down from eighth notes to quarter notes for the start of the second theme in m. 57, as the square brackets in the example illustrate.

The beginning of the second theme is straightforward enough. After two four-bar phrases ending on a half cadence, a third phrase begins in m. 65 much like the first, with what promises to unfold in the manner of a double period. But the theme begins to dissolve midway through the fourth phrase, with the high B held across mm. 71–72 as a quasi-fermata over a neighboring 6/4 chord. After the theme breaks off a second time over another 6/4 chord, all that remains from the original theme is an indistinct ascending fourth gesture repeating like a distant echo as the music settles quietly on a predominant II6 chord.

[24] Smith, "Liquidation, Augmentation, and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps," 238.

EXAMPLE 3.16. Brahms, Piano Trio no. 2 in C major, Op. 87, I, dissolution of the secondary theme midway through



The curly brackets above the second theme show that, although creating a significant formal disjunction, the fragmentation of the theme may be heard as emerging organically from the rhythmic irregularities of the melody. In the antecedent phrase, the quarter notes tied across the bar lines create small rhythmic crevices on an otherwise even rhythmic surface. A new gap appears at the beginning of the consequent phrase, but it is eventually those rhythmic fissures heard in the second phrase that widen, causing the whole theme to crumble and turn, as it were, onto a Romantic ruin.

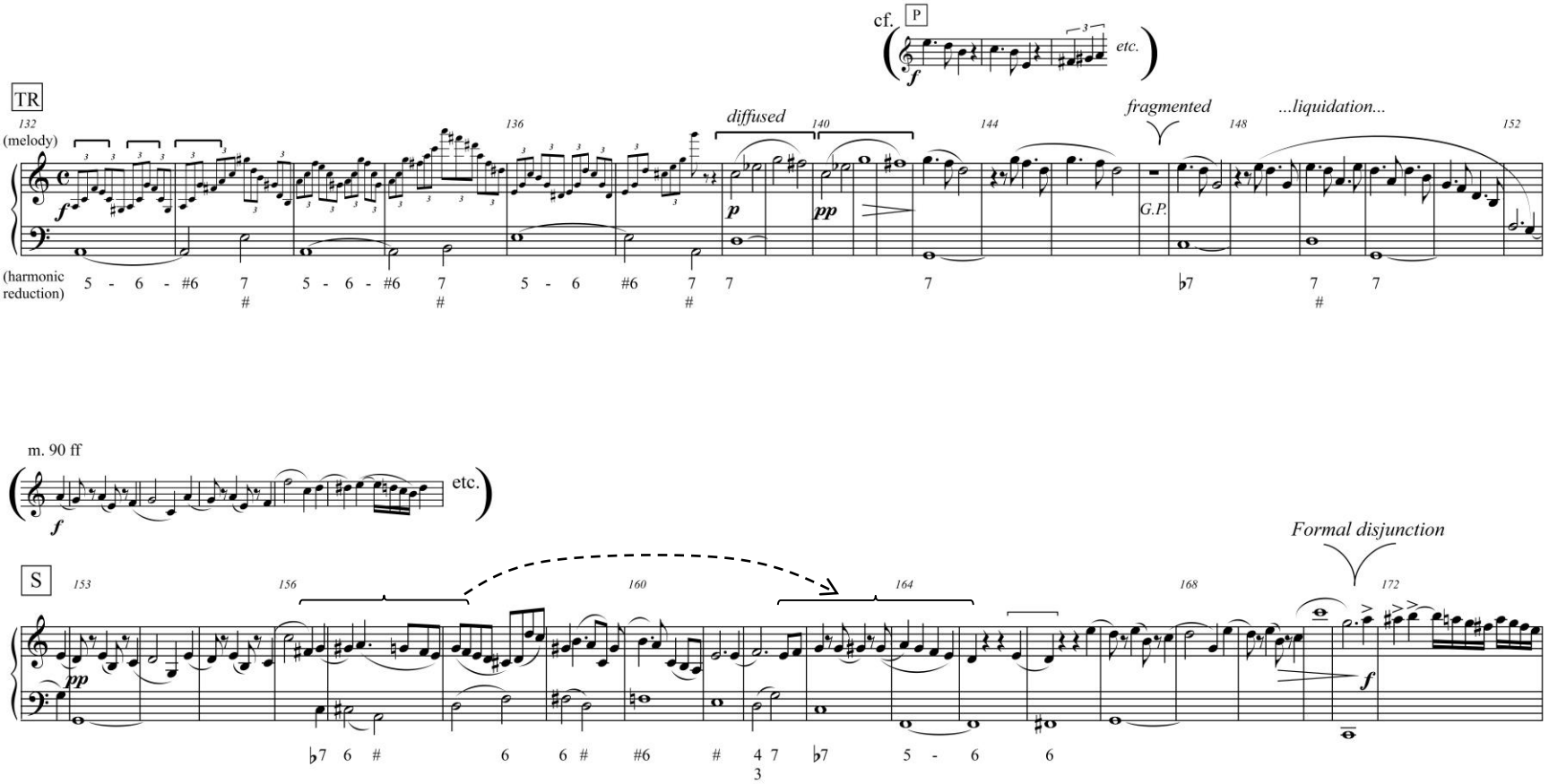
After the consequent fades away over the II6 chord, the music gradually begins to pick-up steam and reaches a powerful root-position II chord in m. 90. The process of intensification carries on, propelling the fifth of the triads in mm. 92–93 chromatically upward to D♯ and G♯, respectively. Four bars later, however, just as a triumphant G major cadence seems at hand, Brahms reinterprets these two notes as E♭ and A♭ and the energy begins to ebb. After the reinterpretation of G♯ as A♭, the music continues yielding chromatically downward harking back to the passage heard in mm. 80–84, but ending this time with an authentic cadence in G major. The authentic cadence elides with the beginning of the closing theme.

In short, the second theme area of this movement illustrates a case where the process of decay unfolds towards the beginning of a section and culminates midway through, creating a disjunction in mid syntactic unit. As in the examples of recapitulations discussed by Smith, this process may be heard as carrying over from the previous section, in this case from the de-intensifying transition into the second theme. While in the examples provided by Smith the process of dissolution culminates with the beginning of the recapitulation, in the piano trio it continues to unfold well into the second theme.

The first movement of Brahms's Double Concerto in A minor, Op. 102, is another work in which the process of decay at the end of the transition continues into the beginning of the second theme. As shown in Example 3.17, the transition in the soloist's exposition begins energetically with a set of chromaticized 5–6 exchanges. The music, however, loses its drive upon reaching a D dominant seventh chord in m. 138. At this point the woodwinds play a four-note gesture in half notes that resembles the reaching-over figures heard in the violin and cello at the beginning of the transition. Two bars later the woodwinds repeat this four-note gesture now even more slowly while decaying to a pianissimo, giving way to a quiet return of the movement's opening motive in m. 143. As shown in the example, the first three-note cell of the theme spreads now over three measures and breaks off with the grand pause. The second fragment of the opening theme undergoes a similar expansion until the melody finally dissolves into an indistinct arpeggiation of G dominant harmony by the end of the transition.

Following the gradual decay of the transition, the second theme begins in m. 153 over a G dominant pedal. Instead of sounding tutti and forte as in the orchestral exposition, the theme returns now dolce and piano over a pair of yielding descending chromatic lines that suggest a sense of tranquil resignation. The process of dissolution continues in m. 156 with the theme slowing down and floating away via a half cadence in m. 161 back into the key of A minor. Following the cadence, the end of the theme returns now even slower and dies away until all that remains is its opening dyad from E to D. The theme then repeats in the violin, but melts away following the elongation of the high C in m. 170 onto a quiet C major triad. After the ensuing disjunction, the melody continues now forte in a similar fashion as in the orchestral exposition.

EXAMPLE 3.17. Brahms, Concerto for Violin and Cello in A minor, Op. 102, I, dissolution of secondary theme midway through



As in the Piano Trio, the process of dissolution that unfolds at the beginning of the second theme may be heard as carrying over from the de-intensifying transition. The boundary between the two sections is much more blurry in this example, nonetheless, for here the pedal G in the bass also carries through. Given that the process of dissolution generally unfolds until the end of a section, one could argue that the transition ends instead with the C major chord and the textural break in m. 171. This hearing, however, would ignore the thematic layout and the fact that the passage beginning in m. 172 has been heard several times as the continuation to the theme beginning in m. 153 and repeating in 167.

These examples demonstrate the variety of functions that the process of dissolution can assume within a given section. To summarize, these functions can be placed into three categories corresponding to the three diagrams shown in Figure 3.1. The first and most common function is as a period of relaxation following the attainment of the main structural goal of the section. Here, dissolution carries little structural weight. More structurally and expressively marked are those passages in which the process of decay unfolds long before reaching the main cadential goal, as shown in Figure 3.1b. In these cases, the structural point of arrival comes effortlessly as if by an act of grace. Much more striking are those cases corresponding to Figure 3.1c, where the process of dissolution culminates midway through the section rather than continuing to unfold until the end of the passage. In all examples, the process of dissolution, regardless of its formal function, involves one or more of the thematic procedures outlined earlier in the chapter alongside a de-intensification in several parameters.

3.4. The First Movement of the Op. 114 Trio as a Romantic Ruin

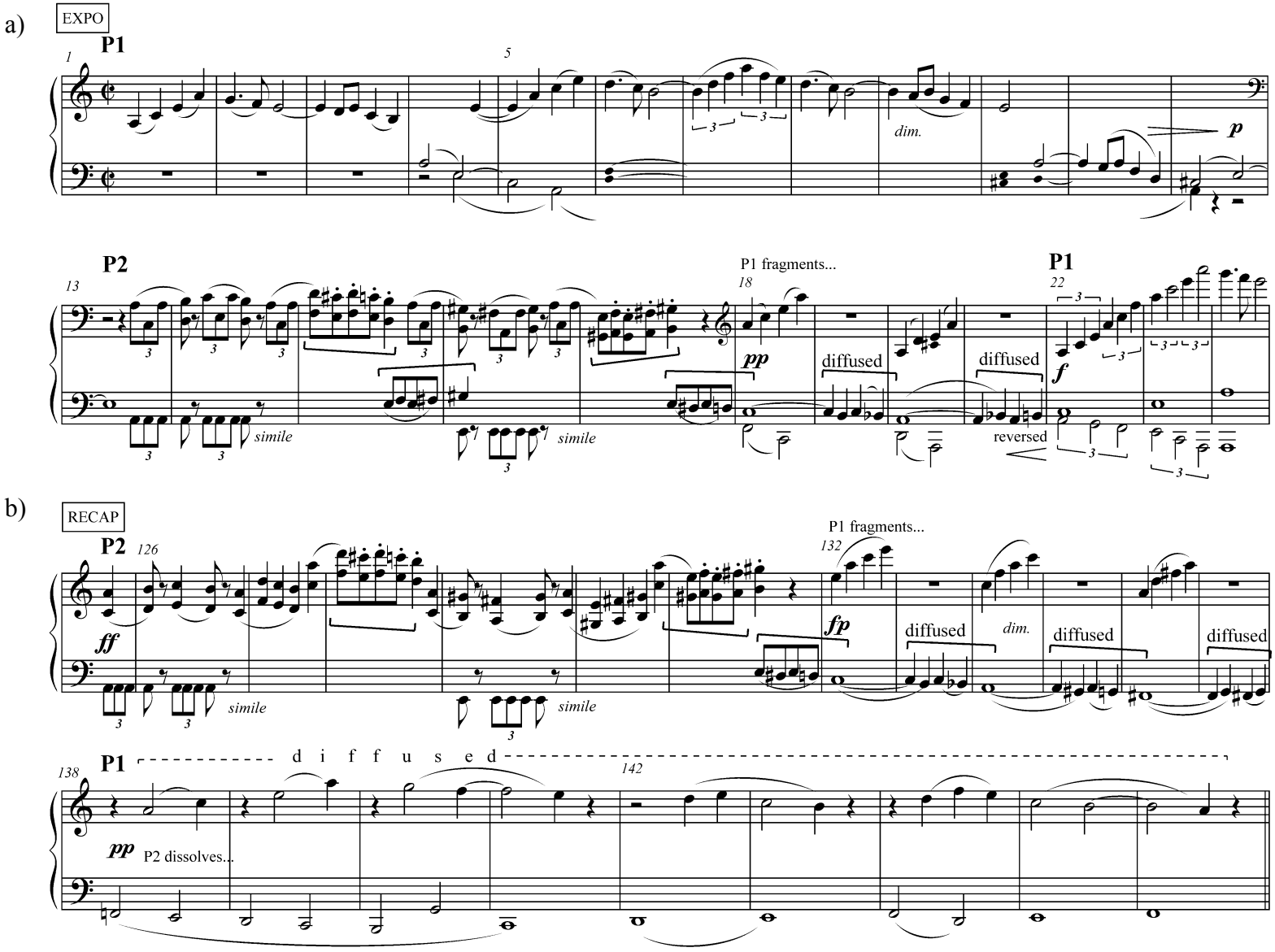
This chapter has discussed several processes of thematic dissolution and the role they may assume within a given syntactic unit. The following analysis of the first movement of Brahms's

Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114, shows how these processes can shape an entire movement or work. More specifically, the analysis reveals how the themes heard at the beginning of the movement gradually dissolve through the course of the movement, turning as it were onto Romantic ruins.

This sense of decay is palpable from the onset of the piece. As shown in Example 3.18, the trio starts with a pair of phrases that form a parallel period (P1). Whereas the antecedent is heard poco forte in mm. 1–4, the consequent phrase dwindles midway through as it spreads across eight bars, coming to rest with a plagal cadence on a serene A major tonic chord. The next theme (P2) follows softly yet energetically, moving in triplets and emphatic staccato eighth notes. By m. 15, however, the energetic five-note motive bracketed in the example becomes diffused, and the music once again settles plagally on an A major tonic triad. For an area in the form where continuity tends to be paramount, these two hiatus and the accompanying plagal progressions are both structurally and expressively marked. In opposition to the more typical dominant-to-tonic progressions that drive common practice tonality, these plagal progressions have, according to Margaret Notley, a quality of "otherness" that convey a sense of alienation.[25] If, as Michael Klein has argued, the dominant/subdominant dichotomy correlates with the opposition between moving into the future and looking towards the past respectively, the plagal dissolution of these two themes may also be heard as conferring a retrospective quality to the opening—an alienation from the present. [26]

[25] Notley, *Lateness and Brahms*, 90–97.
[26] Michael Klein, "Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative," *Music Theory Spectrum* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 39.

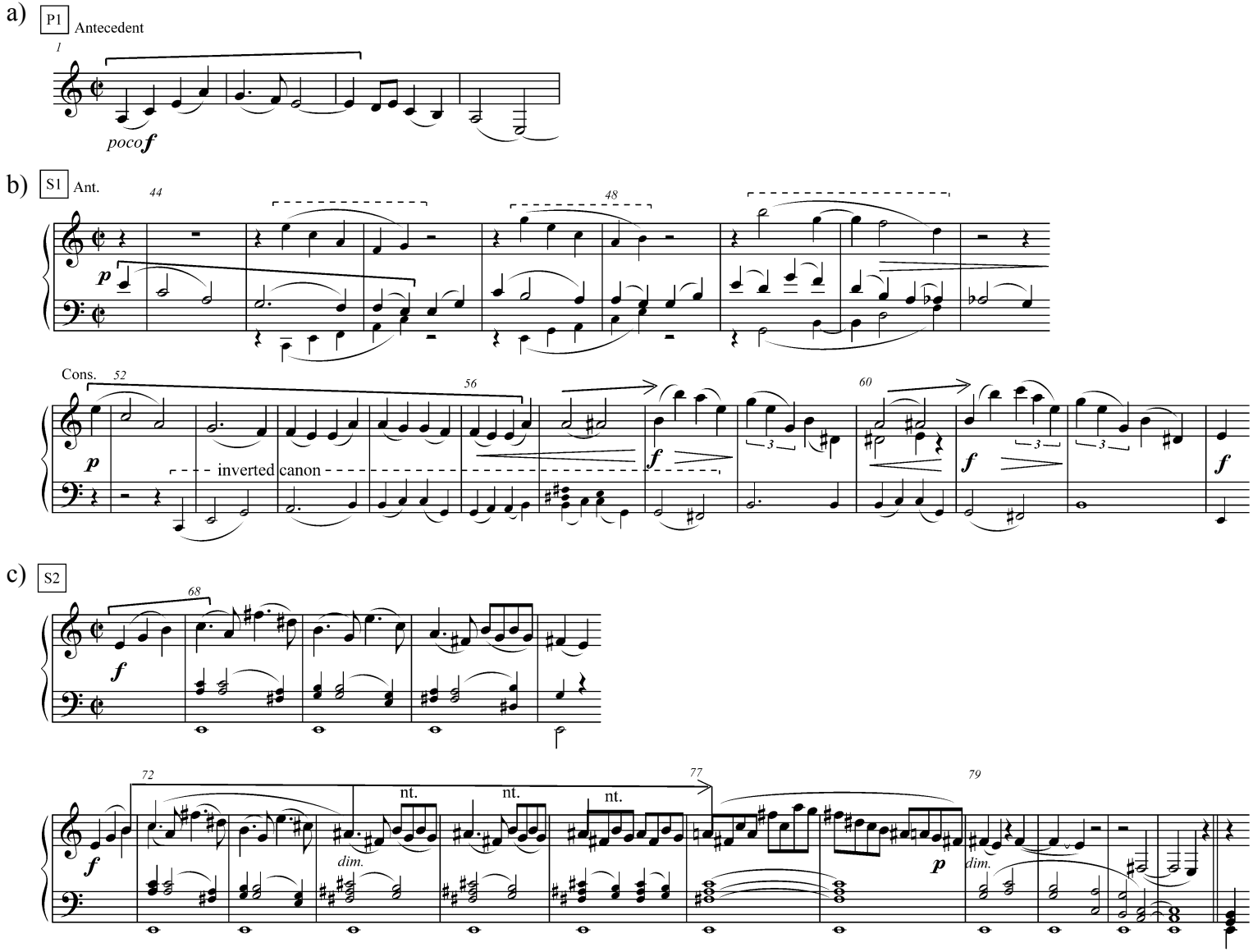
EXAMPLE 3.18. Brahms, Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114, I, opening themes and their return in the recapitulation



After fading away, P1 and P2 return now loudly and energetically in what functions as the transition section. The transition starts to fade away after reaching a powerful augmented sixth chord in m. 37 (not shown in example). At this point P2 becomes fragmented and sheds its distinct triplet rhythm for a straight quarter-note pulse. Meanwhile, the upwardly bounded D♯ (augmented sixth), heard sforzando in the clarinet and cello, becomes enharmonically reinterpreted as a downward resolving E♭ (chordal seventh), veering the transition from A minor toward the relative major. Slowing down to half notes and decaying to a piano, the transition finally melts onto a tonic C major chord for the start of the second theme in m. 44.

The C major theme (S1) that emerges after the decay of the transition is a diffused and partially inverted version of the opening theme (P1). This transformation of P1 into S1 is marked with brackets in Example 3.19. Whereas P1 begins with the cello reaching upward through an A minor triad to a downbeat G, S1 starts with the cello slowly yielding downward through these same exact pitches to a downbeat G. In both phrases, the dotted G then descends by step to E. While the cello continues with the melody, echoes of the head motive resound in the piano, outlining first a tonic C major harmony and then ascending by thirds until they too dissipate as the phrase settles on a half cadence in m. 51. The consequent phrase follows with the cello now echoing the theme in inversion while the piano provides a chorale-style accompaniment that gives the dissolution of P1 into S1 the particular spiritual quality of a Romantic ruin. In m. 57, however, a forceful melodic ascent disturbs this C major idyll. As the arrow in Example 3.19b shows, the A, which twice before has functioned as an upper neighbor to G, appears here as the seventh of a B dominant chord. But, instead of resolving downward, the A pushes upward to a B♭/A♯. The B♭ sounds at first like another chordal seventh, but it becomes reinterpreted as an augmented sixth that forcefully resolves to B, driving the music to a cadence in E minor.

EXAMPLE 3.19. Brahms, Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114, I, thematic transformations in the exposition (P1, S1, and S2)



This shift to E minor brings about a transformation of the diffused C major theme into its diametric opposite. As shown in Example 3.19c, the theme beginning in m. 67 (S2) inverts the descending four-note gesture heard at the beginning of the C major theme into an energetic four-note ascent. In keeping with the rhythmic compression of the opening gesture from half notes to quarter notes, the phrase rhythm speeds up from eight to four bars and the music reaches a cadence in m. 71. The theme then repeats in the clarinet. Instead of reaching the expected PAC four bars later, the theme gradually begins to dissolve midway through the phrase. The process of dissolution starts in m. 74 with the clarinet continuing to repeat the penultimate measure of the phrase ever softer until it finally loses its distinctive dotted rhythm. Harmonically, the chord in m. 74 sounds at first like II♯ chord, a chromaticized version of the II chord heard in m. 72. Rather than moving to the expected dominant chord, however, the F♯ chord alternates with a neighboring E minor chord, until the A♯ finally yields to A♮ as part of a half-diminished II chord that resolves plagally to tonic. While this de-intensifying plagal ending recalls P1 and P2, the chromatic descent from A♯ to A♮ reverses the forceful ascent from A through A♯ to B played by the clarinet in that exact same register at the end of the C major theme. Whereas the chromatic ascent appeared as part of a process of intensification, its reversal forms part of a process of decay that continues through the end of the exposition with the closing F♯ to E gesture becoming diffused over a resigned plagal descent.

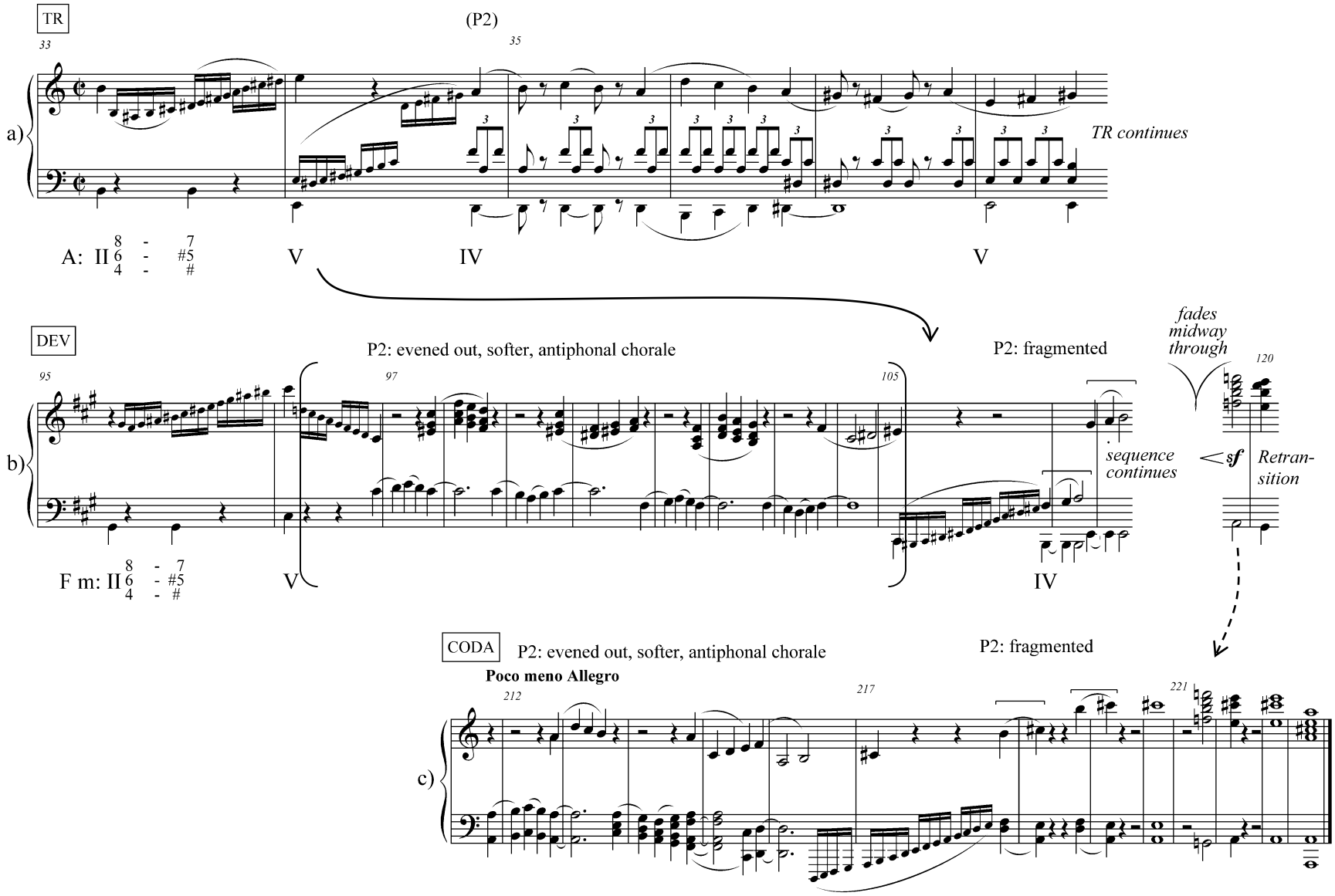
The process of decay that affects the exposition becomes more pronounced in the course of the development, bringing a drastic transformation of the energetic P2 theme. As shown Example 3.20b, this theme first appears in m. 97 following a tonicized half cadence that recalls that in m. 33 of the exposition, shown above (a). Both cadences mark the end of a powerful statement of the opening melody and are characterized by an energetic stepwise ascent in the

clarinet from the root of the II chord to the root of the V chord. But, while in the exposition a fortissimo statement of P2 follows, in the development the music deflates suddenly to a piano, and P2 is now stripped of its energetic triplet rhythm, taking on the character of an archaic antiphonal chorale. The decayed theme, much like a Romantic ruin, momentarily collapses time into an infinite now, expanding the C♯ dominant chord of m. 97 across nine bars in the manner of a quasi-fermata or parenthesis, as shown in the example.

Time resumes, as it were, in m. 105, as the cello plays the ascending gesture leading to the IV chord one would have expected to find in m. 96 given the parallelism between the development and the exposition. Continuing the process of dissolution, however, the stepwise run is heard pianissimo rather than fortissimo, and the ensuing P2 theme is now fragmented into three-note segments that repeat sequentially until the passage dies away over an E minor II chord in m. 114. The result is a disjunction midway through a syntactic unit similar to those in the Op. 87 Trio and the Double Concerto discussed above.

Following the disjunction in m. 114, the E minor chord continues to the A dominant harmony. Just as a cadence in D major seems at hand, however, the bass ascends chromatically from A through A♯ to B, abruptly forcing the music back to A minor. This ascent recalls that in the exposition, forming part once again of a process of intensification that culminates now with a set of *s*forzando II4/2 chords that resolve to V6 for the beginning of an energetic re-transition. The dynamic curve for the development as a whole follows then the trajectory shown in Figure 3.1c, with the phase of decay beginning prematurely and ending midway through the development. After the disjunction, the music gathers momentum again leading to a powerful recapitulation.

EXAMPLE 3.20. Brahms, Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114, I, dissolution of P2 in the development and in the coda

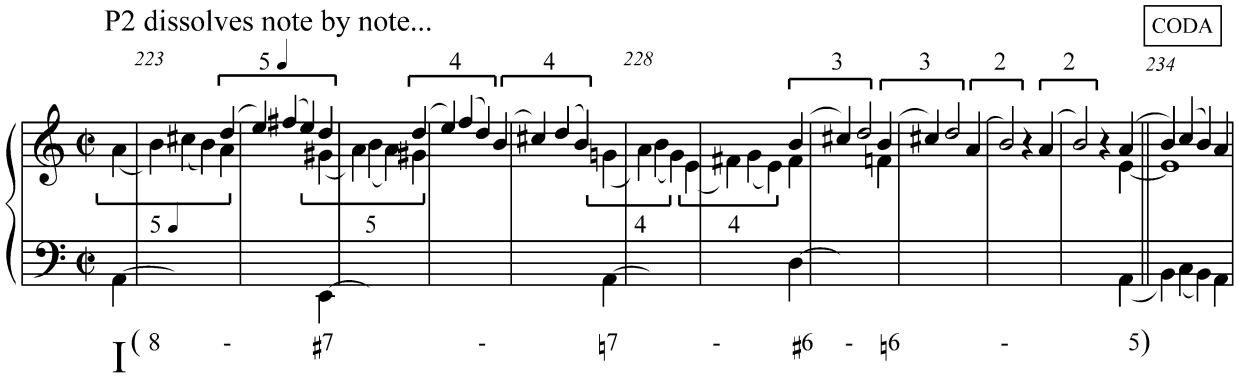


The recapitulation begins with an energetic statement of P2, reproduced at the bottom of Example 3.18. This energy suddenly dissipates, nonetheless, as the chromatic neighboring motive heard twice during the course of the theme becomes diffused in m. 132. Since the elongation of this five-note motive recalls a rather similar moment at the beginning of the exposition, one expects this de-intensifying passage to be followed by a loud return of P1. This time, however, the process of dissolution continues as the bass sinks chromatically deeper and deeper until the opening theme finally returns in m. 138, quietly and dispersed into small fragments. Meanwhile, P2 dissolves into an indistinct bass descent in parallel sixths that tonicize the parallel major before moving to a deceptive cadence for the end of P1. The music then stays on the key of F major for the return of the chorale S1 theme. Accordingly, one can trace a process of dissolution unfolding from the end of P2 through the recapitulation of P1 up to the beginning of the chorale. From there on the recapitulation continues without any significant changes, modulating back to A minor, as expected.

The process of decay affecting the movement as a whole culminates in a remarkable coda, mm. 212–224. This section comes about through the gradual dissolution of the P2 theme across mm. 201–211. Example 3.21 shows how in this passage a five-note fragment of P2 withers note-by-note until the theme finally appears softer and slower than ever before for the beginning of the coda. As shown in Example 3.20, the antiphonal choral texture creates a clear parallelism between the coda and the first appearance of this theme in the course of the development. Now modal rather than tonal, the chorale sounds even more ancient, creating a moment of deep retrospection as the theme comes to a plagal cadence on a tonic A major chord. The passage that follows continues the parallelism with the development, beginning with a run and continuing with pianissimo chords in the piano and delicate scales in the clarinet and cello

that echo the scalar ascent in m. 217. While in the development P2 vanished at this moment into three-note fragment, this time the process goes further and the theme dissolves into a two-note fragment, B to C♯, until finally only a C♯ remains.

EXAMPLE 3.21. Brahms, Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114, I, gradual dissolution of P2



The parallelism between the development and the coda continues with the unusual G dominant seventh chord that resolves to tonic in m. 122. A more typical progression would have included a G♯ in the bass as part of a viio7 that resolves back to tonic. Instead, the expected G♯ yields to G♮ in a moment of serene surrender. Moreover, given the parallelism between the end of the coda and the middle of the development, the high F♮ in this chord calls to mind the sforzando chords from the development that led to the return of V, as shown in Example 3.20c. The right hand's voicing is in fact identical, and both chords are strongly marked, the former by sheer dynamic emphasis and repetition, the latter by its unusual harmonic function. More striking than their similarities are what sets them apart. In the development, the sforzando chords are part of process of intensification that interrupts a long idyllic section; in the coda, the G seventh chord forms part of a long process of decay that carries on until all is silent. In short, one can hear the coda as a faded memory of the development. The P1 theme is no longer and P2 has become a beautiful ancient ruin.

This analysis has shown how the processes of thematic dissolution discussed at the beginning of the chapter can shape an entire movement. It reveals, in particular, the way in which P1 and P2 gradually fade away, becoming fragmented, diffused, and evened out through the course of the work until finally disappearing by the end of the coda.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has shown how different thematic processes in Brahms's music may be heard as embodying the Romantic ideal of dissolution, turning themes into ruins. Several examples illustrate these modes of thematic decay and reveal the heightened structural and expressive significance they assume in Brahms's works. The examples also show that these processes of thematic dissolution generally unfold as part of larger phase of decay often involving a reversal of upward voice-leading tendencies. Examining in detail the role of these voice-leading reversals in depicting the Romantic ideal of dissolution is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Sound of Twilight: Sublimation of Upward Melodic Impulses

4.1. Introduction

In his article, "Sublimating Sharp ^4: An Exercise in Schenkerian Energetics," Frank Samarotto discusses several instances where scale-degree ♯4 yields to ♮4 instead of ascending to 5.[1] Drawing on the process whereby a solid evaporates and from the Freudian idea of redirecting a primal impulse into a more uplifting one, Samarotto characterizes the downward turn of ♯4 to ♮4 as a kind of "sublimation" whereby the upward force of ♯4 seems to evaporate as the music reaches a higher state where impulses are muted or transformed.[2] The muting of impulses that Samarotto mentions correlates with the Romantic notion of resignation, which involves a quiescence of the will and a sense of self-dissolution. The meaning of sublimation that refers to the evaporation of a solid even suggests the ideal of fading away cultivated by the Romantics, of which self-dissolution was but one manifestation. Samarotto turns to this meaning repeatedly describing how the energy of ♯4 dissolves or evaporates away.

Adopting the concept of sublimation, this chapter argues that the muting of upward impulses conveys a sense of dissolution in Brahms's music. Analyses of several songs depicting the image of a sunset demonstrate how upward melodic impulses become sublimated as the day finally vanishes into the night. This muting of impulses serves as a musical analogue to the main poetic conceit in each song: the night as relief from daily striving and as bringer of serene rest and/or peaceful death. Having established the connection between the processes of sublimation and dissolution in three songs, the focus shifts to the analysis of two instrumental works where

[1] Frank Samarotto, "Sublimating Sharp ^4: An Exercise in Schenkerian Energetics," *Music Theory Online* 10, no. 3 (September 2004).
[2] Ibid., para. 15.

sublimation plays a central role. Here, as in the songs, the reversal of upward melodic tendencies produces an unmistakable twilight tone. Furthermore, in these works the process of sublimation unfolds alongside those of thematic dissolution discussed in the previous chapter.

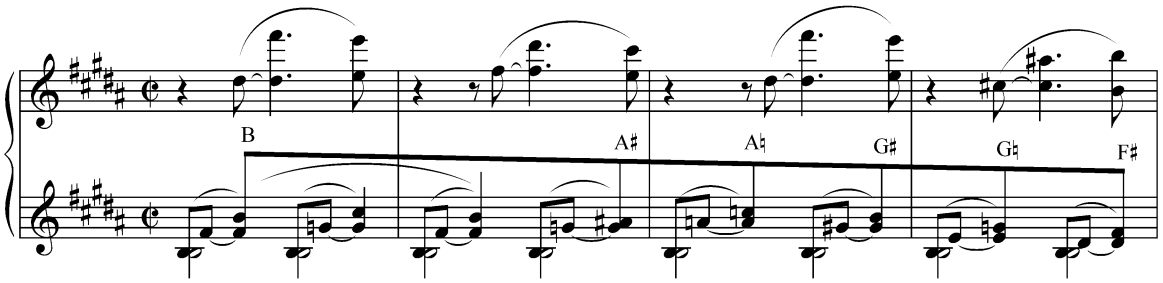
4.2. Two Types of Upward Impulses

While Samarotto focuses exclusively on scale-degree ♯4, this chapter expands the concept of sublimation to include other kinds of upward impulses. This expansion is warranted, for there is nothing concerning this expressive category that suggests limiting it to ♯4.

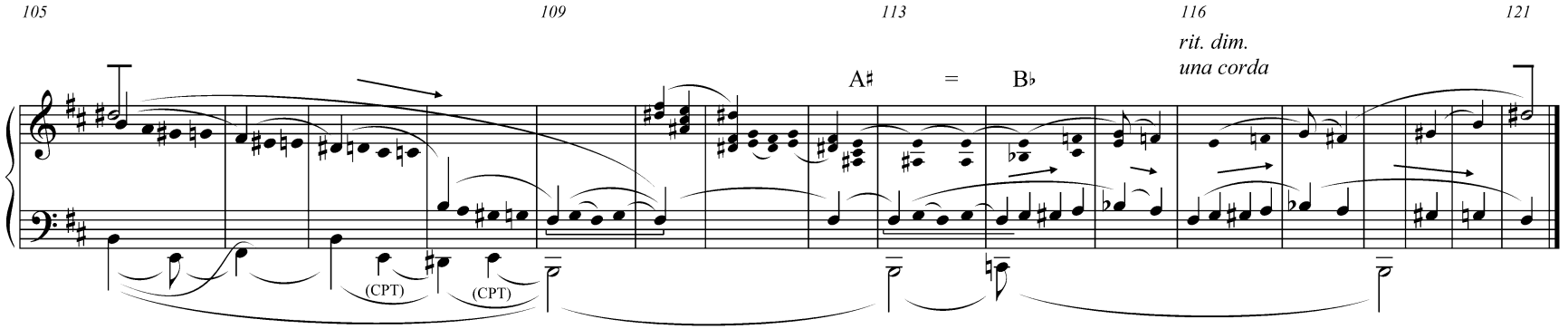
The works analyzed in this chapter feature the sublimation of two types of upward impulses. The first encompasses tones with strong upward melodic tendencies. These include ♯4 as well as other scale-degrees, such as (♯)7 and ♯5. In each case the given scale-degree functions locally as a leading-tone pushing upward towards its resolution. Sublimation entails then a downward chromatic deflection of the temporary leading-tone as in the case of scale-degree ♯4 yielding to ♮4.

The chromatic descending tetrachord from 8 to 5 is a very common progression employed by Brahms, which involves the sublimation of scale-degree 7. Example 4.1 illustrates Brahms's characteristic variation of this stock pattern. The passage serves as the prelude, interlude, and postlude to his song "Lerchengesang," Op. 70 no. 2, in which the speaker sings of distant ethereal voices, closing his eyes gently as memories of twilight pass by. In this passage the leading-tone (A♯) yields to A♮ and continues chromatically down to F♯. Unlike a typically lament bass, the progression appears in the major mode and ends back on tonic rather than V. With these changes the descent conveys not so much a doleful lament, but rather that sense of serene idleness depicted in the poem. While the sublimation of scale-degree 7 is admittedly

EXAMPLE 4.1. Brahms, “Lerchengesang,” Op. 70 no. 2, descending chromantic tetrachord



EXAMPLE 4.2. Brahms, Capriccio in B minor, Op. 76 no. 2, sublimation of a contra-structural upward impulse



unmarked in this passage, this sort of progression appears in several of the works discussed below as part of a more marked and widely encompassing process of sublimation.

The second type of upward impulse is not so neatly defined but no less expressive. It includes ascending melodies that run against the grain of the voice-leading structure. These correspond to what in a different study Samarotto refers to as "contra-structural melodic impulses."[3] Samarotto notes that contra-structural impulses generally move upward and may fill out an interval that is either dissonant with the prolonged harmony or belongs to a lower level elaboration of that harmony.[4] This chapter draws attention to those instances where this upward energy dissipates. In these cases, sublimation involves a loss of impetus that brings the upwardly bounded pitch or pitches back under the control of the voice-leading structure, often through a reversal of the ascending melodic line. This reversal may include the downward chromatic deflection of upward tendency tones of the sort discussed above.

Example 4.2 shows the sublimation of a contra-structural upward impulse at the end of Brahms's Capriccio in B minor, Op. 76 no. 2. The voice-leading sketch draws attention to the inner voice. Beginning in m. 105, while the upper voice becomes fragmented, the inner voice descends chromatically from B down to F♯, prolonging tonic harmony. The descent ends five bars later with the repetition of the motion from G to F♯ (vii^{o7} - I). The inner-voice F♯ finally settles in m. 110 for the return of a short fragment from the opening theme in the upper voice. But the neighboring figure from G to F♯ comes back a bar later and once again in m. 113. This last time, it is not followed by the tonic return of the short thematic fragment. Instead, as if the neighboring figure was unable to contain its energy, the inner-voice melody thrusts upward moving chromatically to B♭ just as the bass pushes upward to C♮. The B♭ is an enharmonic re-

[3] Frank Samarotto, "'Plays of Opposing Motion': Contra-Structural Melodic Impulses in Voice-Leading Analysis," *Music Theory Online* 15, no. 2 (June 2009).
[4] Ibid., para. 18.

spelling of the leading-tone, A♯, whose resolution has been delayed since m. 113. The A♯ is now reinterpreted as B♭ and becomes sublimated as it yields down to A. It is easy to image a different scenario where the inner-voice A♯/B♭ would resolve up to B while the C♮ in the bass descended to tonic. A progression of this sort, in fact, marks the final tonic arrival in the fourth piece of this set. The possibility of an upward resolution becomes available once more in m. 116 when the inner-voice pushes upward for a second time to B♭/A♯, as if unwilling to embrace the sublimation. Once again, however, the melody yields down to A and continues this time to descend chromatically back to the F♯, effectively completing a reversal of the upward melodic impulse from F♯ to B♭. While the ascent moved energetically in eighth notes, the reversal moves sluggishly in half notes as tempo, dynamics, and surface rhythm dwindle. The thematic fragments in the upper voice become diffused as well, slowing down by the end to two eighth notes. With the upward impulse neutralized and muted, the music finally dissolves on a quiet B major tonic chord.

This example illustrates a more marked instance of sublimation that involves the reversal of a contra-structural impulse. Regardless of the type of impulse involved, however, the effect of sublimation is one where upward melodic tendencies dissolve as the music yields downward. In either case, the process of sublimation typically appears alongside a decay in several parameters, especially rhythm and dynamics.

4.3. The Sound of Twilight

This section establishes a close link between the process of sublimation and that of Romantic dissolution through the analysis of three texted works. All three works depict an image of the sunset, where a sense of struggle gives way to a state of tranquil rest or welcomed death when

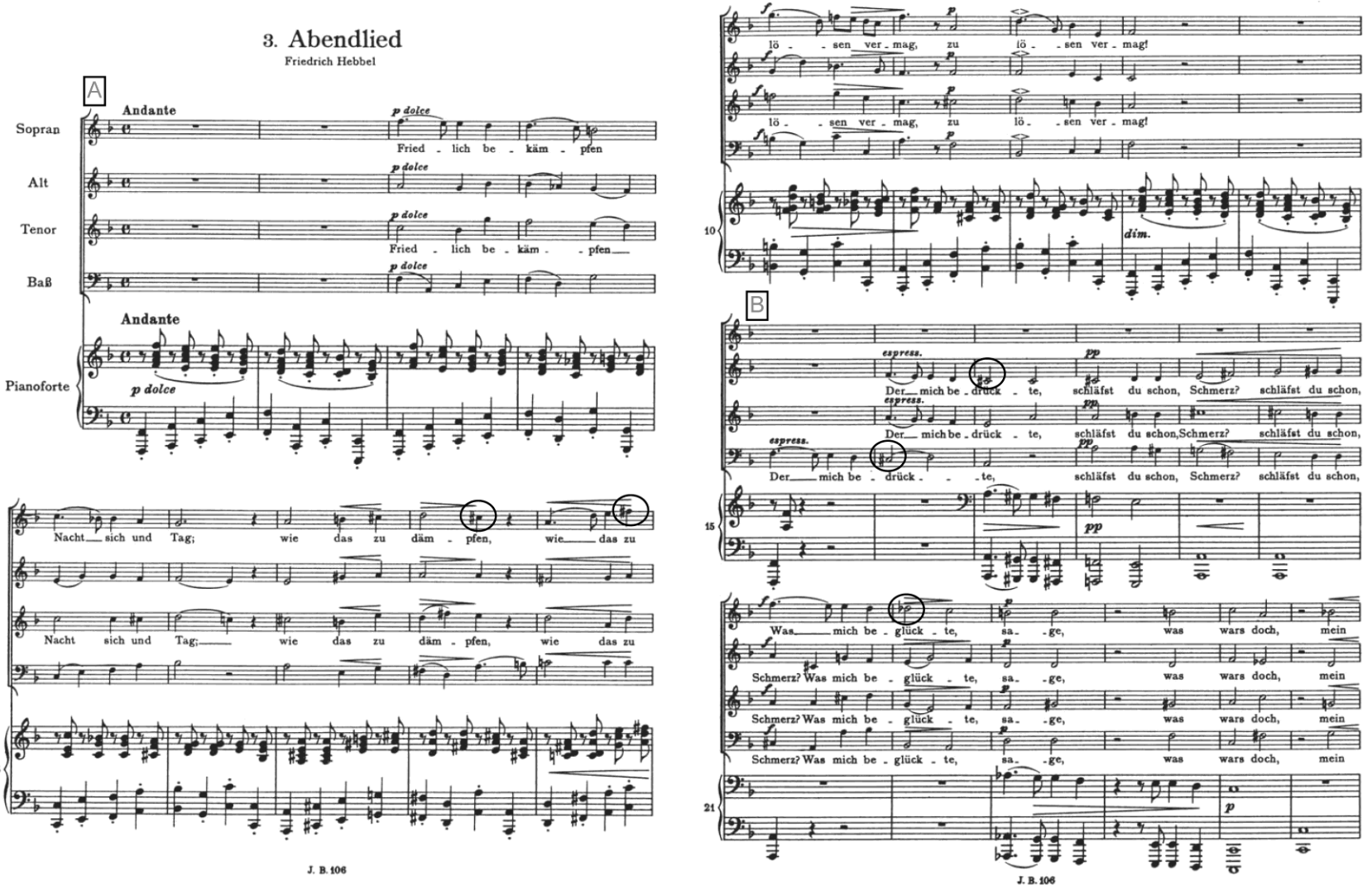
the day dissolves. In each case, an upward impulse enacts the struggle, and its sublimation the will-less state that follows.

For our first example, let us turn to Brahms's "Abendlied" (Evening Song), Op. 92 no. 3. This choral work sets a poem by Friedrich Hebbel reproduced in Example 4.3 along with an annotated copy of the score. The poem is replete with words that cue the process of dissolution, such as dissolve, melt away, float away, and so forth. This said, the process unfolds gradually during the course of the poem. While the first stanza focuses on the struggle to dissolve the day, by the third stanza everything has melted, bringing slumber instead. The topic of transcendence finally comes forth in the last stanza when the poetic speaker floats away skyward. The imagery of the night as the bringer of divine slumber resonates with prototypical Romantic works such as Novalis's *Hymns to the Night.* The image of floating in the air also recalls the meaning of sublimation as the process whereby a solid evaporates.

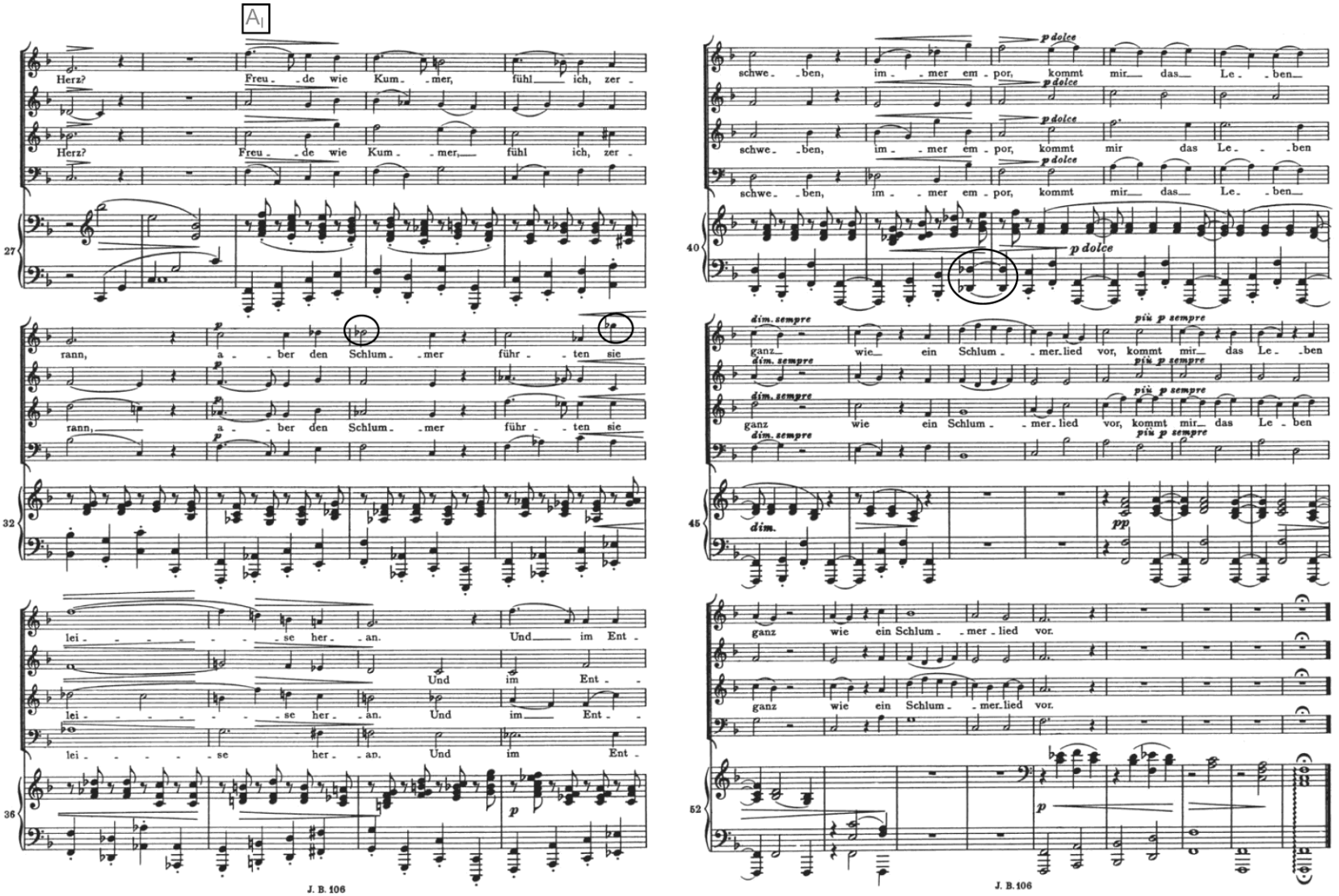
EXAMPLE 4.3a. Brahms, "Abendlied", Op. 92 no. 3, translation of Friedrich Hebbel's poem

> Peacefully does night
> struggle with the day:
> how to muffle it,
> how to dissolve it.
>
> That which depressed me,
> are you already asleep, o Pain?
> That which made me happy,
> say, what was it, my heart?
>
> Joy, like anguish,
> I feel has melted away,
> but they have gently
> invoked slumber instead.
>
> And as I float away,
> ever skyward,
> it occurs to me that life
> is just like a lullaby.

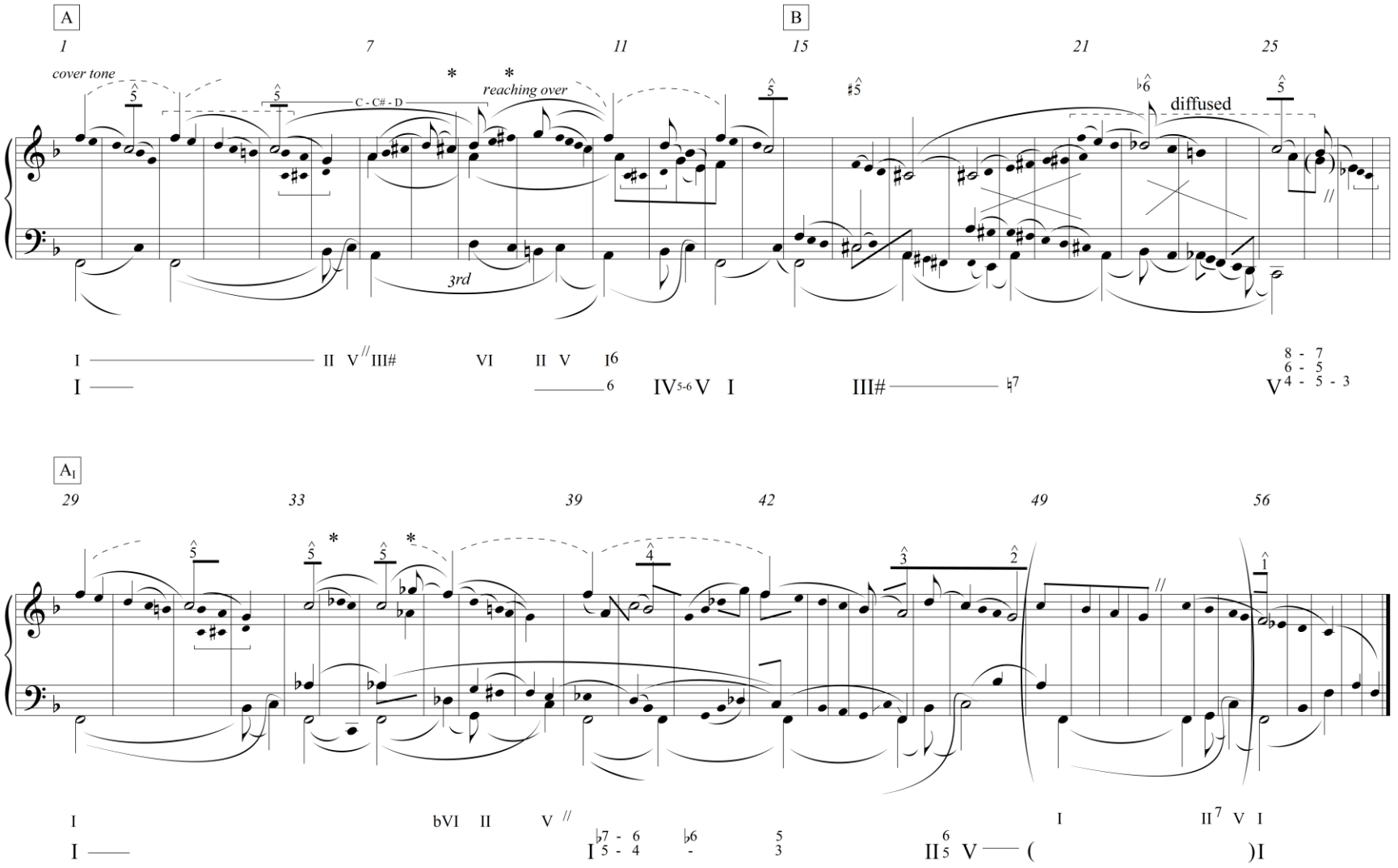
EXAMPLE 4.3b. Brahms, “Abendlied”, Op. 92 no. 3, annotated score



EXAMPLE 4.3b continued



EXAMPLE 4.3c. Brahms, “Abendlied,” Op. 92 no. 3, voice-leading sketch showing sublimation of scale-degree ♯5

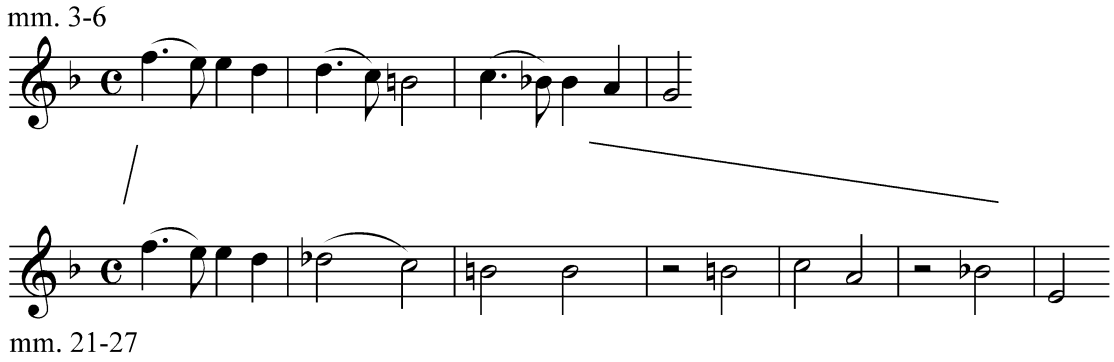


Brahms's setting of the poem conveys the process of dissolution primarily through the sublimation of scale-degree ♯5 (C♯). In keeping with the depiction of a struggle to dissolve in the first stanza, there is at first no sublimation. Instead, in the opening section (A), ♯5 moves repeatedly up to scale-degree 6. The most marked appearance of ♯5 is that in mm. 7–8 when the sopranos sing a C♯ as part of a III♯ chord that tonicizes the following VI chord. As shown in the voice-leading sketch in Example 4.3c, the C♯ pushes upward, functioning as a chromatic passing tone between the *Kopfton* C♮ and its upper neighbor D. C♯ is not the only tone with strong upward tendencies, however; the melody climbs to F♯ (scale-degree ♯1) and then to a climactic G in m. 10. After the music settles back on tonic harmony in the next measure, the tenors sing once again the chromatic ascent C-C♯-D before the section comes quietly to a close.

Scale-degree ♯5 becomes even more prominent in the middle section (B), mm. 15–28. It is sung first by the basses and then by the altos, who follow imitatively. The upward chromatic inflection of the *Kopfton* introduces a strong upward pull towards D, especially since C♯ is harmonized with a $III^{7}♯$ chord, an applied dominant to D. As tenors and altos effect a voice-exchange prolonging $III^{7}♯$, the music gains momentum, culminating with the entrance of the sopranos in m. 21 on an unexpected F. The sopranos imitate the descending melodic line beginning on F and ending on C♯, sung previously by the basses and altos. But just when the resolution to D seems inevitable, C♯ becomes reinterpreted as D♭ in m. 22, resolving as a chromatic upper neighbor back down to C in m. 25. The sublimation of C♯ is highlighted through a sudden decrease in dynamics and a slowing down of surface rhythm from quarter notes to half notes. In fact, as shown in Example 4.3d, the soprano's entrance marks a return of the opening melody, but now becoming diffused across mm. 21–27. The slowing down begins just at the

point where C♯ turns to D♭. Finally, to end the section the altos move downward from D♭ to C at the cadence in m. 27, echoing the sublimation of C♯/D♭ to C.

EXAMPLE 4.3d. Brahms, "Abendlied," Op. 92 no. 3, diffusal of the opening gesture



The sublimation of C♯ to C♮ affects the rest of work. It clearly works its way into the return of the opening section, beginning in m. 29 (A_I). As the asterisks in the sketch above mm. 8–9 and 34–35 show, the C♯ heard in the melody during the A section turns into a D♭ at the analogous place in the A_I section. The D♭ functions as an upper neighbor to C creating a clear parallelism with the deep middleground neighboring motion around the *Kopfton* brought forth through the sublimation of C♯ in the middle section. Just as the C♯ from the opening turns to D♭ in m. 34, so too does the F♯ in m. 9 turns to G♭ in m. 35. These enharmonic changes portray the contrast between the end of the first and third stanzas; while the former ponders over how to dissolve the day, in the latter slumber sets in after the day melts away.

While C♯ and F♯ become reinterpreted in the melody, the basses begin a chromatic descent from Ab. For the beginning of the fourth stanza in m. 39, they keep moving downward sublimating the leading-tone (E) down to E♭ and continuing down to scale-degree 5. The descent features Brahms's characteristic harmonization of the downward chromatic tetrachord discussed above: it appears in major and on tonic rather than V. In this case, the final step of the descent

from D♭ to C clearly recalls the sublimation of C♯. The piano brings out the motion from D♭ to C by imitating the upper voice and through the bass suspension in m. 42. After settling back on tonic, the melody begins a quiet descent from the cover tone F down an octave to complete the *Urlinie* descent, each note becoming suspended and yielding down in a state of complete surrender.

Accordingly, the sublimation of C♯ marks the expressive crux of the song and may be heard as enacting the process of dissolution depicted in the poem. The sublimation of C♯ affects the entire work: C♯ is reinterpreted as D♭ in the middle section, C♯ and F♯ turn to D♭ and G♭ when the opening section returns, and the bass completes a long chromatic descent ending with a motion from D♭ to C. By the end, the day has faded away and all upward impulses have vanished with it.

The sublimation of C♯ also takes center stage in Brahms's "Der Abend" Op. 64 no. 2. Like "Der Abendlied," "Der Abend" is written for SATB choir and piano to a text depicting the sunset. A translation of the poem is reproduced in Example 4.4a (the score is reproduced in the appendix). The poem is divided into three sections. The first corresponds to the first stanza and begins by imploring the sun to set, explaining that the world is weary. For the second and third stanzas the imagery shifts from earthly to transcendental. Instead of depicting the weary world, this section dwells on references to Greek mythology, portraying the sunset as a climactic embrace between Thetis (the Goddess of water) and Phoebus (The God of the sun). The fourth stanza returns to the imagery of the first. Seamlessly continuing the metaphor of the horses slowing down and quenching their thirst, the fourth stanza describes how the night spreads with a soft step through the sky and brings relief to the weary. By the end, the day has faded and the world rests.

Brahms's closely follows the thematic layout of the poem, setting it in ABA_I form. While energetic upward impulses convey the climatic union of water and sun during the B section, the sublimation of ♯4 (C♯) at the end of the song enacts the sweet repose granted by the night.

EXAMPLE 4.4a. Brahms, "Der Abend," Op. 64 no. 2, translation of Friedrich Schiller's poem

Sink, beaming God; the meadows thirst
for refreshing dew, Man is listless,
the horses are pulling more slowly:
the chariot descends.

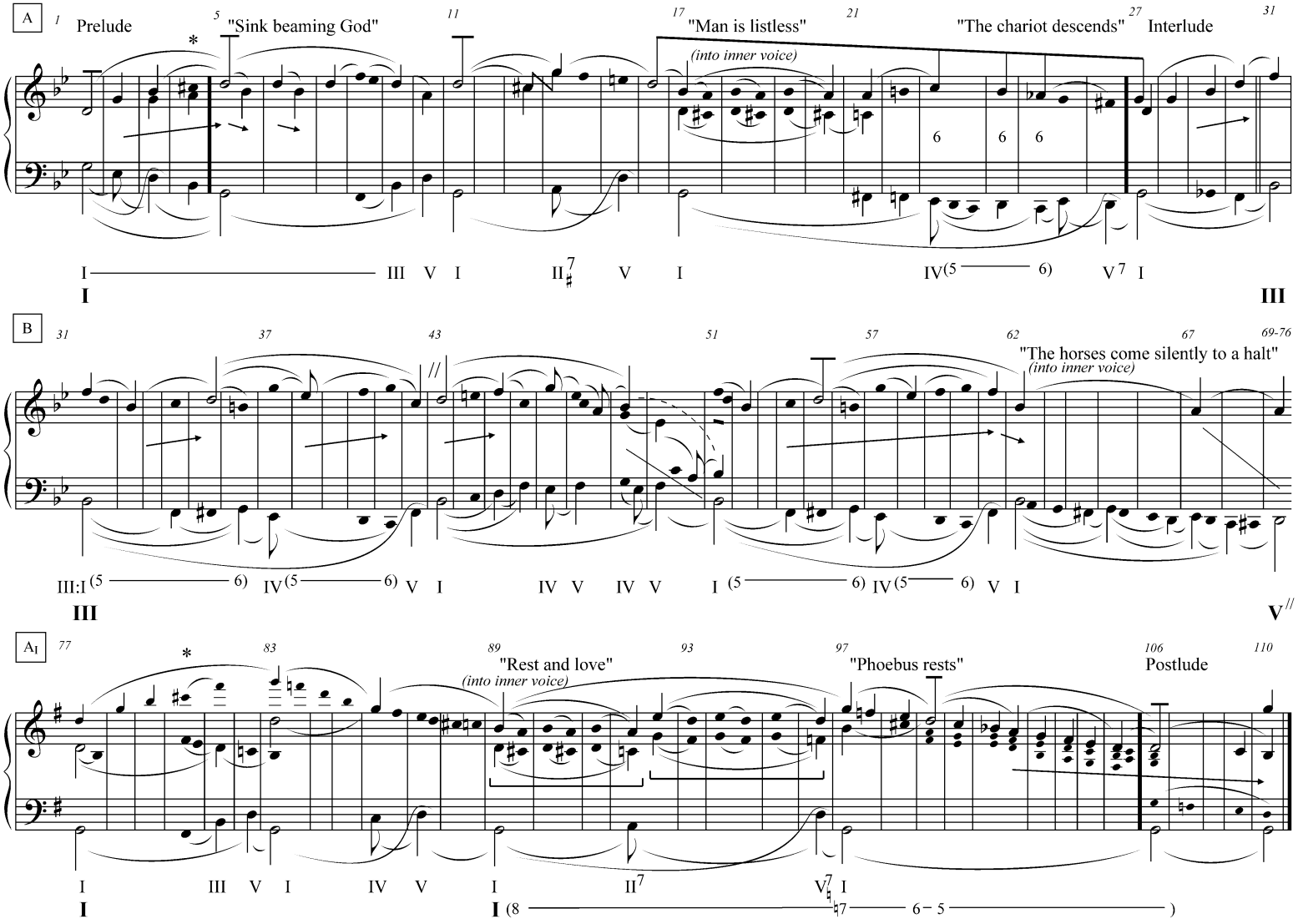
Look who beckons from the sea's crystal waves,
smiling warmly! Does your heart know her?
The horses fly more quickly.
Thetis, the divine, is beckoning.

Quickly from the chariot and into her arms
springs the driver. Cupid grasps the reins.
The horses come silently to a halt
and drink from the cool waters.

In the sky above, with a soft step,
comes the fragrant night; she is followed by
sweet
Love. Rest and love!
Phoebus, the amorous, rests.

Scale-degree ♯4 becomes clearly thematized during the short but expressive piano prelude. As shown in the voice-leading sketch below (Example 4.4b), the piano moves in m. 3 to what sounds at first like a cadential 6/4, but the upper-voice B♭ pushes upward through an augmented second to the only chromatic tone heard for the first several measures—a poignant C♯. The C♯ is harshly dissonant; it belongs to a dominant functioning A major chord (A-C♯) that is superposed over the notes of the prolonged tonic harmony. Scale-degree ♯4 then resolves upward to 5 pushing the *Kopfton* up an octave to D4.

EXAMPLE 4.4b. Brahms, “Der Abend,” Op. 64 no. 2, foreground voice-leading sketch showing the sublimation of C♯



Precisely at this moment the voices come in singing “Sink, beaming God.” This imploration may be heard as a reaction to the rather unusual piano prelude, as if they were asking for the C♯ to yield down and the *Kopfton* to sink back to its initial register. The descending gestures from D to B♭ at the beginning of the first two phrases show the way, the gentle sway lulling the world to sleep. But no rest is granted, and after touching once more on scale-degree ♯4 in m. 12 the sopranos return to the high D for the half cadence in m. 16. The melody moves then into an inner voice to set the third line of poetry. At this point, the music begins rocking back and forth between a tonic and a II^{7}♯ chord. The A dominant chords appearing in between the tonic chords recall the passage in m. 3. But this time B♭ moves downward to A instead of climbing forcefully to C♯ and D. The gentle oscillation of tonic harmony seems to work and in m. 20 the bass note G yields down, sublimating the leading tone and continuing to E♭ as the voices sing of the sinking sun. While the bass continues moving downward, the *Kopfton* D descends stepwise past scale-degree ♭2 to complete a fifth-descent in m. 27. After the cadence, the melody in the short piano interlude, much like that in the prelude, moves upward toward the high D, but the poignant C♯ has now disappeared.

In contrast to the opening, the B section describes the quick running of the horses that bring the Sun God rushing towards the Water Goddess. In keeping with this change of imagery, the wavering quarter-quarter-rest rhythm in the accompaniment speeds up to running eighths, while the downward melodic gestures of the opening turn into energetic, ascending ones. As shown in the voice-leading sketch, the melody moves in ascending thirds for most of the section. It climbs from B♭ to D, regaining the *Kopfton* by m. 35, and up another third from E♭ to G before settling back on C for the cadence in m. 42. With the horses speeding up to galloping triplets, the melody climbs yet another third, now from D through a raised E (locally ♯4) up to F, reaching

once again to the high G before the cadence in m. 51. The opening material of the B section returns at this point, but this time the melody does not settle down on C for the half cadence in m. 62; instead, the sopranos reach-over to the G to complete a third-ascent on the high F. Following this powerful ascent, the music changes abruptly; the accompaniment once again falters; the melody sinks down to a static inner-voice B♭; the horses come silently to a halt. Finally, to the image of quenching thirst (which relates back to the meadows thirsting for dew), the section comes quietly and slowly to an end on V.

With the sun down and the world at rest, the opening section returns in m. 79 in the major mode. While the voices sing about the night slowly stepping in high in the sky, the piano plays the distinctive ascending melody from the prelude. The poetry re-contextualizes the ascending gesture and so does the harmony. No longer harshly dissonant nor having the strong pull of a leading-tone, the C♯ in m. 80 is harmonized as the fifth of an F♯ major chord that freely floats skywards to a high F♯. Then, as if completing a sonic image of the firmament, the piano melody moves back down the tonic triad, seamlessly joining the sopranos in m. 86 as they descend from the high G. While in the opening this descent came to an end with a solid half cadence on D, this time the dominant simply seems to evaporate as the melody continues chromatically downward, sublimating C♯ and completing a sixth-descent with the arrival of B for the beginning of the next phrase.

As the world is lulled into slumber during the next phrase, the sublimation of C♯ becomes more marked. As before, this phrase begins with a I and a II^{7}♯ chord rocking back and forth. (As remarked before, the oscillation between these two harmonies recalls the idiosyncratic piano prelude.) But while in the opening this oscillation ends on an A dominant chord, this time the

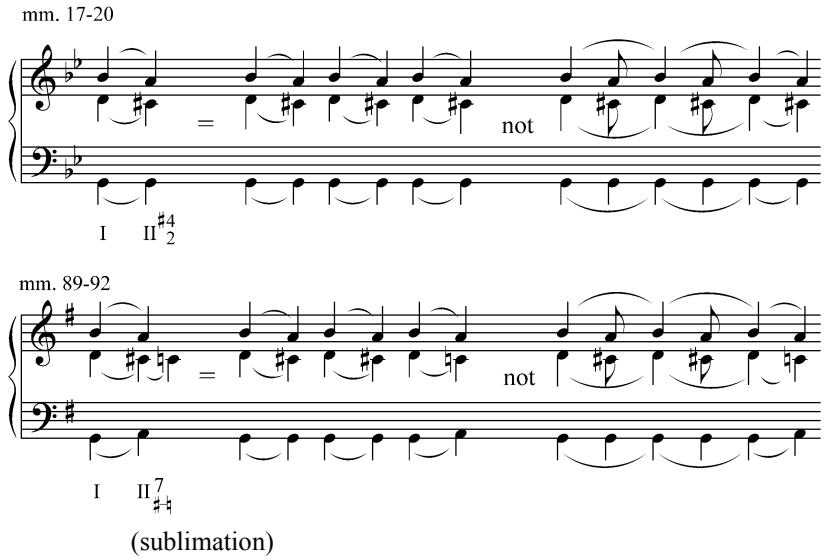
note C♯ becomes sublimated, and the fourth-bar incise comes to rest in m. 92 on an A minor-seventh chord instead.

One could argue that this does not represent a case of sublimation, for the C♯s do move to D prior to the arrival of C♮. However, articulations and text layout clearly indicate a break after each II^{7}♯ chord. Accordingly, the passage may be heard as consisting of three repetitions of one chord progression: I–II^{7}. To borrow Arthur Komar's term, what is in essence one motion from I to II^{7} becomes then bifurcated (or, in this case, trifurcated) into several statements.[5] Example 4.4c renders this analysis visually and compares this passage as it occurs in the settings of the first and last stanzas. Locally the II^{7} chords do not prolong tonic nor does tonic prolong II; instead, each chord stands for its respective *Stufe* in what is at a deeper level a single motion from I to II^{7}. But while in mm. 17–20 all tonic and supertonic chords are of the same quality, in the passage in mm. 89–92, the third of the II^{7} chords becomes sublimated to C♮ in what stands at a deeper level for a motion from I to $II^{7}_{\sharp\text{–}\natural}$, as shown in the example below.

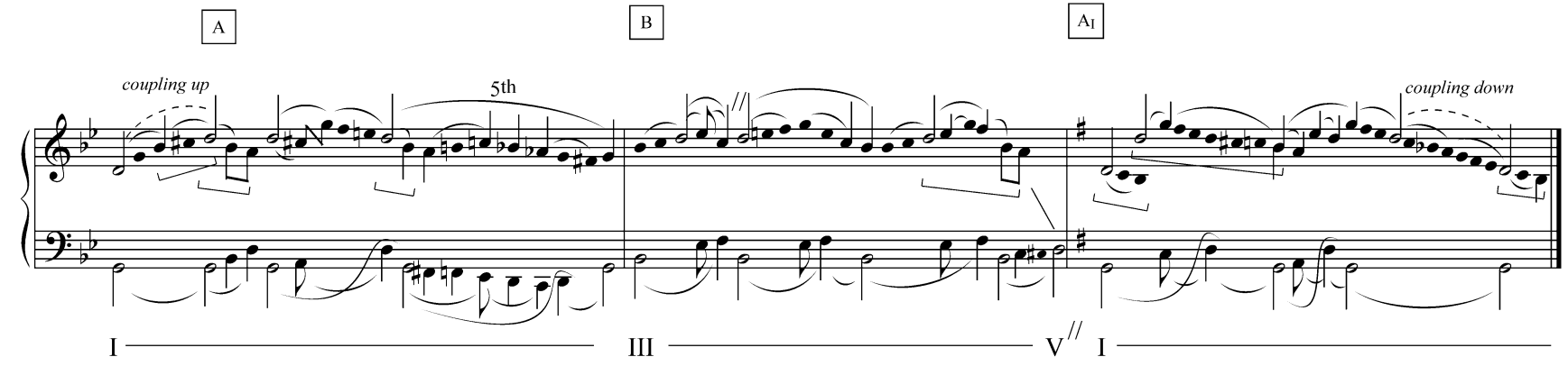
Following the sublimation of ♯4, this four-bar unit repeats a fifth higher, and now it is the leading-tone that is sublimated, transforming the dominant into a minor-seventh chord. Whereas at the beginning of the song the singers implore the sun to sink after the forceful melodic ascent from B♭ through C♯ to D, the sublimation of C♯ and later F♯ in mm. 89–96 delicately depicts a world finally coming rest in the darkness of night.

[5] Arthur Komar, *Theory of Suspensions: A Study of Metrical and Pitch Relations in Tonal Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971). 62.

EXAMPLE 4.4c. Brahms, "Der Abend," Op. 64 no. 2, bifurcation of harmonic progression from I to II^7 in the A and A_I sections



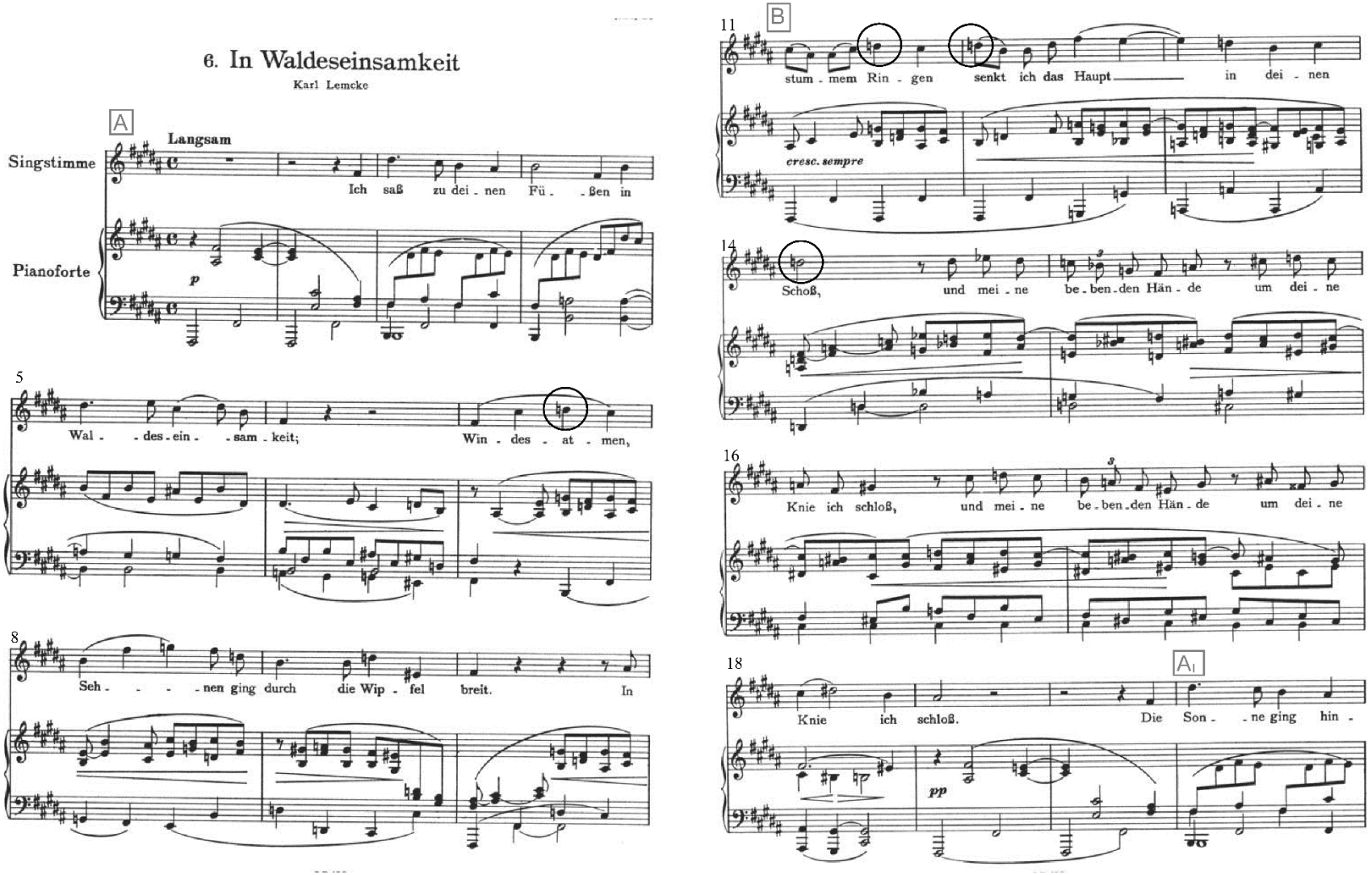
EXAMPLE 4.4d. Brahms, "Der Abend," Op. 64 no. 2, middleground voice-leading sketch showing repeated motion to an inner voice



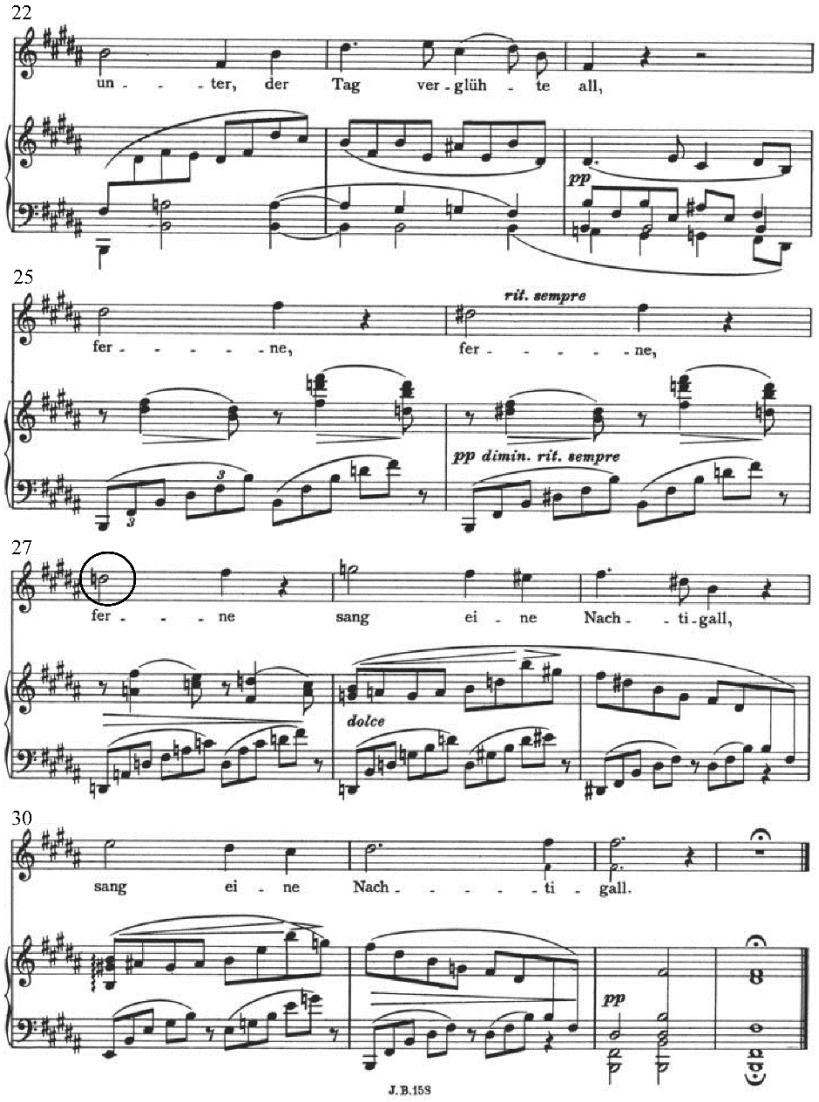
The sublimation of F♯ is even more striking given that the minor dominant is the last root position V chord heard in the song. Following the minor V chord, the piano rests undisturbed on a tonic pedal while the melody gradually descends from D5 down an octave to D4, each note yielding to the next until the music comes quietly to rest on tonic harmony in m. 107. By the end of the song, the *Kopfton* has sunk back down to its lower register, reversing the forceful octave ascent of the piano prelude. The piano postlude then continues this stepwise descent through C♮ to B. This descending third from D to B in the postlude not only stands in clear opposition to the upward melodic trajectory of the prelude and the interlude, it also effects a reversal of the forceful third-ascent from B♭ through C♯ to D heard in the opening. The deeper middle-ground sketch in Example 4.4d shows just how prevalent this motion into an inner voice from D to B is, especially at the end of each section. The effect, particularly in the postlude when the B is covered by the right hand, is one of drawing inward. With scale-degree ♯4 sublimated and the *Kopfton* sunken to a lower register, the weary can rest at the end of the song under the night sky.

These two analyses of "Abendlied" and "Der Abend" show how the sublimation of an upward tendency tone can serve as an important compositional premise. While these two works feature the first type of upward impulse discussed at the beginning of the chapter, Brahms's song "Im Waldeseinsamkeit" thematizes the second type of impulse. The score, a translation of the poem, and voice-leading sketch are reproduced in Example 4.5. In this work, it is a contra-structural melodic impulse primarily associated with the note D♮ that enacts the protagonist's struggle depicted in the poem. The sublimation of this impulse expresses in turn how this struggle is appeased as the day fades away.

EXAMPLE 4.5a. Brahms, "Im Waldeseinsamkeit," Op. 85 no. 6, annotated score



EXAMPLE 4.5a continued



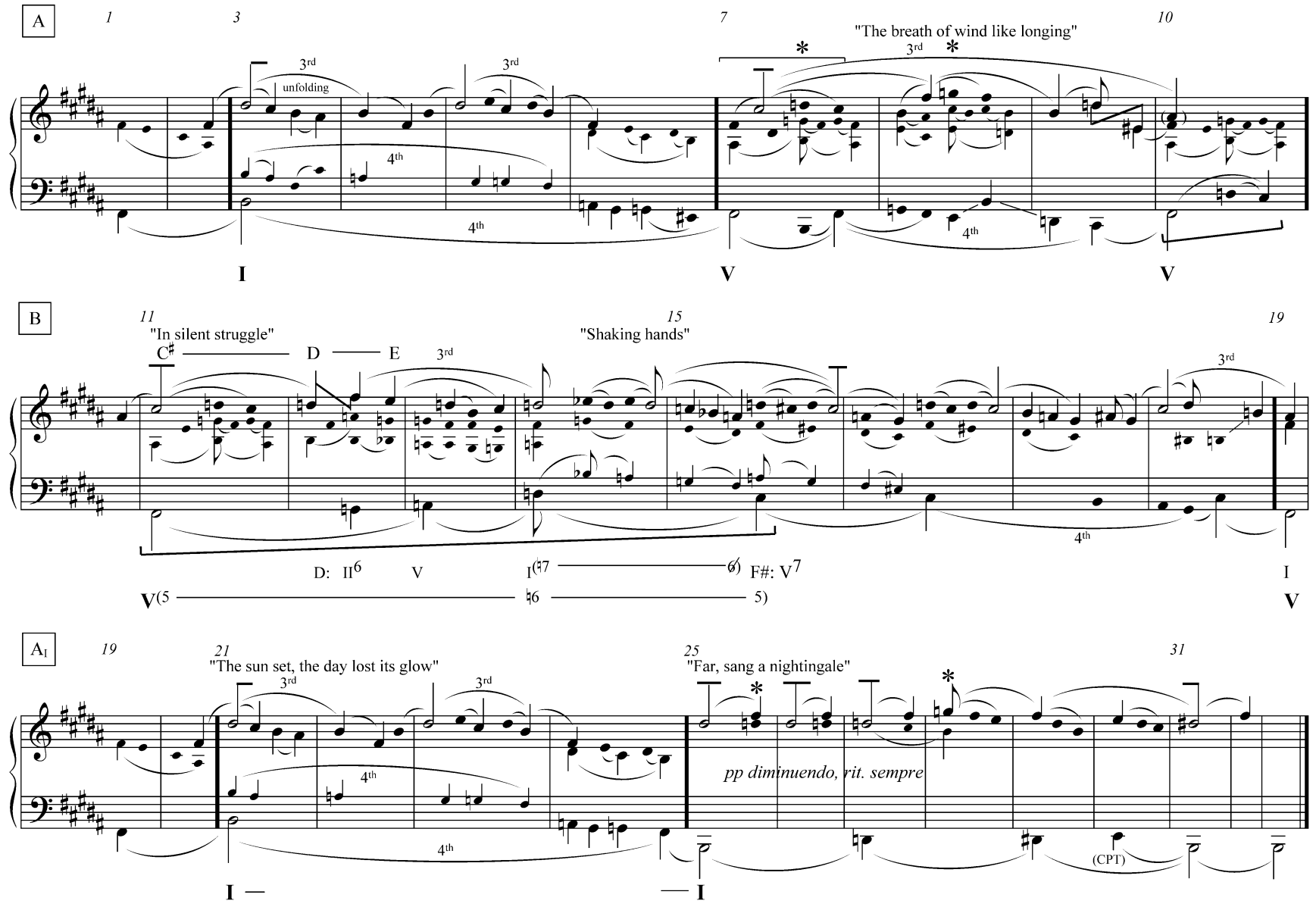
EXAMPLE 4.5b. Brahms, "Im Waldeseinsamkeit," Op. 85 no. 6, translation of Karl von Lemke's poem

I sat at your feet
In the loneliness of the forest;
The breath of the wind, like longing,
Went through the broad treetops.

In mute struggle I sank
my head into your lap,
And my shaking hands
I clasped about your knees.

The sun set,
The day lost its glow,
Far, far, far away
Sang a single nightingale.

EXAMPLE 4.5c. Brahms, “Im Waldeseinsamkeit,” Op. 85 no. 6, voice-leading sketch showing sublimation of upward impulse



The poem may not refer to the sunset until the last stanza, but a twilight tone lingers in the music from the very first phrase. There, above a dormant tonic bass, an inner voice falls in quiet surrender down the descending tetrachord from B to F♯. Meanwhile, as shown in the sketch, the melody moves effortlessly through two descending third progressions from D♯ to B, prolonging tonic and the *Kopfton* D♯.

Beginning in m. 7 with the unexpected shift to V and a sudden profusion of accented neighbor notes saturating the musical fabric, a growing sense of urgency disrupts the sweet slumber of the opening. The neighboring figure is heard at the very beginning of the phrase, when the melody prolongs scale-degree 2 through its upper neighbor. It is the neighboring D♮, however, that is metrically and textually stressed, as if it were attempting to overtake the structural C♯. The melody continues in m. 8 by transposing this four-note motive a fourth higher, while the bass line follows in imitation at the lower fifth—each accented neighbor pushing upward but being pulled back down. Meanwhile, in the eighth-note accompaniment the accented-neighbor figure takes on an agitato character, appearing in rhythmic diminution and in the form of an energetic reaching-over gesture, as shown in the voice-leading sketch. In m. 9, before the end of the phrase, the voice returns once again to that dissonant neighboring D♮ that seems to have started it all, now as part of a C♯ dominant ninth chord. The voice leaves the D♮ unresolved, nonetheless, leaping downward for a perfect authentic cadence in V.

The upward gestures resume with the short piano interlude in m. 10, the left hand reaching to the neighboring D♮, the right hand to the dissonant G♮. To the sound of the agitato neighboring figure in the piano, the voice begins the next phrase much like the previous one, with the neighboring C♯-D-C♯ motive set now to the word “struggle.” The dissonant D♮ returns once again at the beginning of the next bar. But this time, as if the neighboring motion was

unable to contain its force, the D♮ pushes upward leaping to F♯ before settling on to E. The ensuing contra-structural upward impulse from C♯ through D to E is shown with asterisks in the voice-leading sketch. The D is unfolded to F♯ nonetheless, which continues to E as part of a third-descent ending on D with a tonicization of III (functioning as VI with respect of F♯) in m. 14. Moving in parallel sixths with the agitato neighboring figures in the piano, the melodic descent in mm. 12–14 subtly enacts what the poem describes: the protagonist sinking in silent struggle.

With the protagonist trembling and unwilling to let go, the agitato neighboring figures continue shuddering in the accompaniment throughout the next phrase while the tonicized D in m. 14 moves back to scale-degree 2, composing-out at a deeper level the C♯-D-C♯ "struggle" motive heard elsewhere. The return to scale-degree 2 comes about from the D turning into a dominant seventh chord in m. 14 and becoming reinterpreted as an augmented-sixth chord that resolves to a C♯ dominant seventh chord. After returning to scale-degree 2, the melody descends through a third progression down to A♯, arriving back on the F♯ *Stufe* in. 19 for the end of the section. By this moment, the agitato accompaniment has dwindled, and we hear the B♯ (locally a leading-tone) sublimated to B♮ in an inner voice, much the same way in which the leading-tone is sublimated in an inner voice during the opening phrase. No longer a trace of any struggle, all is left is a sense of passive acceptance.

In summary, D♮ is a strongly emphasized dissonance within a long dominant prolongation spanning mm. 7–20. Always receiving metric and textual emphasis, the D♮ constantly pushes the structural C♯ upward, nearly subordinating it harmonically, but eventually collapsing back to it. The voice-leading sketch shows the ensuing C♯-D-C♯ neighbor motive heard throughout these measures. The accented neighboring motion from C♯-D-C♯, together with the accented

neighboring figure in the agitato accompaniment, enacts the protagonist's constant but futile struggle to hold on to this world.

As the poem turns to the image of the sunset for the beginning of the third stanza, the music returns to the twilight sounds of the opening phrase, with its yielding chromatic descent in the inner voice. In the opening, the unexpected shift to V at the end of the descending tetrachord in mm. 6–7 had interrupted the sweet slumber of the opening. When this chromatic descent returns in mm. 24–25, however, it ends plagally back on tonic and paves the way to one of the most remarkable passages in the song. In m. 25 and then, even quieter, in m. 26, the B major tonic deflates to minor as the D♯ sinks to D♮. Given the return of the opening section in m. 21, a clear parallelism may be heard between the D♮ in m. 6 and that in m. 25. But while the former is dissonant, active, and pushes the structural tone upwards; the latter is consonant, passive, and appears as a deflation of the structural D♯. In short, the strong upward impulse associated with the tone D♮ has vanished much like the protagonist's yearning for life has faded away with the end of the day.

The parallelism between the end of the song and the middle section continues with the shift in m. 27 to a D dominant chord for the third utterance of the word "far." This D dominant chord recalls that in m. 14; but instead of being reinterpreted as augmented sixth-chord, it now resolves to a G major sonority, as expected. The G major chord in m. 28 returns to tonic via a common-tone diminished seventh chord that supports a neighboring motion from G to F♯ in the melody. The voice then repeats this same descending gesture a third lower, now over a plagal motion ending on tonic.

Thus, from the return of the opening in m. 21 to the end of the song there is never a motion to V, only a long, uninterrupted tonic prolongation that supports scale-degree 3 (D♯/D) in

the melody. This lack of dominant is reminiscent of the ending of "Der Abend," with its missing structural dominant and prolonged *Kopfton*. The endings also share a similar imagery, namely that of the light of the day fading with the night. Whereas Heather Platt has argued that the missing dominant in "Im Waldeseinsamkeit" reveals that the "protagonist's deepest longing remain unfulfilled," I would argue that the missing dominant in this song, like that in "Der Abend," conveys instead a lack of longing and striving—a positive state of complete idleness and equanimity.[6] As with the concept of sublimation and resignation, the absence of a dominant at the end of this song is not a matter of having an unmet need, but of giving up wanting and needing altogether. After all, the dominant *Stufe* in "Im Waldeseinsamkeit," prolonged across mm. 6–20 and conspicuously absent from the ending, is clearly associated with the struggle of the protagonist. The turning away from V to remain on I after m. 24 is precisely what leads to the re-contextualization of D♮ at the end of the song, from a strongly accented, active dissonance that pushes scale-degree 2 constantly upward, to a passive consonance that stands for a deflated version of scale-degree 3. With the forward drive of V now absent and the upward impulses of D♮ muted, the music begins slowing down until it dwindles away like twilight.

These three songs together demonstrate a close connection between the process of sublimation and that of dissolution as manifested in the poetry through the image of the sunset. This melodic process unfolds differently from one song to another, the first being the most straightforward, this last the subtlest. In each case, nonetheless, upward impulses simply seem to fade away with the light of day, leaving behind only the sweet repose of night. The claim, however, is not that the sublimation depicts specifically a sunset, but rather than the reversal of upward impulses in the music enacts a process of decay which is central to the Romantic aesthetic and is made manifest through several tropes, including that of the sunset. In short,

[6] Heather Platt, "Unrequited Love and Unrealized Dominants," *Integral* 7 (1993): 135.

sublimation and the sunset both embody a process of de-intensification that brings about a state of blissful repose. Even in the absence of a text, it is in this in richer sense that one may describe sublimation as the sound of twilight.

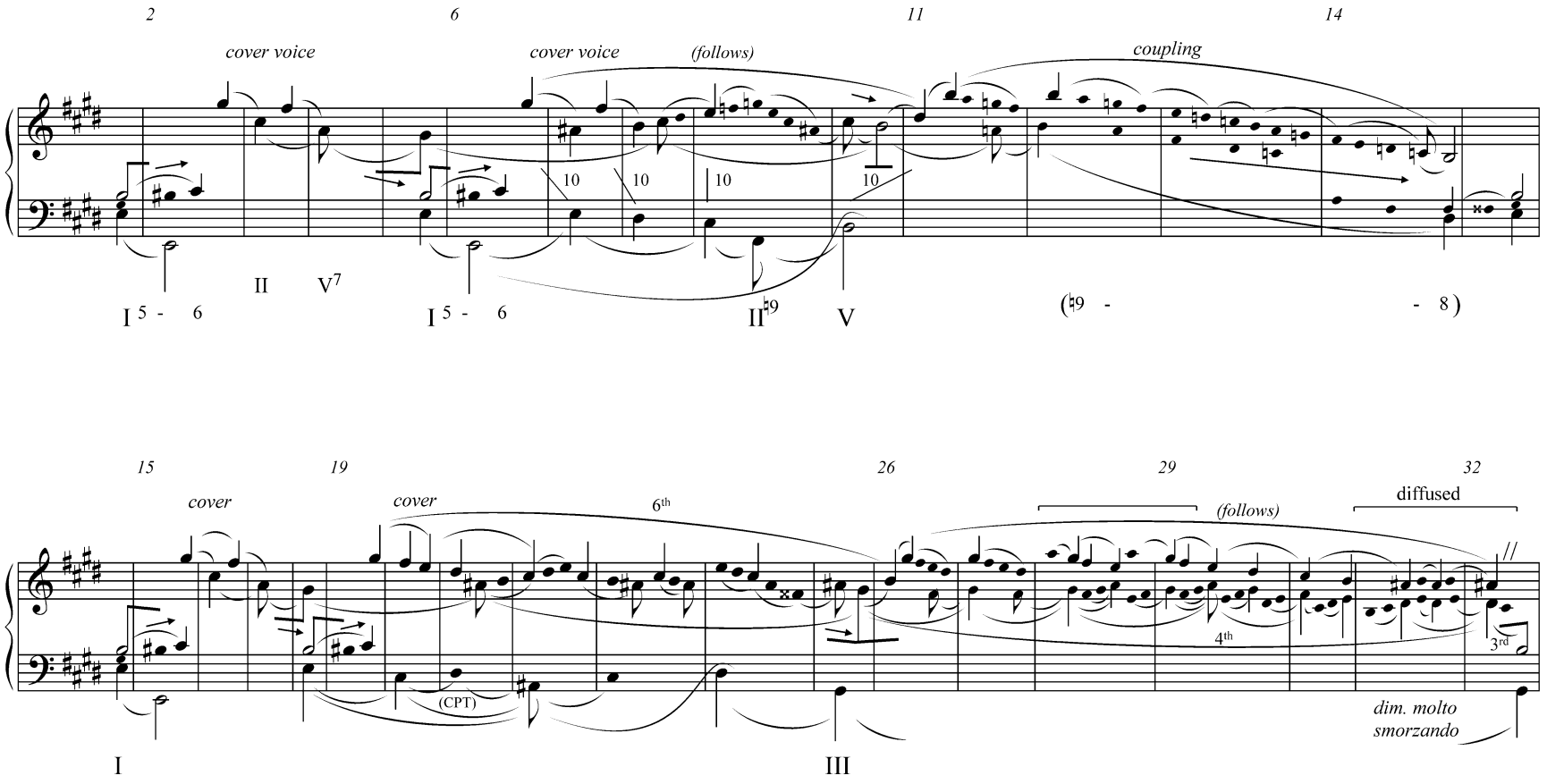
4.4. Sublimation in Two Instrumental Works

The twilight sound of sublimation characterizing these three songs is also found in many of Brahms's instrumental works, giving them that autumnal quality that so many authors have regarded as quintessential to his style. In few pieces does sublimation play a more prominent role than in his E major Intermezzo, Op. 116 no. 4. Central to the intermezzo is a tension between two opposing melodic trajectories, where a contra-structural upward impulse from B to C♯ continues to assert itself over the languishing downward gestures. At the end, however, this upward impulse is reversed and sublimated.

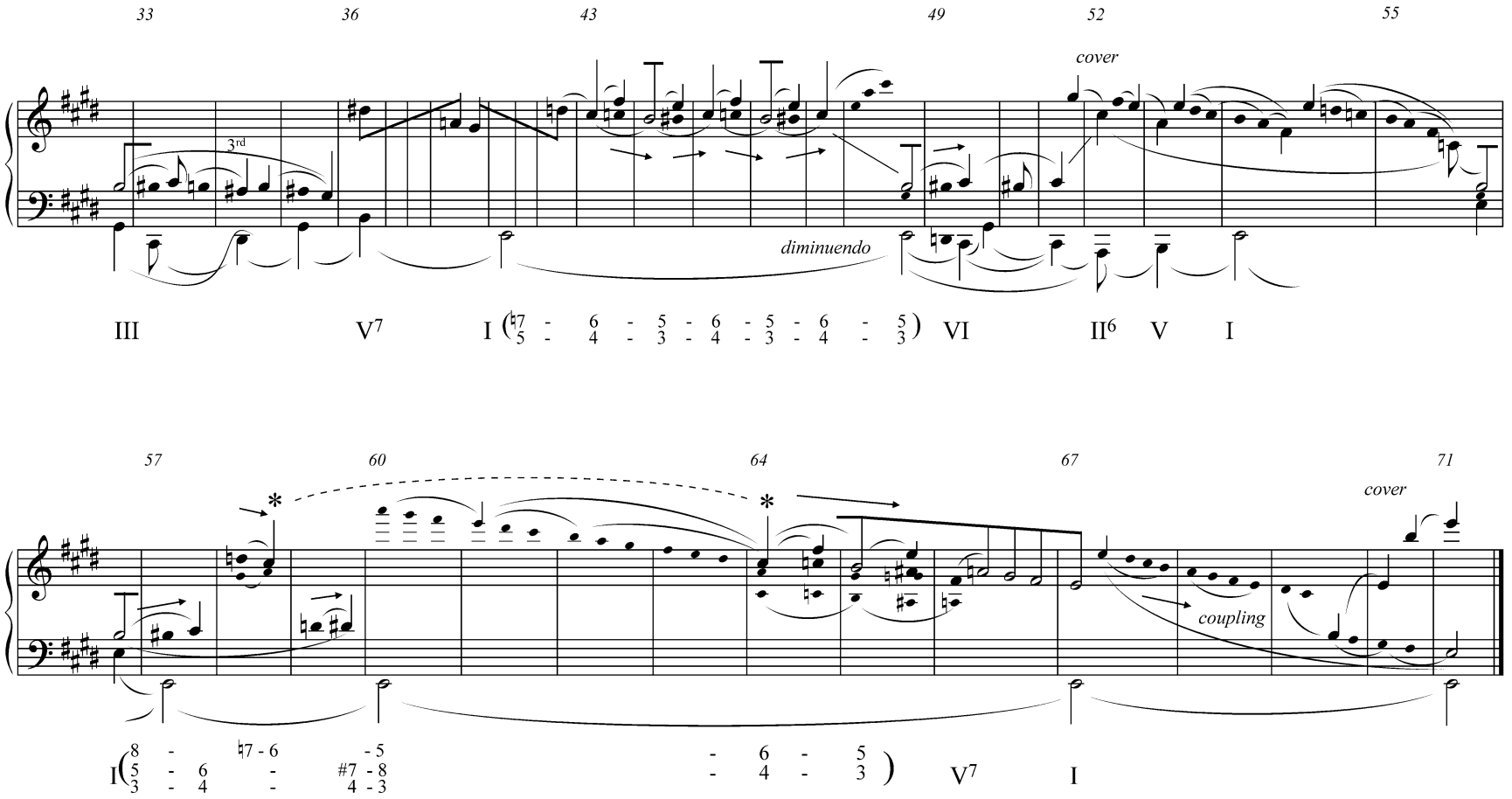
The tension between opposing melodic trajectories is apparent from the very beginning. As shown in Example 4.6, the first phrase begins with an energetic chromatic ascent from the *Kopfton* to a metrically accented B♯. The B♯ could have resolved back down, functioning as a neighbor tone (as C♮), but instead it pushes upward to C♯. The result is a contra-structural ascent from scale-degree 5 to 6 that forcefully cuts across the barline. To this upward impulse, the right hand replies with what Antony Hopkins characterizes "as sighs of contentment," which give "the impression of a reluctance to move, a delicious idleness."[7]

[7] Antony Hopkins, "Brahms: Where Less is More," in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essays in Performance and Analysis*, ed. David Witten (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 253.

EXAMPLE 4.6. Brahms, Intermezzo in E major, Op. 116 no. 4, voice-leading sketch showing sublimation of scale-degree ♯5



EXAMPLE 4.6 continued



In terms of voice-leading, the right-hand melody answers the chromatic ascent to C♯ with a descent from A to G♯, as the sketch illustrates. Concealed by the sighs, the descent takes place in an inner voice, as if sensed from within. Just when the A yields to G♯ for the end of the phrase in m. 5, however, the contra-structural impulse reasserts itself for the beginning of the consequent phrase, thwarting any sense of arrival.

Accordingly, the opening phrase may prolong tonic harmony, but there is no harmonic repose, for we hear the tonic being compressed in the foreground to a quarter-note pickup that forcefully pushes to VI through a contra-structural impulse. (One is reminded here of other works where the initiating tonic is confined to a short anacrusis with a similar expressive effect, such as the Intermezzi Op. 116 no. 6, and Op. 118 no. 2.) From here on, at every point when the harmony is about to settle on tonic, the upward impulse from B to C♯ pushes the music forward with a renewed sense of striving.

Much as in the first phrase, the upward impulse from B to C♯ in mm. 4–5 gives way to a set of languishing downward gestures. Concealed beneath the sighs, the structural inner voice ascends through a fourth progression from G♯ to C♯, as shown in the sketch. The C♯ then resolves as an upper neighbor back to B for the cadence in m. 9, delicately reversing the energetic ascent from B to C♯ heard at the beginning of the phrase. As the right hand slowly arpeggiates through the V chord after the cadence, however, the structural B slowly disappears within the texture, first beneath the cover-voice D♯ (which completes a stepwise descent from G♯) and then under the cascading melody beginning on the high B.

After a two-octave descent from B to B in mm. 9–14, the contra-structural impulse presses forward once again for the beginning of the next period. The antecedent unfolds much the same way as before, except that now the energetic descending motive from the previous

piece returns quietly and diffused with each sigh.[8] The sighs in turn are drawn out, concealing ever more the inner structural voice until totally covering it in mm. 20–21 for the beginning the consequent phrase. The structural inner voice becomes audible once again with the A♯ at the end of m. 20, which resolves back to G♯ with the cadence in III m. 25. But, as in the end of the first period, it is not long before the structural voice begins to fade within the texture underneath a superimposed descending melody that begins now on a high G♯.

Following the pair of neighboring chords prolonging the local tonic (G♯), the music moves to an A major chord to begin a sequential stepwise descent to the local V in m. 31. The energetic sequence becomes diffused midway through, nonetheless, and the passage starts quietly dissolving with the gentle rocking of the D♯ dominant harmony. Just when this V chord seems to be coming quietly to a rest on the G♯ tonic in m. 32, the chromatic upward impulse from B to C♯ surges once again, propelling the music forward. This time, however, the fragment becomes a four-bar phrase, where the melody quietly descends through a third progression to end on a perfect authentic cadence.

After the cadence the music continues getting softer as the melody sinks slowly first over a V^7 chord and then over a I^7 chord, with scale-degree 7 becoming sublimated and resolving to C♯ in m. 44. To the sound of a sigh, the C♯ yields downward through C♮ to B, reversing the upward impulse heard elsewhere before. The melody, however, climbs right back to C♯, albeit with less intensity than before, for now the passing B♯ is metrically and dynamically unstressed. Torn between two directions, the melody keeps moving back and forth between B and C♯, until

[8] Antony Hopkins (1997) argues that the energetic motive from the previous piece sounds now "so lazy that it might even be taken for a yawn." For a more detailed discussion of the connections between this Intermezzo and the pieces from the Op. 116 set, see Jonathan Dunsby, "The multi-piece in Brahms: *Fantasien* Op. 116," in *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary, Analytical* Studies, ed. Robert Pascall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 167–191.

the passage begins to fade away as the sixteenth-note accompaniment becomes diffused across mm. 48–49 with the slow arpeggiation of the neighboring A major chord.

Just when the neighboring A major chord seems about to settle quietly back to tonic, the energetic upward impulse reasserts itself, impelling the music to a cadence in VI. Languishing descending gestures once again answer the chromatic ascent to C♯, except that now the melody starts gathering momentum after the bass tonic arrival, leading in m. 56 to the first forte statement of the energetic B-B♯-C♯ motive. The ascent is answered with a descent from D to C♯. But, as if buoyed from the added momentum, the melody keeps ascending chromatically past C♯ to D and D♯, yearning to complete the ascending fourth progression.

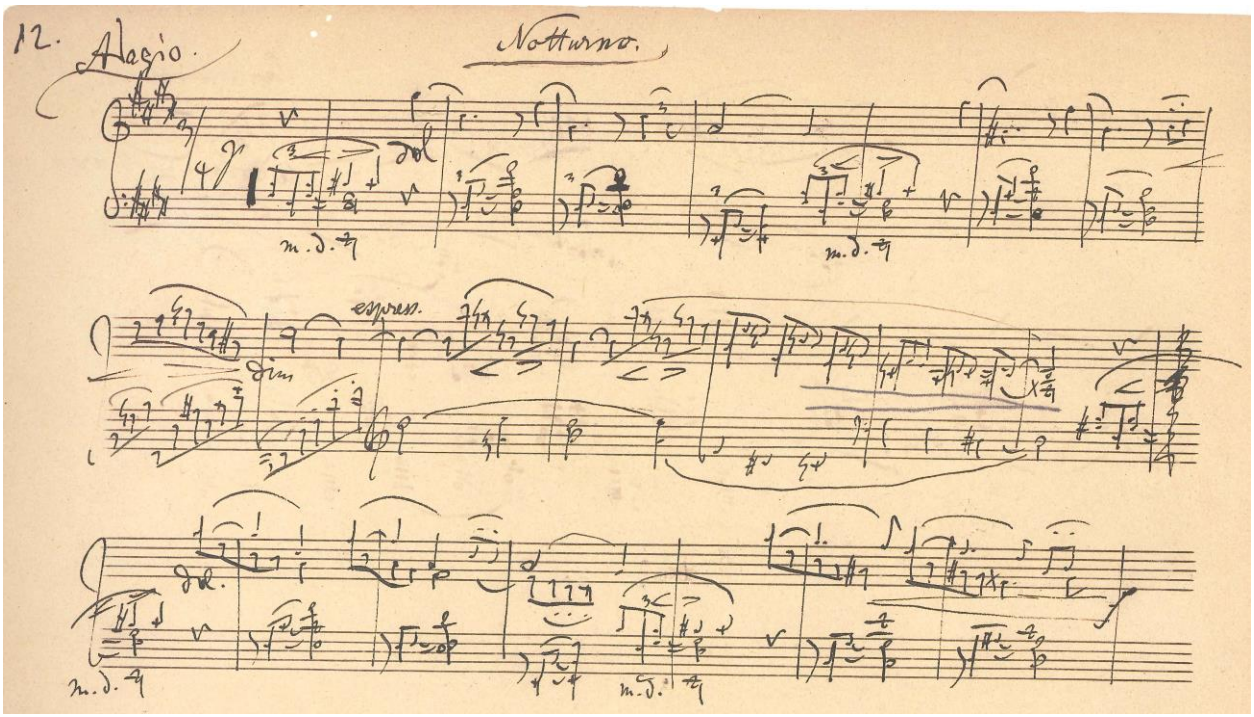
It seems, however, that there is no will left, and the right hand begins instead a stepwise descent back towards a C♯ in m. 64. As shown in the sketch, when the music sinks to this C♯, it sounds as if we were recouping the C♯ heard back in m. 58—the right hand voicing is even the same. In a final reversal of the upward impulse, the C♯ now continues sinking chromatically through C♮ to B, much like before. But while in mm. 44–48 the melody climbed right back to C♯, this time the contra-structural impulse is muted and the B continues moving downward, sublimating the A♯ (which functions locally as a leading-tone) and completing a fifth-descent with the cadence in m. 67. In place of a strong harmonic motion from scale-degree 5 to 1, however, the bass remains static on the tonic pedal through the cadence, creating a remarkable sense of idleness. The contra-structural impulse muted, the music is finally able to come to a rest on tonic.

In the short codetta that follows, the bass remains idle on scale-degree 1 while the melody descends from the high E down two octaves, slowing down in the last two measures and fading into an inner voice beneath two 5-1 leaps in the right hand. No traces of the upward impulse or of

any chromaticism for that matter, the melody fades within the final tonic chord as the Intermezzo as a whole quietly dissolves.

The similarities between this ending and that of the song "Der Abend" discussed above are striking. After the sublimation of upward impulses, both works end with a long stepwise descent that sinks into an inner voice while the bass remains idle on a tonic pedal that carries even through the final cadence. As we may recall, in "Der Abend" these features help convey in the imagery of a world finally at rest under the night that is depicted in the poem. This imagery seems equally fitting for the intermezzo. As the manuscript reproduced in Figure 4.1 illustrates, Brahms, in fact, initially entitled this work a "Notturno," suggesting the night as a guiding poetic image for the work as a whole.

FIGURE 4.1. Brahms. Intermezzo in E major, Op. 116 no. 4, facsimile of the autograph. Copyright G. Henle Verlag; reproduced with permission.



Despite their individual subtleties, the four works analyzed up to this point follow the same overall expressive trajectory: an upward impulse asserts itself towards the beginning and is sublimated towards the end. The last piece we shall discuss charts a different path. The first movement of Brahms's Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77 starts by sublimating the leading-tone C♯, but the end of the development seems unable to embrace this sublimation, forcefully pushing the C♮ back to C♯. It is only in the coda that the music finally embraces the lowered seventh scale-degree. The following analysis fleshes out this outline and shows the process of sublimation working in tandem with those processes of thematic dissolution outlined in the previous chapter.

The leading-tone is sublimated to C♮ as early as m. 9 when the V chord unfolds into a ♭VII chord for the beginning of the dolce theme, labeled P2 in the voice-leading sketch in Example 4.7a. Functioning locally as a IV chord in G major, the C major chord in m. 9 descends to a first inversion G major triad and continues downward, completing a third progression with the cadence in m. 17, as shown in the sketch. After a powerful crescendo, the opening theme returns in m. 27 and moves energetically to another half cadence. With a sudden decay in dynamics, however, the V chord turns minor in m. 42, the C♯ yielding to C♮ for a second time.

The sublimation of C♯ to C♮ in m. 42 colors the second theme (S1) from its beginning. When C♮ returns later on in mm. 53–56, the theme starts dissolving, never to reach a cadence.[9] The dissolution of S1 begins midway through the ascending sequence that starts in m. 49 and prolongs II. While the upper woodwinds and the violins sequence up the main thematic idea of this section, first over E minor and then over F♯ minor, the lower strings unfold each of these chords, moving chromatically upward from G to B, as shown in the sketch. But the upward

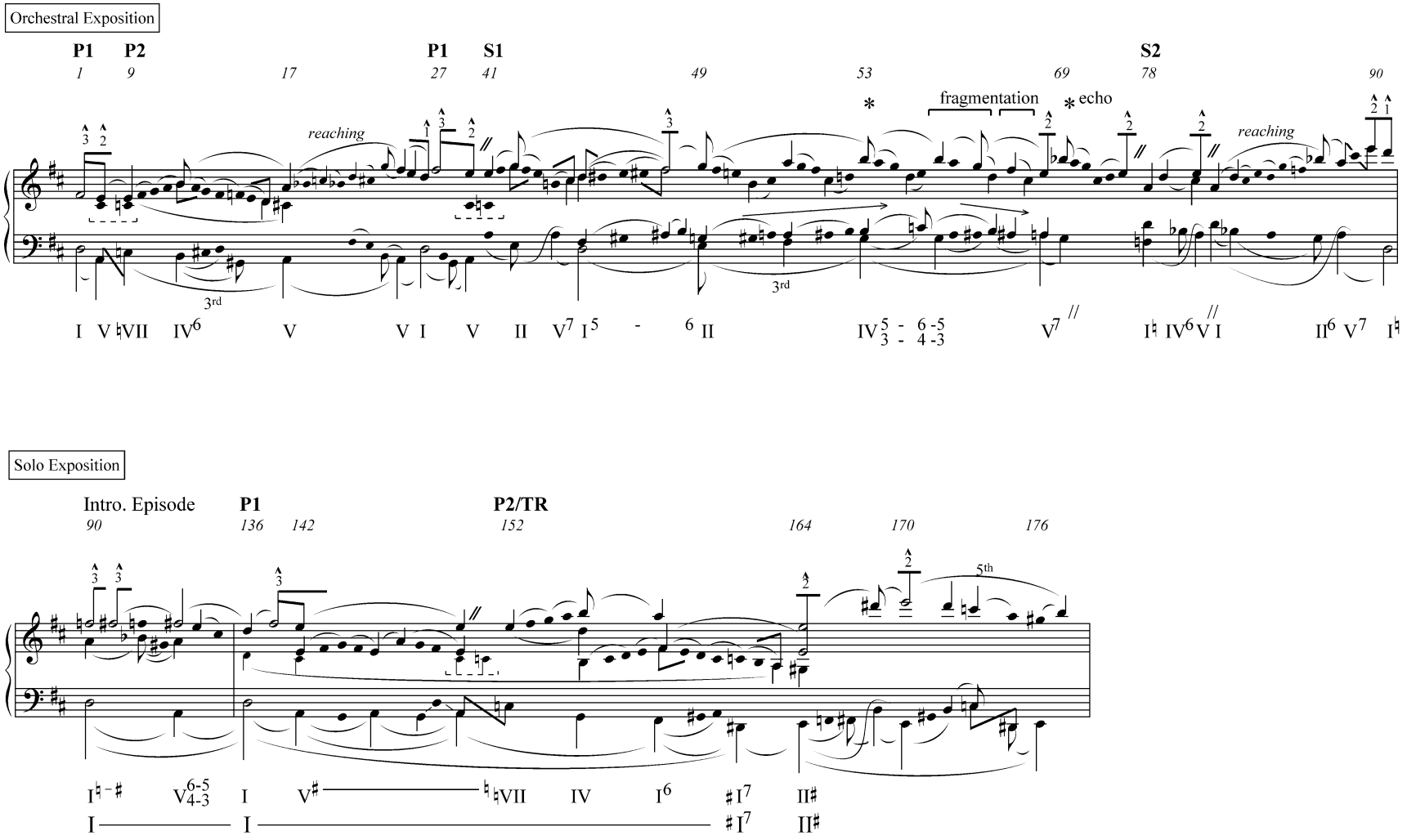
[9] The dissolution of the secondary theme in the Violin Concerto is thus comparable to the dissolution of the secondary theme in the first movements of Brahms's Piano Trio in C major, Op. 87 and Double Concerto, Op. 102 discussed in the previous chapter.

impulse suddenly disappears with the quiet arrival of G major in m. 53. Instead of continuing upward to the next chord of the sequence—a C♯ diminished triad—the G major chord moves to and from a neighboring C major chord. These C major triads, much like that in m. 9, are locally heard as IV in G major. As the music gently rocks between G and C major, the theme fades away in the upper woodwinds over a held D while quietly continuing to sound in the violins like a distant echo.

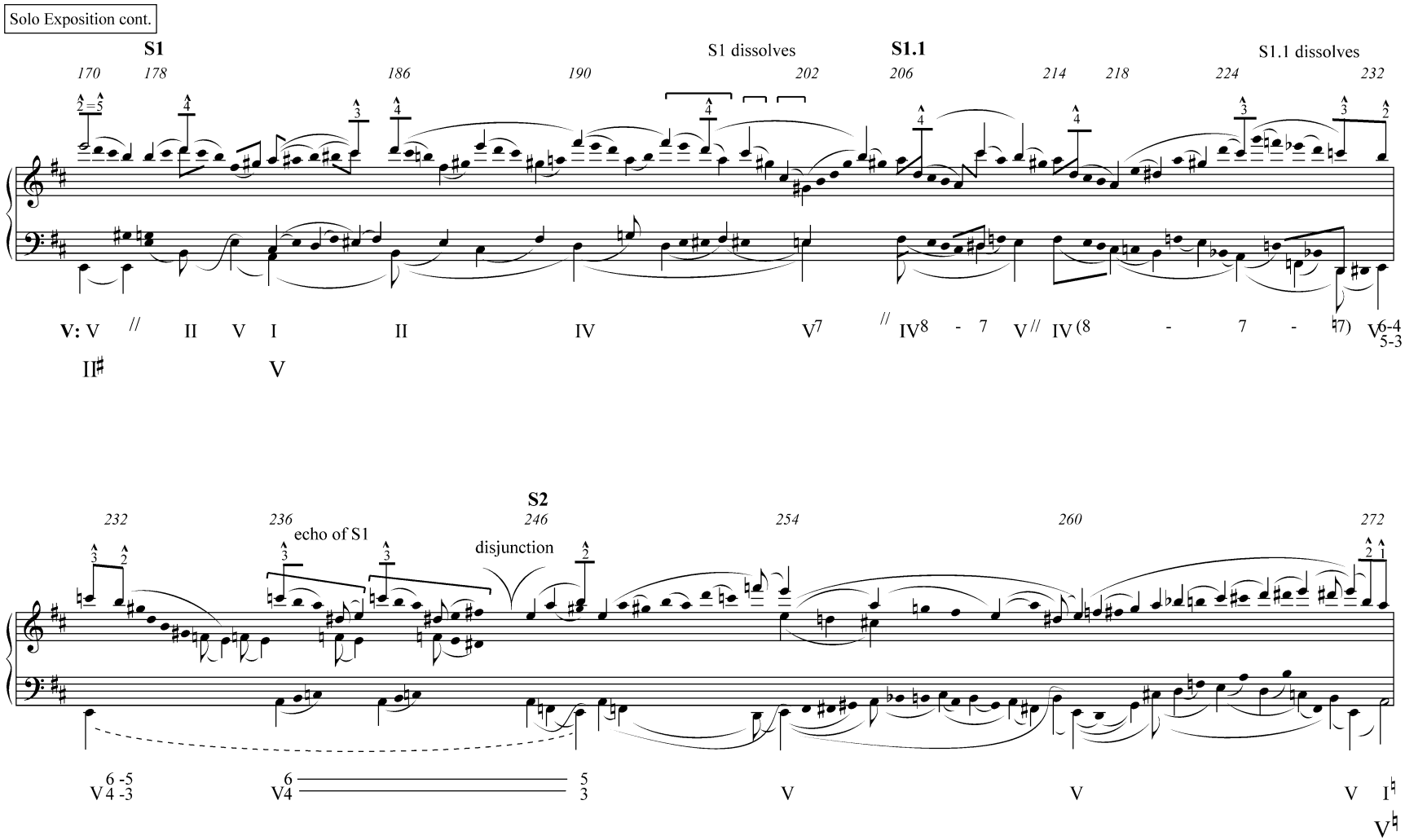
Within the wider context of the passage, the neighboring C♮s in mm. 53–57 curb the energetic chromatic ascent in the bass and bring about its reversal, as shown with the arrows in the voice-leading sketch. The reversal comes as the bass yields quietly back down from B through A♯ to A in mm. 57–64. Above the yielding bass, the theme becomes fragmented and diffused, dissolving with the dominant arrival in m. 64. Finally, as the bass sinks past the dominant to a G in m. 69, the passage heard in mm. 53–57 returns, as if a distant memory, over a static vii^{o4}_3 chord. As before, the theme is rhythmically evened out, except that now it is fragmented into different instruments. After a few bars, however, all that is left of these fragments is an indistinctive voice-exchange repeating ever more softly until finally dissolving by m. 77.

In short, this section loses impetus with the appearance of C major triad in m. 54 until it slowly fades away in m. 77 like evening twilight. It is only with the beginning of a new theme (S2) in m. 78, that the music gathers momentum again, pushing forward with its dotted rhythms and reaching-over gestures towards a powerful cadence in m. 90 that brings the orchestral exposition to a close.

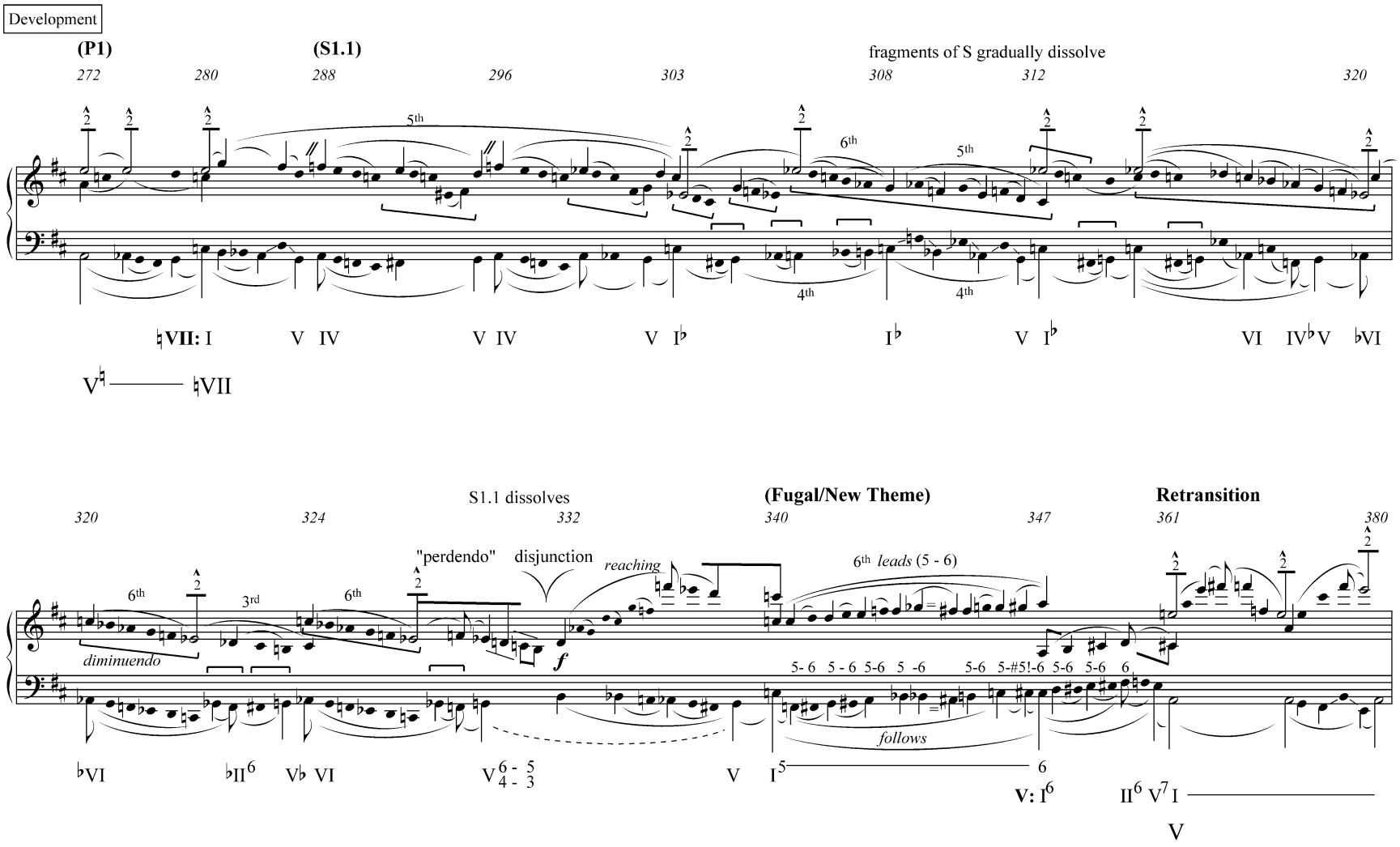
EXAMPLE 4.7a. Brahms, Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77, I, foreground voice-leading sketch



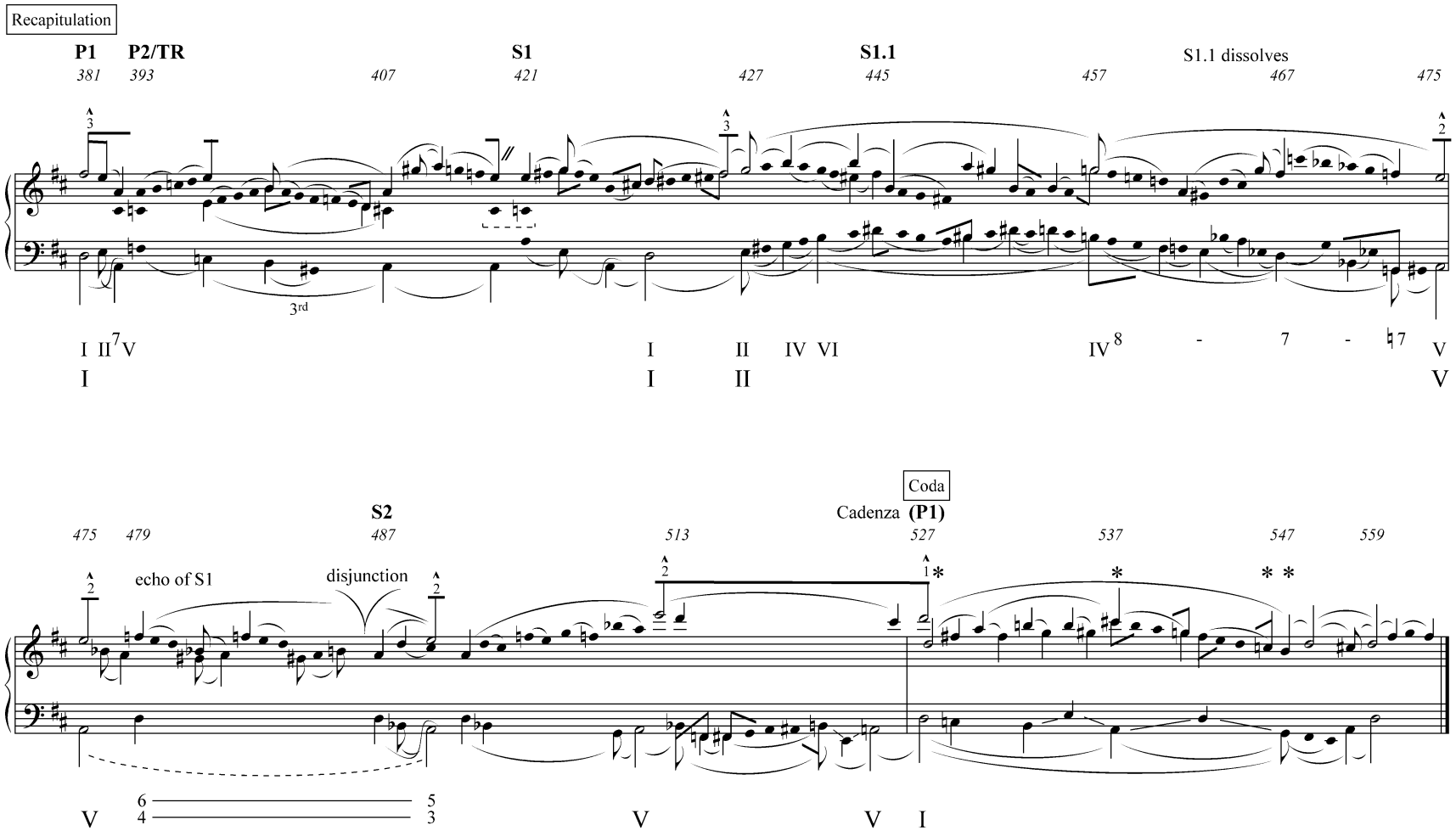
EXAMPLE 4.7a continued



EXAMPLE 4.7a continued



EXAMPLE 4.7a continued



After a long introductory episode that combines motives from P1 and S2, the solo exposition begins quietly in m. 130. As one would expect, the leading-tone is again sublimated to C♮ during the opening theme; only this time the V chord is prolonged for several measures and deflates to minor before unfolding into a ♭VII chord in m. 151, as shown in the sketch. This motion from A major through A minor to C major will become structurally important later on, starting with the modulation to A major for the second theme. For now, the unfolded V chord moves downward completing a chromaticized tonic arpeggiation that brings us in m. 164 to a half cadence in A major. Following a long dominant prolongation, this E major quietly yields to E minor for the beginning of the second theme.

The second theme unfolds much the same as before, slowly fading away when the bass descends chromatically to V in m. 202. From this dominant stems a new lyrical theme. The theme begins in m. 206 on a IV^6 chord, the inner-voice melody moving in parallel sixths with the bass before returning to V for the end of the first phrase. When the second phrase begins just like the first, it seems as if it might function as a consequent, ending eight bars later with an authentic cadence. As the music drops to the parallel minor, however, the theme starts to dissolve. The turn from A major to A minor begins in m. 216 when the C♯ in the bass deflates to C♮ and continues moving chromatically down to A in m. 224. By this moment the theme vanishes into an indistinctive eighth-note stream, quietly descending in parallel thirds by step while the bass sequences down to a D in m. 228, unfolding now a minor IV chord. All forward impulse gone, the passage comes to rest over a minor cadential 6/4 that languidly resolves to V two bars later. Finally, while the neighboring figure from F to E continues repeating in the violin after m. 234, what was left of S1 returns over an A minor chord. There is no sense of tonic arrival, nonetheless. Like an afterglow, the A minor is only an apparent tonic that functions as a

cadential 6/4 and echoes the one heard just a few measures back, as shown in the sketch. What contributes to this hearing are the chromatic neighboring figures in the violin, which prolong the E much as the previous dominant was by the D♯ in the bass and the F♮ in the melody. Unlike the previous 6/4 chord, however, this one quietly fades away without resolving. As Niemann remarks, the music quietly seems to "lose itself in rapt, twilight dreams."[10] This rapture begins just at the moment when A major deflates to its parallel minor, composing-out at a deeper level the sublimation of C♯ to C♮ that characterizes the opening theme and the beginning of the second.

The resolution of the fading 6/4 comes only with the beginning of the next theme. After moving more decidedly to V in m. 254, the music prolongs dominant through an energetic chromatic ascent, first in the bass and then from E to E in the melody. The music finally reaches a powerful authentic cadence in A minor in m. 272, which completes a fifth-descent in the melody and brings the exposition to an end. This fifth-descent is freely interrupted in several occasions; the most marked being those in mm. 232 and 245, when the second theme fades away.

While the sublimation from C♯ to C♮ colors much the exposition, it is in the development that the flattened leading-tone comes to the fore. The development prolongs a C♮ triad from mm. 280–340. Just as in the primary theme, the C triad unfolds an A dominant chord through its flatted third, composing-out the sublimation of the leading-tone (C♯) from the beginning of the second theme through much of the development, as shown in the sketch. This motion from V through minor V to ♭VII harkens back to the beginning of the soloist exposition, mm. 149–151.

Within this long prolongation of C♮ in the development, the second theme begins to dissolve much as it did in the exposition. The second theme enters poco forte in m. 288, locally prolonging IV and moving to V. When this passage repeats eight bars later, it gradually decays to

[10] Niemann, *Brahms*, 320.

a *pp* as it deflates to C minor for the cadence in m. 304. What remains after this is only that rhythmically evened-out version of the theme fragmented into a descending-third and a neighbor figure that was heard at the end of S1 in the exposition (mm. 236–245). Now, however, even these last traces of the theme disappear, as shown with brackets in the voice-leading sketch (see m. 304ff). Beginning in m. 304, the descending-third fragments sound distinctly in the solo violin while the cellos follow with the neighboring gesture ascending chromatically from G to C. By the end of the phrase, the descending-thirds yield to a stepwise descent, and the cellos moves sequentially back down to G before cadencing in C minor in m. 312. The next phrase unfolds in a similar manner. With the deceptive progression in m. 320, however, the descending-third motive vanishes into an indistinct sixth-descent that locally prolongs ♭VI. The cellos follow still with the distinctive quarter-half neighboring figure, this time from G♭ to F and then from F♯ to G. But when this passage repeats four bars later, the downward neighboring motion from G♭ to F becomes diffused across two measures, and the G sounds pianississimo without its lower neighbor. The two thematic fragments gone, the local V chord vanishes like twilight. Far from being a point of cadential arrival, the V chord sounds instead as part of a motion towards tonic that simply fades away. In his arrangement of the concerto for piano and violin, Brahms in fact marks this V chord perdendo. The second theme once again loses itself midway through, deferring the cadential arrival to a new section.[11]

This new section begins energetically in m. 332 and reaches a strong authentic cadence in C minor in m. 340. The music then keeps growing in intensity as it moves upwards through an ascending 5-6 sequence; that sequence ends by forcing the C♮ in the bass up to a C♯ in m. 345–46

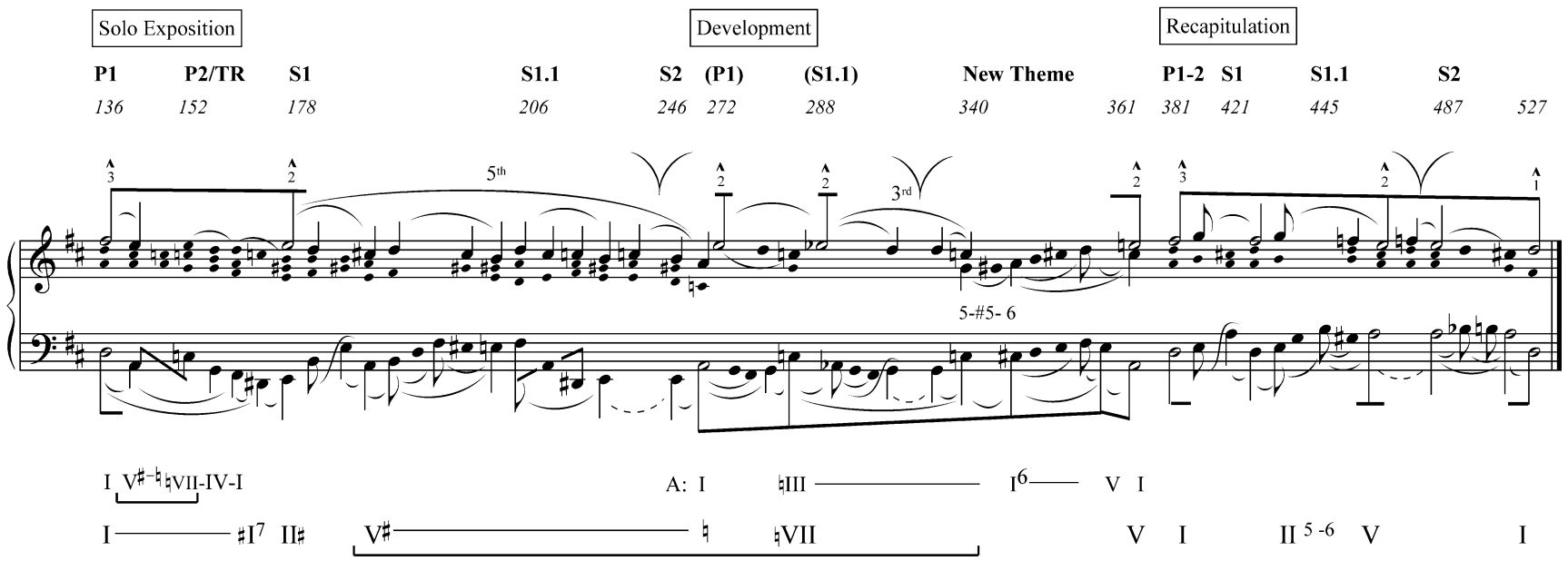
[11] The dissolution of the second theme midway through development (before reaching the expected cadence in C major) is comparable to the way in which the primary theme fades away in mid development in the first movement of the Brahms's Clarinet Trio, Op. 114, discussed above. In both cases, the theme dissolves before the music can reach the expected cadence. See Figure 3.1c.

and bringing back the A dominant chord, as shown in the sketch. Up to this point the lowered C♮ had always continued downward to B as one would expect, but the development seems unwilling to embrace the sublimation of the leading-tone. The issue is not the return of C♯—the diatonic seventh scale-degree is by itself unmarked and bound to reappear. It is rather the pushing of C♮ directly to C♯, resisting its tendency to resolve down to B. This upward push negates the sublimation of the leading-tone that was composed-out from the exposition through most of the development, as shown in the deeper-middleground sketch in Example 4.7b.

After overturning the C♮ in m. 347, the development continues ascending through a 5-6 sequence until reaching a perfect authentic cadence in V. The root-position dominant is then prolonged for the rest of the development leading to a powerful return of tonic for the beginning of the recapitulation. The development thus unfolds the dominant triad, first through its lowered third, C♮, then through C♯ and finally to E before returning back to A. The C♮ seems to languish in comparison, taking most of the time span of the development and the dominant arpeggiation.

The recapitulation unfolds much the same as the exposition, so only a couple of details warrant commentary. The first is that C♮ is itself now tonicized just as the primary theme suddenly begins to lose its momentum in m. 393. The second is the temporary motion towards the key of F♯ major with the lyric section of the second theme, before returning to the tonic minor as the second theme slowly fades. From there on the music continues just as in the exposition. But at the last moment a deceptive motion thwarts the cadence at the end of recapitulation, pushing the tonic arrival until after the cadenza.

EXAMPLE 4.7b. Brahms, Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77, I, deeper middleground sketch



The cadenza begins powerfully, but by the moment tonic arrives in m. 527 the music has lost its impetus and the primary theme is now heard *pp* for the beginning of the coda. As the sketch illustrates, the coda finally embraces the sublimation of the leading-tone, letting C♮ descend to B rather than pushing it back to C♯. C♮ appears first in the bass in m. 533 as part of a stepwise descent, while the soloist ascends by step from A through B to C♯ for the arrival on V in m. 539. Instead of resolving up to D with the return to tonic, however, the melody sinks slowly by step, descending finally through C♮ to B in m. 547 for the arrival of IV. At a deeper level, the soloist thus moves chromatically over a prolonged tonic from D through C♯ and C♮ before descending to B. As the melody descends from C♯ through C♮ to B, the pace of the music slows down. To the sound of horn calls, the coda leisurely expands the subdominant through a 5-6 motion, before gathering energy for the final cadence in m. 559. With no more traces of C♯ or C♮, the movement ends by prolonging tonic through a neighboring 6/4 motion.

The concerto thus charts a different path than the previous works discussed in this chapter. Whereas in those pieces an upward impulse asserts itself towards the beginning and is sublimated towards the end, the sublimation of the leading-tone characterizes the concerto from the very beginning through most of the development, and it is only later on that the C♯ forcefully asserts itself. The powerful lurching of C♮ to C♯ in the development ends up adding more expressive weight to the sublimation of the leading-tone earlier in the work and later in the coda. While the pushing of C♮ to C♯ may be invigorating, even heroic, the sublimation of C♯ to C♮, works in tandem with those processes of thematic dissolution described above to produce that sweet sound of decay, resignation, and self-loss that is characteristically Brahmsian.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has expanded on Samarotto's concept of sublimation to include other kinds of upward impulses while further refining its meaning to reflect the ideals of German Romanticism. In Brahms's music, sublimation unfolds as part of a gradual decay in other parameters, enacting a process of Romantic dissolution and giving his works a particular quality that may appropriately described as the sound of twilight. Several of the examples also illustrate that the moment of sublimation often coincides with a turning inward of the melody towards an inner voice. Examining Brahms's use of inner voices to embody a sense of fading within is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Fading Within: Structural Inner Voices in the Piano Works

5.1. Introduction

In Brahms's piano works, inner voices occasionally function as the structural melody. For a genre and style in which the melody typically appears in the upper voice, its concealment in an inner part is both structurally and expressively marked. If, as Frederic Rzewski[1] has argued, the partly hidden quality of the inner voices in Romantic music may be heard as adding a dimension of depth, the structural melody in the works I will consider is buried deep within, imbuing the music with that inward, Romantic quality long associated with Brahms's style.[2]

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Romantics conceived of inwardness as a fading within that mirrors the process of dissolution objectified in ruins, sunsets, and the like. The former is the subjective counterpart to the latter. Novalis, like many Romantics, for instance, made the vanishing day into a place for experiencing the infinite within, while Schopenhauer claimed that those who have completely faded from themselves see only fleeting phenomena that gradually vanish away.[3] This coupling of inwardness and dissolution is also evident in Brahms's music. The following examples reveal that inner-voice passages in his piano works generally enact a process of decay.

---

[1] Frederic Rzewski, "Inner Voices," *Perspectives of New Music* 33, no. 1–2 (1995): 405.
[2] Sources describing Brahms's music as inward include: Edward Hanslick, "Discovering Brahms," in *Brahms and His World*, eds. Walter Frisch and Kevin C. Karnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009 [1870]), 219; Theodor Adorno, "Brahms aktuell," 36; Walter Niemann, *Brahms*; Robert Morgan, "6 Piano Pieces, Opus 118,", 193; Margaret Notley, *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism*, 34; Steven Rings, "The Learned Self: Artifice in Brahms's Late Intermezzi," in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, eds. Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 27.
[3] See Novalis, *Hymns to the Night;* and Arthur Schopenhauer, *WWR*, vol. 1, 390–91.

In order to bolster the claim that Brahms use of structural inner voices may be heard as embodying the Romantic ideal of inwardness, I begin by briefly examining the topic of inner voices in terms of markedness. I will then discuss three different types of structural inner melodies in Brahms's music, addressing their common formal functions and offering a more nuanced hermeneutic interpretation for each of them. To conclude, a detailed analysis of Brahms's Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 76 no. 7, illustrates the way in which these types of structural inner melodies can interact within a single work.

5.2. Structural Inner Voices as a Marked Opposition

The main claim of this chapter is not that structural inner voices are always expressive of inwardness, but rather that they can be under certain circumstances. To be expressively significant, inner voices must be marked within the given style and genre. Markedness, as Robert Hatten explains, is a valuation of opposition where the marked entity occurs less often and has a more specific meaning than its unmarked counterpart.[4] Hatten illustrates this by commenting on the opposition between the major and the minor mode in the Classical style. The minor mode is marked because it occurs less often and has a higher specificity of meaning than its major counterpart. He concludes that while the major mode has a wide variety of expressive meanings ranging from the comic to the heroic and even the tragic, the minor mode is specifically tragic, such that the use of modal mixture always indicates at turn towards a more tragic or poignant perspective. This is true, according to Hatten, of Classical music, but not necessarily of other styles.[5]

Similarly, my claim regarding inner voices is style and genre specific. In Renaissance and Baroque polyphony, for instance, the opposition between inner and outer voices is unmarked, for

[4] Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 291.
[5] Ibid., 36.

in these styles there is a greater equality between parts. Romantic music, on the other hand, tends to draw a clear distinction between a structural outer-voice framework and the supporting inner voices. It is this distinction that allows for a marked opposition between outer and inner voices. Since the structural melody typically appears in an outer voice, inner-voice melodies are stylistically marked and have a greater specificity of meaning. I would argue that the common mapping of musical into physical space suggests hearing these inner-voice melodies as expressive of inwardness.[6] This is not to say that outer-voice melodies are indicative of outwardness; structural outer-voices remain stylistically unmarked and thus accommodate a wider range of meanings.

Inner voices do not have the same degree of markedness in all Romantic music, nonetheless. String quartets, for instance, tend to have a greater equality between parts than piano works, which generally maintain a clear hierarchy between structural outer voices and supporting inner ones. There is also a distinction to be made here concerning performance, for a pianist gets to experience how it looks on the keyboard and feels on the hands to play the inner melody while also playing the outer voices. In some cases, bringing out these inner voices even requires an inward disposition of the body. This is categorically different from the way a second violinist would experience playing the melody while the first violinist provides a counter-melody above, for example. One last issue to consider is texture, given that the opposition between inner and outer voices is unmarked in polyphonic passages while it remains marked in homophonic textures. These two textures are treated rather differently in Brahms's works. Whereas polyphonic passages such as fugues are generally energetic, inner-voice passages in homophonic textures are subdued.

---

[6] See the discussion of cross-domain mapping in Lawrence M. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002), 65–72.

There is perhaps no other Romantic genre where the opposition between inner and outer voices is more stylistically and performatively marked than in the solo piano works; hence, this chapter focuses exclusively on this repertory. In these works, inner-voice melodies sound and are played within, suggesting a correlation with inwardness. Contributing to this correlation is also the fact that just as the Romantics coupled inwardness with decay, so do these inner-voice passages tend to slowly dissolve, as the following examples demonstrate.

5.3. Types of Structural Inner Voices

This section examines the use of inner-voices in Brahms's piano works by focusing on those compositional techniques that render them expressively and structurally significant. These range from the use of cover tones and compound melodies that conceal structurally significant inner-voices to transformations of inner voice accompaniments into outer melodies. Different techniques are common to different areas in the form and each may be heard as expressive of inwardness in its own particular way.

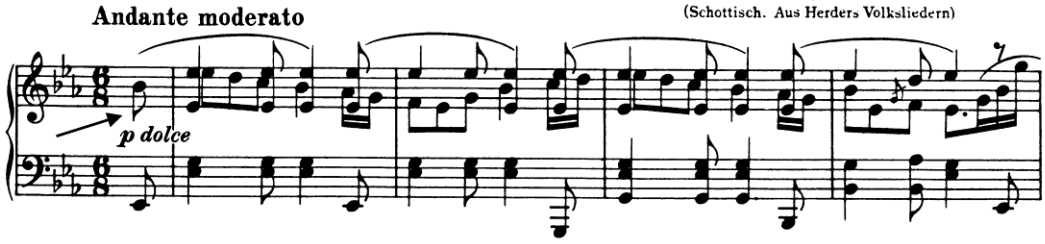
Enfolded Melodies

One of the most common techniques that Brahms employs is that of using a cover tone or voice to conceal the melody in an inner voice. The outer voices may then be heard as enfolding the melody, hence the term. A well-known example of this type of melody is the lullaby that rocks gently beneath the covering tone at the beginning of Brahms's Intermezzo in E♭ major, Op. 117 no. 1, shown in Example 5.1a. Here, as Steven Rings describes, "the lulling E♭s create a sonic field that enfolds the melody in tonic security."[7] The pianist in turn can experience this sense of

[7] Steven Rings, "The Learned Self," 33.

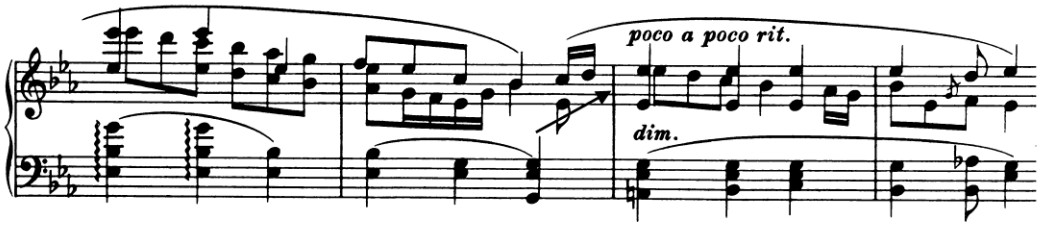
EXAMPLE 5.1. Brahms, Intermezzo in E♭ major, Op. 117 no. 1, enfolded melody

a) Opening phrase, mm. 1–4

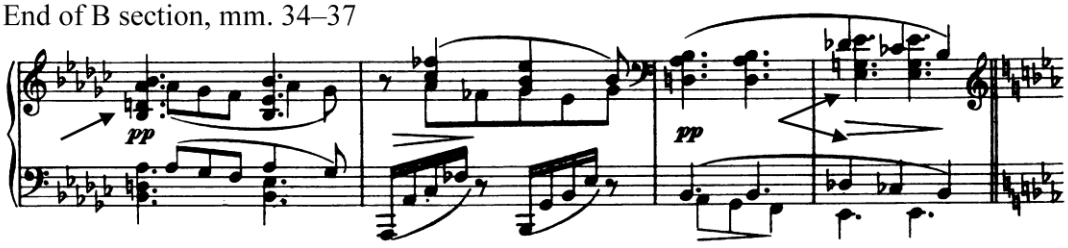


b) Enfolding of the melody at the end of each section

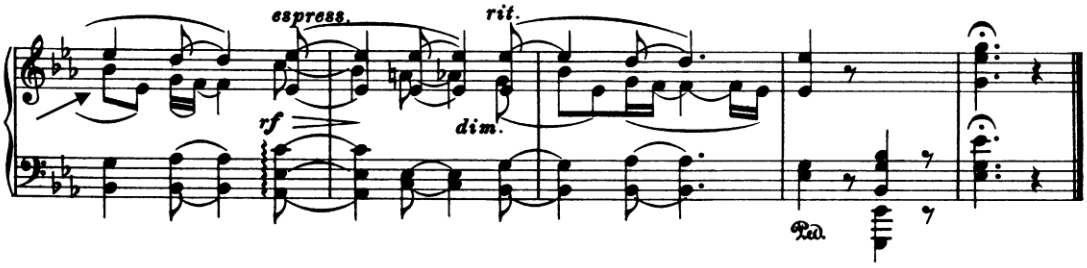
i. End of A section, mm. 13–16



ii. End of B section, mm. 34–37



iii. End of work (A_I), mm. 53–57



.

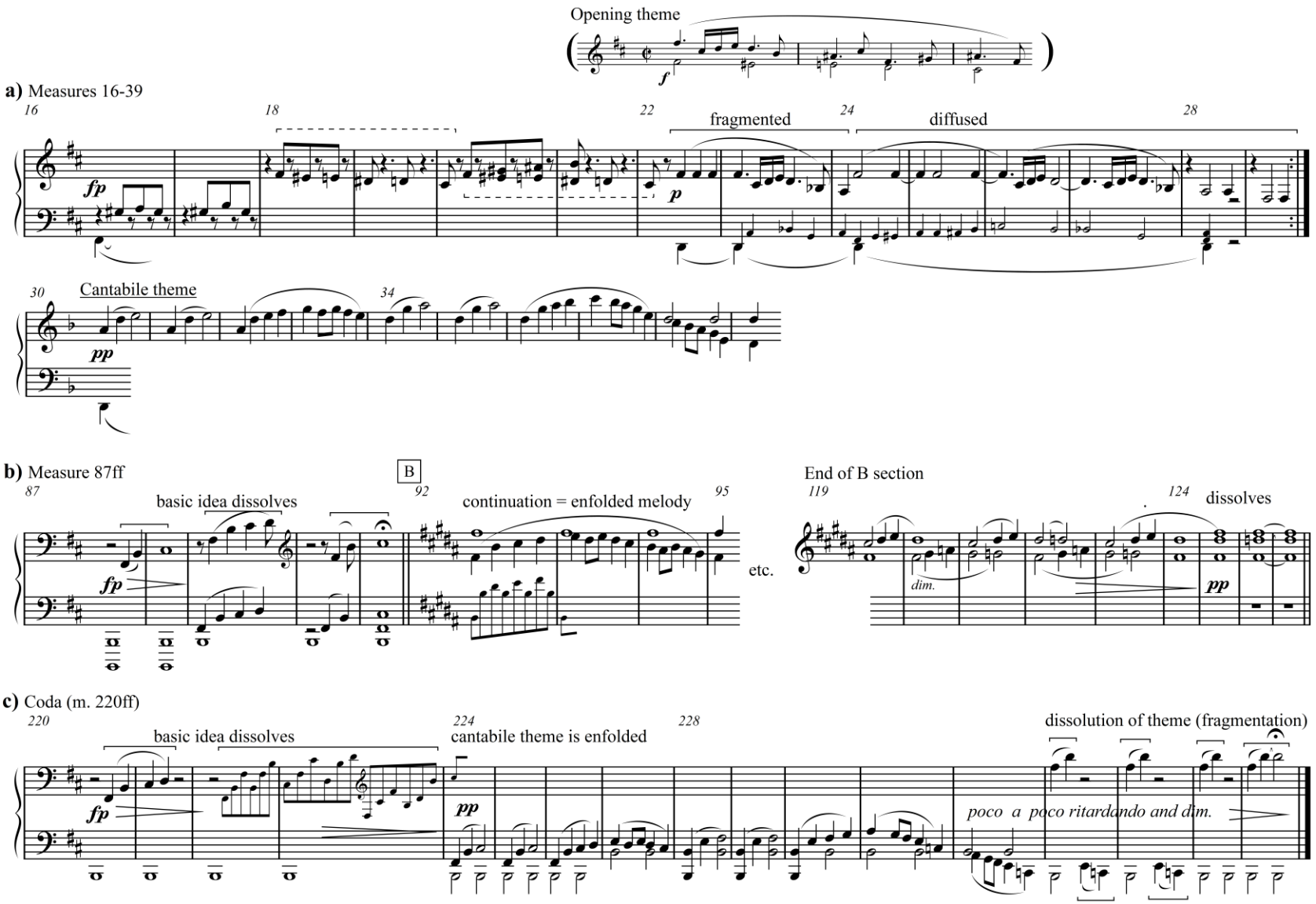
inwardness as she holds the thumb and little finger fixed on the octave E♭s while playing most of the melody with the fingers in between. During the course of the intermezzo the melody does surface momentarily but only to withdraw into an inner voice by the end of each section, as shown in Examples 5.1b. Finally, by the end of the work, the enfolded lullaby becomes diffused

as it yields downward from scale-degree ♯4 through ♮4 to 3 before melting into the final tonic chord. The process of decay coupled with the enfolding of the melody enacts a fading within.

Whereas in this intermezzo a cover tone enfolds the lullaby from the very beginning, in most cases the melody appears first in an outer voice and only later withdraws to an inner part. This is precisely what happens in Brahms's B minor Rhapsody Op. 79 no. 1. As shown in Example 5.2a, the rhapsody begins energetically but loses its impetus after reaching a powerful authentic cadence in V (F♯ minor) on m. 16. Above a pedal F♯, the inner-voice chromatic descent heard in mm. 1–5 echoes now quietly as it melts onto an F♯ major chord by m. 22. At this moment, a fragment from the energetic opening melody returns piano and becomes diffused while an inner voice pushes chromatically upward to C♮ only to yield back down and settle quietly in a D major chord for the end of the first reprise.

The process of decay continues past the repeat with a new *cantabile* theme singing *pp* in m. 30. The theme is divided into two four-bar mini-sentences, the second of which fades away by m. 64 as the last notes from the melody resound under the repeated Ds. This *cantabile* theme returns in the aftermath of the powerful cadence in m. 87, which brings the first rounded binary section to a close. But, as Example 5.2b shows, all that is left from the melody is an echo of the basic idea slowly dying away until it finally dissipates with the fermata in m. 91. Following the diffusion of the basic idea, the melody that functioned as the continuation during the *cantabile* theme turns now into the beginning of the B major middle section. This time, nonetheless, the melody appears in an inner voice enfolded by an F♯ cover tone above and a pedal B below, as shown in the example. The *cantabile* melody continues sounding within throughout the middle

EXAMPLE 5.2. Brahms, Rhapsody in B minor, Op. 79 no. 1, enfolding of the cantabile theme



section until it too begins to fade away. By m. 123 all that remains is a diffused version of the brisk turn figure that characterized the beginning of the opening theme, now repeating ever quieter until it fades beneath the framing F♯.

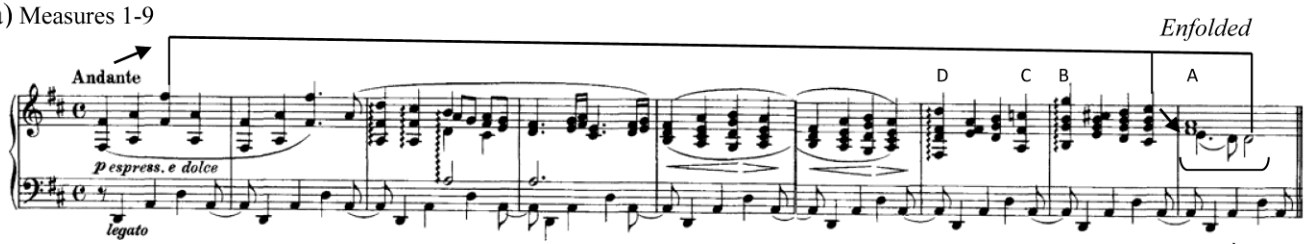
The F♯ that enfolds the melody during the middle section is not just any F♯, but that heard at the outset of the energetic B minor section. When this framing F♯ comes into focus with the return of the B minor theme in m. 130, it is as if the music suddenly shifted from a calm inner space into a turbulent outer reality. Once the focus switches back to this energetic melody, the B minor section repeats without any alterations, coming to an end with the cadence in m. 222. As before, ever softer echoes of the cantabile melody are heard after the cadence. Example 2.c show how the melody appears at first in an outer voice but is concealed after m. 226 between the right-hand arpeggios and the pedal B in the bass. Much as in its first appearance, the melody is divided into an antecedent-consequent pair of phrases. This time, however, all that remains after the consequent are the opening and closing two-note fragments of the theme echoing ever softer as the Rhapsody gradually vanishes. Overall, the outward dissolution and internalization of the cantabile theme during the B section and the coda may be heard as enacting Jean Paul's description of the Romantic as "the undulant hum of a vibrating string or bell whose soundwave fades away into ever greater distances and finally is lost in ourselves and, although outwardly quiet, yet sounds within."[8]

Enfolded melodies may be found at any moment in a piece, but they most commonly appear towards the end of a section or work. Consider, for instance, Brahms's Ballade in D major, Op. 10 no. 2. As Example 5.3 illustrates, the first phrase comprises a third-descent from the *Kopfton* F♯ down to scale-degree 1. With the downward octave coupling of the E in m. 9,

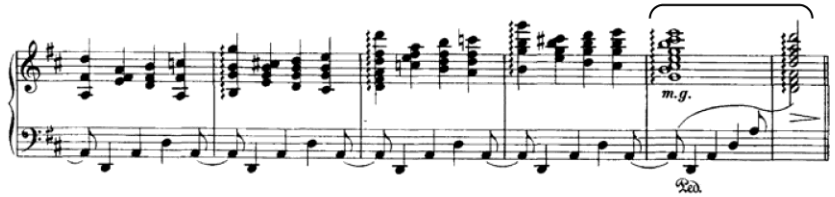
[8] Jean Paul, *Horn of Oberon*, 60

EXAMPLE 5.3. Brahms, Ballade in D major, Op. 10 no. 2, enfolding of the melody in the coda

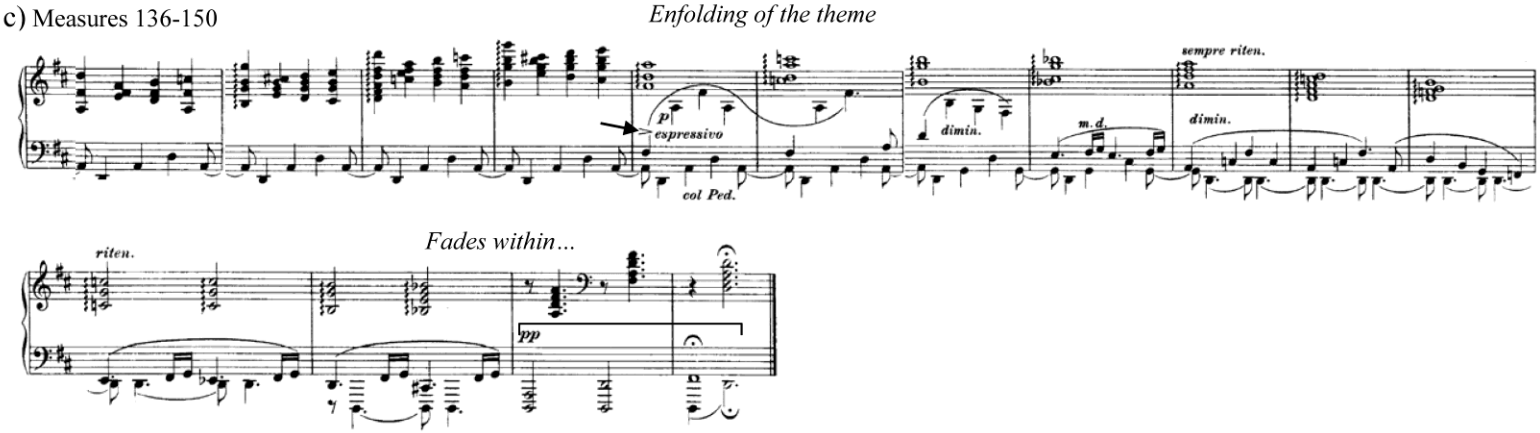
a) Measures 1-9



b) Measures 18-23



c) Measures 136-150



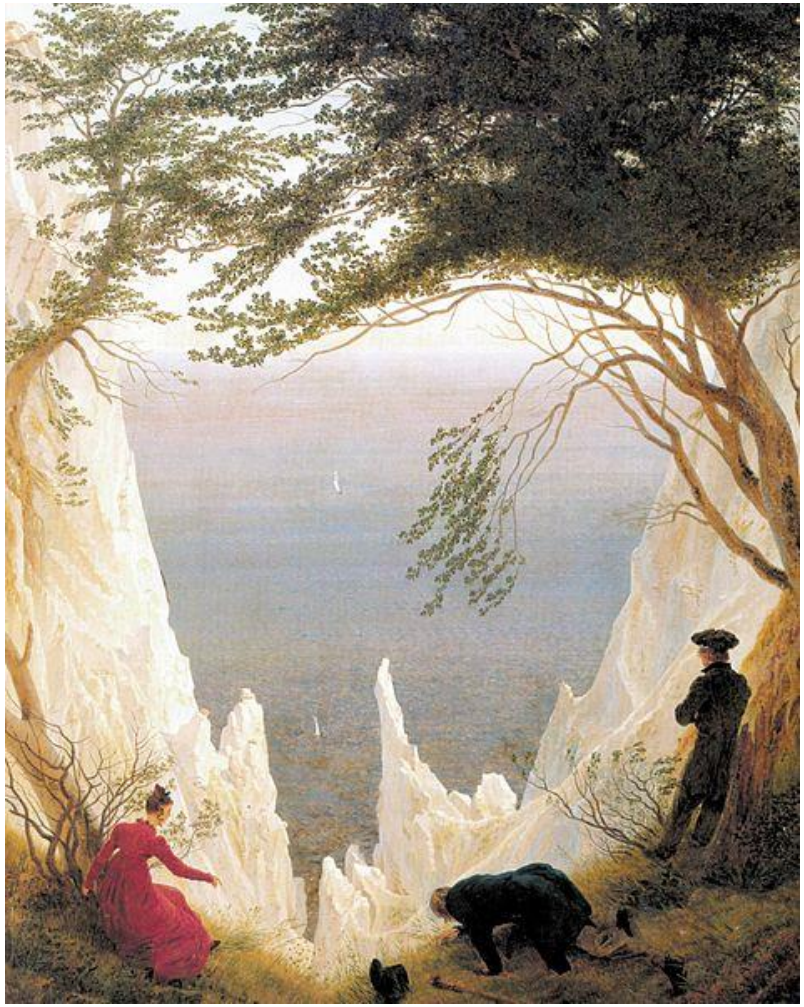
however, the structural descent from F♯ to D sinks beneath the covering fourth progression from D to A. When this passage returns in mm. 18–23, the melody remains this time in the upper voice, as expected, coming to rest on a perfect authentic cadence as the E resolves to D.

This passage returns once more at the end of the ballade, where it leads to a remarkable inner-voice coda. As shown in Example 5.3c, mm. 136–140 are an exact repetition of mm. 18–23, except that at the cadence the upper voice leaps back down to an A instead of resolving to D, much as it did in m. 9. At this point, the opening melody returns in an inner voice, framed by the chromatically descending chords in the right hand and the pedal D in the left. As the music gradually decays, the melody continues to sound within until it finally disappears in the last two bars, leaving behind only a diffused version of the theme's characteristic arpeggio figure marked with brackets in the example.

A visual analog to Brahms's technique of enclosing the melody in an inner voice across a passage that gradually fades away may be found in the framing of the receding horizon in Romantic paintings. Take for instance Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Kreidefelsen auf Rügen* shown in Figure 5.1, where the chalk walls together with the two trees frame the vanishing seascape, or Carl Blechen's portrayal of the evanescent seascape encased between cave walls in his painting *Grotte am Golf von Neapel*, also given below. In other cases, the frame is a ruin, as in Friedrich's painting *Klosterruine Oybin* reproduced in Figure 5.1c, where the windows of a ruined monastery frame the last remnants of daylight, making explicit the spiritual dimension surrounding the Romantic ideal of inwardness. In enclosing the infinitely receding horizon, these paintings present us with a paradox where the framed space is actually the outside world, which the figures view from within a more enclosed location.

FIGURE 5.1. Framing of the horizon in Romantic paintings

a) Caspar David Friedrich, *Kreidefelsen auf Rügen*, 1818. Museum Oskar Reinhart, Winterthur.



b) Carl Blechen, *Grotte am Golf von Neapel*, 1829. Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Köln.

FIGURE 5.1 continued

c) Caspar David Friedrich, *Klosterruine Oybin*, 1835. Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

This reversal of inner and outer space parallels the reversal of outer and inner musical space in the works discussed above and serves as a fitting objectification of the paradoxical Romantic notion of the infinite within,[9] a notion that Novalis clearly articulates when he writes:

> The depths of our spirit are unknown to us—the mysterious way leads inwards. Eternity with its worlds—the past and the future—is in us or nowhere.[10]

Compound Melodies that Imply a Structural Inner Voice

The second type of structural inner voice we will be examining are compound melodies that clearly imply a covering outer strand and a structural inner one, connecting the two through constant inward gestures. Some factors that may contribute to hearing the implied inner voice as structural include: metric placement, duration, and melodic fluency.

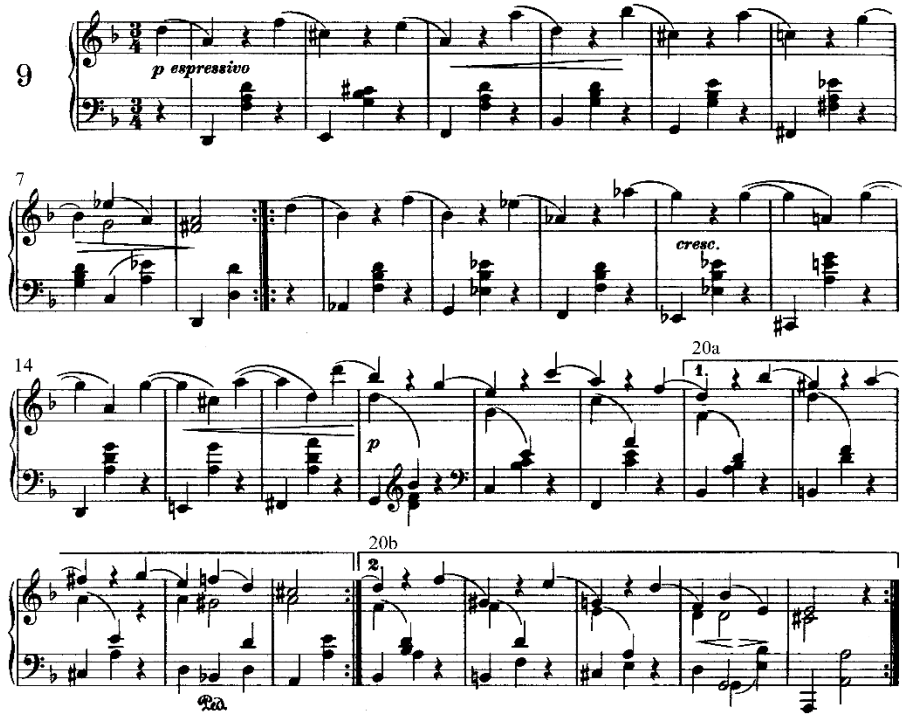
Consider, for instance, the melody from Brahms's Waltz in D minor, Op. 39 no. 9, reproduced in Example 5.4 along with a voice-leading sketch. The melody clearly implies two melodic strands, linking the two through a set of descending sighs. Of these two strands, the lower one is metrically accented and takes structural primacy over the metrically weak and melodically more disjunct upper strand.

As shown in the sketch, then, the waltz begins with the structural inner voice concealed in the middle of the texture, leaping from the *Kopfton* A up to D in m. 4 and then sinking chromatically back down to A to complete a fourth progression in m. 8. During the beginning of the second reprise, the emphasis remains on the implied inner voice as it descends from B♭ to G. But, with the last part of the third-descent taken up an octave in m. 12 and the subsequent elongation of the Gs across the downbeat, the focus now shifts towards the upper register.

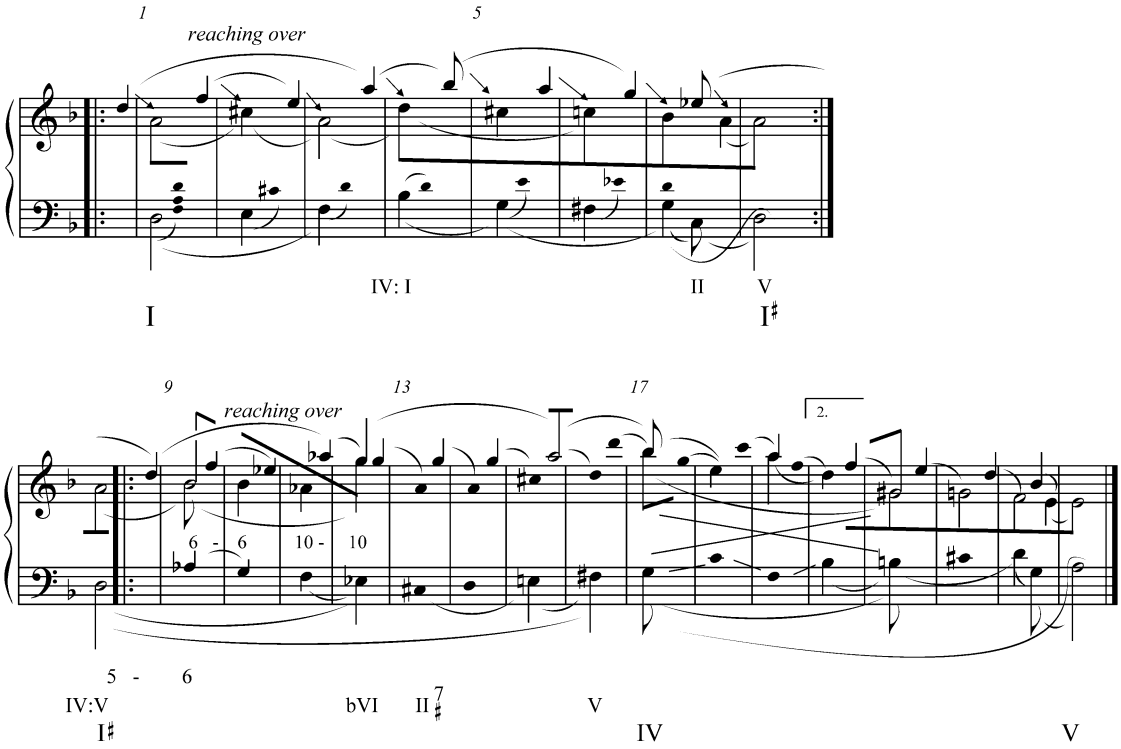
[9] The Romantic idea of the infinite within is paradoxical because by definition infinity cannot be contained.
[10] *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 25.

EXAMPLE 5.4. Brahms, Waltz in D minor, Op. 39 no. 9

a) Score of the two-hand version of the piece



b) Voice-leading sketch, showing compound melody with structural inner strand



The music becomes louder as the structural weight continues to fall on the first note of each descending gesture until the high G finally climbs back to the *Kopfton* A for the return of the prolonged D major harmony in m. 16. Following the return of the *Kopfton*, however, the structural emphasis shifts back to the lower note of each descending sigh. As shown in the sketch, the implied inner voice now prolongs IV through a chromatic voice exchange from B♭ to G♯. In the second ending, the structural inner voice completes this voice exchange by leaping down an octave to the lower G♯, as shown in the sketch. Scale-degree ♯4 then yields downward as the inner voice descends to scale-degree 2 for the half cadence at the end of the waltz.

Overall, the structural inner voice in this waltz may be heard as expressive of inwardness. In the two-hand version, this sense of inwardness becomes physically palpable as the pianist repeatedly withdraws her hands towards the center of her body while executing the descending melodic sighs together with the mirroring, left-hand gestures.

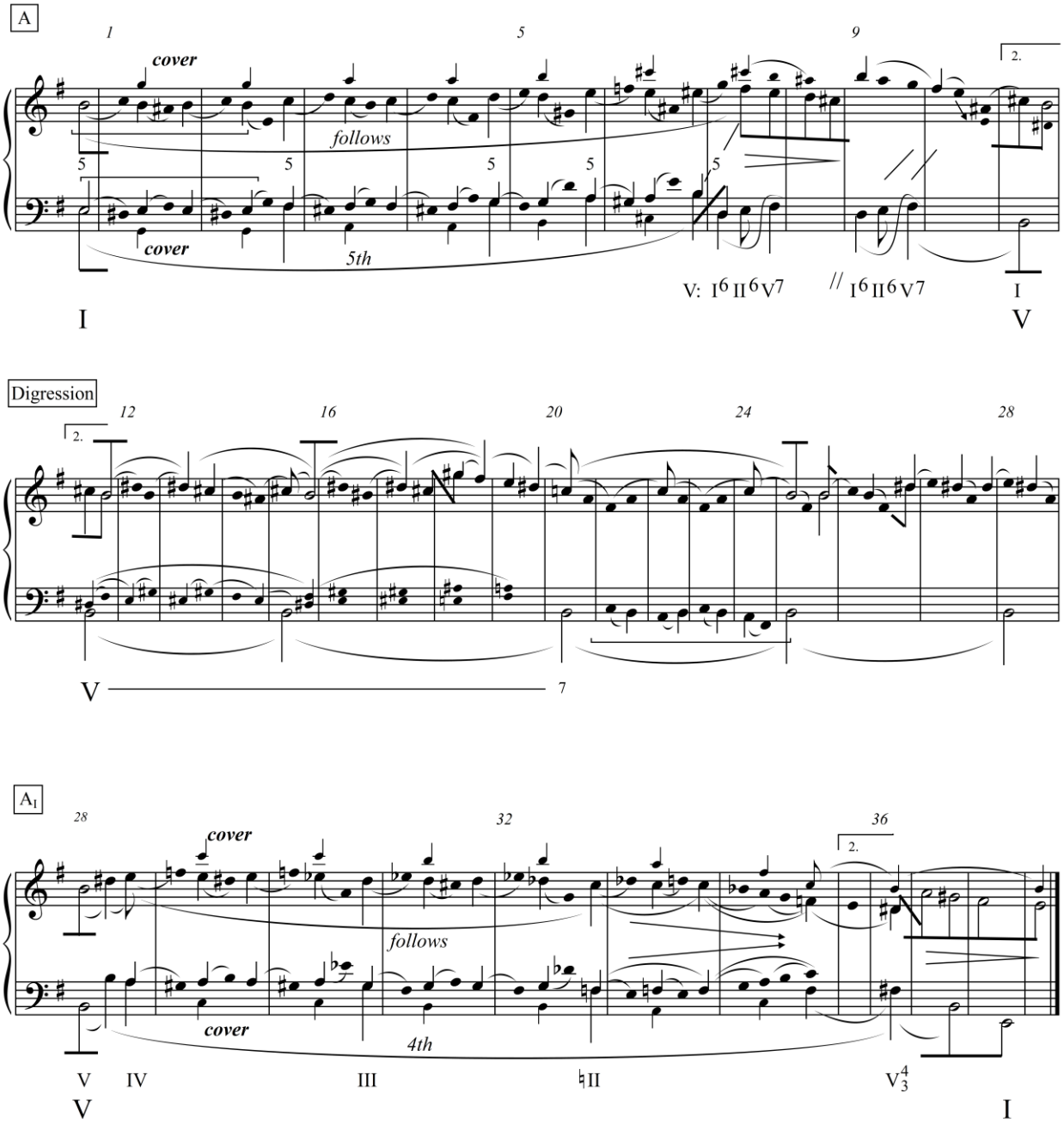
Brahms employs a compound melody to a similar effect in his Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 116 no. 5. In this case, however, the outer voices conceal not only the structural melody but also the structural bass. As the sketch in Example 5.5 illustrates, the intermezzo begins with a chromatic neighboring figure around the *Kopfton* B and the bass E concealed between the framing outer Gs. This inner, neighboring figure then repeats up by step as the bass completes a fifth-progression from E to B and the melody follows in parallels fifths, climbing from B to F♯. However, the neighboring E♯ and G above the B minor chord in m. 6 delay the arrival of the F♯ to m. 7, where it sounds below the covering C♯. With the diminuendo, the inner-voice melody sinks back down, descending by step from F♯ to C♯ for the arrival of the dominant of B minor. Instead of settling on a half cadence, however, the music repeats the cadential motion once more, coming now to rest on a B minor chord in m. 12. At this moment the structural C♯ appears in the upper

voices and completes a fifth-descent as it sinks through C♮ to B for the return of the first reprise. Accordingly, the structural melody may be heard as ascending by step in an inner voice from B to F♯ and then retracing its steps back to B, as shown in the sketch.

During the digression section that follows, the structural melody and bass shift to the outer voices. The bass remains on a B pedal and the melody begins by prolonging B major harmony through a third-descent from D♯ to B in mm. 12–15 while the inner voice follows imitatively. The next phrase begins much in the same way, except that this time the melody reaches-over from C♯ to the high G♯ in m. 18 before descending by step to C♮ in m. 20. While the right hand continues to expand C♮, the left hand composes out the neighboring motive from the opening before settling on a B dominant chord in m. 25. With the dominant arrival and the upper voice moving back to B, the chromatic neighboring figure re-appears in the melody and begins to slowly fade away in preparation for the thematic return in m. 29.

When the opening theme returns, the structural bass and melody withdraw once again into an inner voice, as shown in the voice-leading sketch. More striking is that the theme begins now on IV instead of I, and it moves downward by step rather than upward. The bass descends from B to F/F♯ composing out the dominant chord while the melody follows in parallel fifths moving from a neighboring E to a neighboring C, as the sketch illustrates. After completing a parallel descent to F major in m. 32, melody and bass move now inward by step, mirroring one another and prolonging ♭II through a voice exchange. This inward motion of the structural inner creates the impression that the music is withdrawing into an ever more interior and intimate place. This inward motion culminates with the passing tone E moving to D♯ in the melody.

EXAMPLE 5.5. Brahms, Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 116 no. 5, voice-leading sketch showing structural inner voices



Spanning only a dotted quarter note in the first ending, the passing tone becomes diffused across two measures during the second ending, decaying to a piano by the moment it resolves to D♯ in m. 36. At this point in the first ending, the upper voice echoed the passing motion in preparation for the reprise of the digression. The second time around, however, the C♮ in the upper voice resolves down and remains on a B, enfolding the structural melodic descent in the inner voice, as shown in the sketch. Now enfolded into an actual rather than an implied inner voice, the melody slowly melts into a quiet tonic chord as the intermezzo gradually fades away.

The structural melody and bass sounding within the middle of the texture at the beginning and end of the work impress the intermezzo as a whole with that inner and intimate quality that Brahms's seems to be referring to when he indicates the performer to play "con intimissimo sentimento." The mirroring gestures between the hands from the outer cover tones to the inner structural voices render this sense of interiority physically palpable as well.[11]

These two examples illustrate Brahms's use of compound melodies that clearly imply a structural inner strand. Conceptually and expressively, the concealment of the structural strand of a compound melody within the middle of the texture is similar to the enfolding of a melody in an inner voice. In fact, the way in which the implied inner voice seamlessly turns into an actual inner part at the end of the E minor intermezzo seams to blur the distinction between these two categories. Yet, just as these two types of structural inner voices are conceptually similar but not identical, it is also possible to draw a more nuanced expressive interpretation for each of them. In the case of enfolded melodies there is a clear distinction between an outer and an inner space, with the melody as a whole sounding exclusively within. With compound melodies it is possible to infer a similar distinction between outer and inner voice, but the melody as a whole inhabits

[11] For a discussion of Brahms's use of the mirror symmetry of the hands in several of his piano pieces, including the Op. 116 no. 5 Intermezzo, see Steven Rings "The Learned Self," 41.

both spaces. Rather than having completely withdrawn into an inner voice, the type of compound melodies discussed may be heard then as continuously turning inward, moving repeatedly from an outer voice to a structural, inner one. Accordingly, these compound melodies seem to enact a repeated withdrawing, while the enfolded melodies embody a total withdrawal.

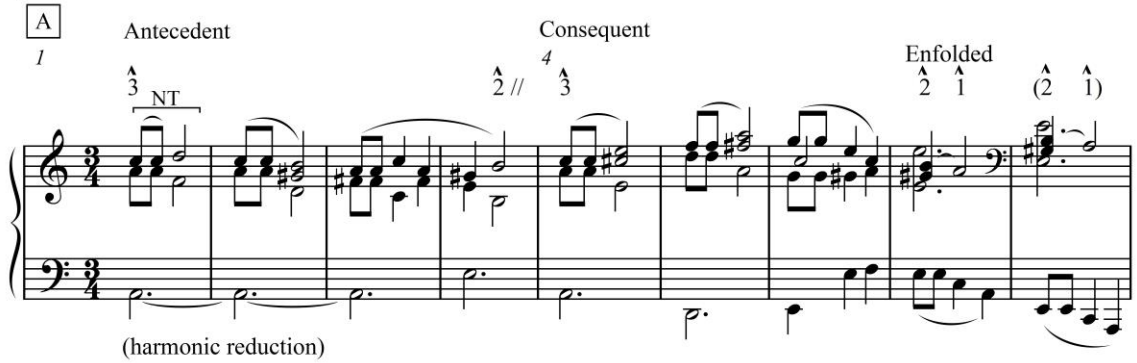
Melodies that Emerge from Within

Another common kind of structural inner voice found in Brahms's piano works are melodies that emerge as transformations of inner parts. While occupying the highest register, these melodies sound as inner voices that have been left temporarily exposed. This transformation often takes place following a process of de-intensification in several parameters, with the effect that the music seems to fade inward until completely losing itself to that melody coming from a place deep within.

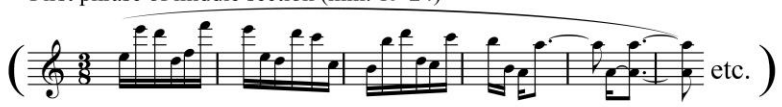
The simplest cases of a melody emerging from within involve the use invertible counterpoint between the upper voice and the accompanying inner part. With the textural inversion there seems to a come a shift from an outer to an inner space. Such is the case in Brahms's Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 116 no. 2. The melody in the opening period descends a third from C to A. As Example 5.6a shows, this descent is interrupted with the half cadence in m. 4 and completed with the perfect authentic cadence in m. 8. What is remarkable is that while in mm. 8–9 the bass echoes the melody, the structural descent is concealed in an inner voice, enfolded in between the octave Es. The high E functions then as a cover tone above the structural upper voice, as Brahms's stemming suggests.

EXAMPLE 5.6. Brahms, Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 116 no. 2, melody emerging from an inner voice

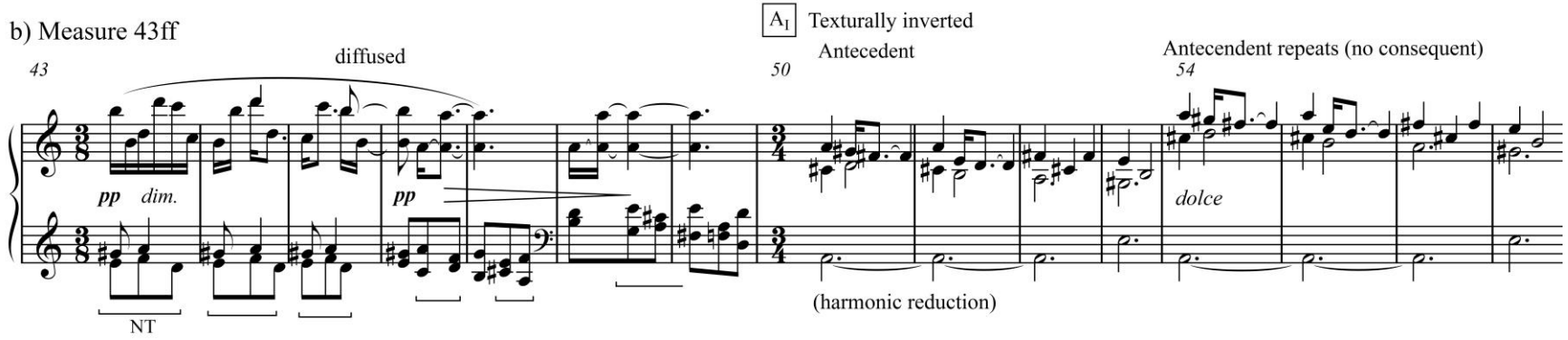
a) Measures 1-8



cf. First phrase of middle section (mm. 19-24)



b) Measure 43ff



Following the diffusion of the right hand melody and the liquidation of the neighboring motive at the end of the 3/8 section, the opening theme returns in m. 51 now in the parallel major, as Example 5.6b shows. Accompanying this modal shift is a textural one. After the liquidation of its neighboring motive during the 3/8 section, the original upper voice melody withdraws into the middle of the texture transforming what was initially an unmarked inner voice into the new melody. Emanating from within, the new melody yields downward with each appoggiatura, sinking in complete surrender from A to D and then continuing on to B for the cadence in m. 54, as shown below. The antecedent then repeats an octave higher, but the consequent never materializes. Instead, without reaching syntactic closure, the A major passage vanishes like a daydream by m. 65, deferring syntactic closure to the return of the opening theme back in A minor and with its original textural configuration. Much as in the beginning, the period is heard twice, except that now the final consequent becomes fragmented with a set of quasi-fermatas before coming to rest on tonic for the end of the work.

The first movement of Brahms's Piano Sonata in C major, Op. 1 offers a more complex and subtle example of a melody that emerges from an inner voice. As the voice-leading sketch in Example 5.7a reveals, the movement begins energetically, thrusting the melody upwards over two octaves to the *Kopfton* G before the cadence in m. 17. The transition follows quietly but soon gains momentum as the melody reaches-over back to the high G in m. 27 and then again in m. 33 to settle on F♯ during the dominant lock in mm. 34–36. The melodic figure (F♯-F♯-E-D♯) leading to the half cadence in m. 36 echoes twice more during the two-bar caesura-fill that follows. But rather than climbing to the high F♯, the low F♯ stalls on the inner-voice A, enfolded between the descent from C to B in the bass and from E to D♯ in upper voice. From this F♯-A fragment, a cantabile second theme finally emerges in m. 39 in an example of what Schenker

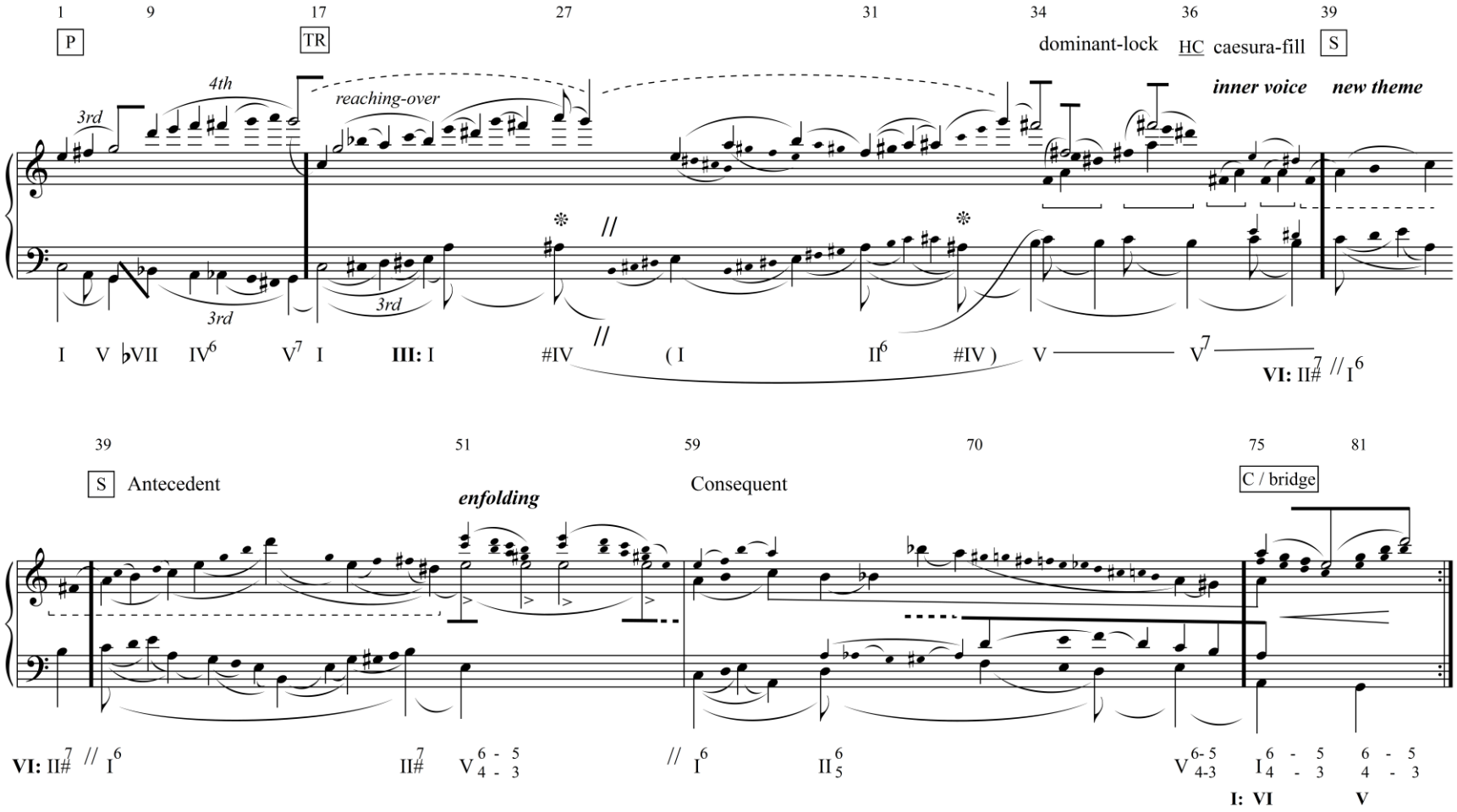
refers to as "linkage technique."[12] But here it is not two melodies, but rather an accompanying inner voice and a melody that are linked together. Given this link, the new melody sounds like an inner voice that is left momentarily uncovered, as the downward stems in the sketch in mm. 39–50 indicate. Example 5.7b illustrates that this melody may be heard as composing-out the melodic figure heard at the end of the transition and across the caesura fill while the left hand composes-out the accompanying neighboring motion from C to B in the bass.

A descant finally conceals the inner melody back again as the antecedent phrase settles on the local dominant in m. 51, as shown in Example 5.7a. Tellingly, however, Brahms accents each of the inner-voice Es so as for them to ring out in between the enclosing outer voices. Though covered, the Es are also structurally important, forming part of a stepwise descent from the *Kopfton* G, through the F♯ at the end of the transition, and now to E, as shown more clearly in the middleground sketch in Example 5.7c.

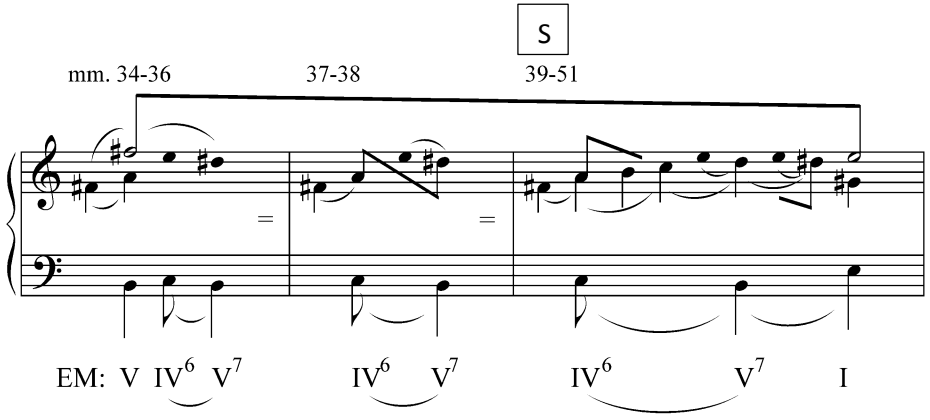
Following the prolongation of the local dominant in mm. 51–58, the consequent phrase gets under way with the melody now concealed in an inner voice. The consequent begins much like the antecedent phrase but starts to veer off in m. 63, finding itself eventually on a B♭ dominant chord. By the time this dominant is reinterpreted to function as part of a neighboring motion prolonging and returning to D minor in m. 70, the right hand melody dissolves into an indistinct chromatic descent and the head motive from the poco ritenuto passage becomes diffused into an inner voice. This inner-voice melody carries now the structural weight, moving stepwise to complete a fifth-descent on A with the tonic arrival in m. 75, as shown in the sketch.

[12] For a discussion of Brahms's use of "linkage technique," see Peter H. Smith, "New Perspectives on Brahms's Linkage Technique," *Intégral* 21 (2007) 109–154. Smith does not discuss any cases where the linkage happens between an accompanying inner voice and a new melody.

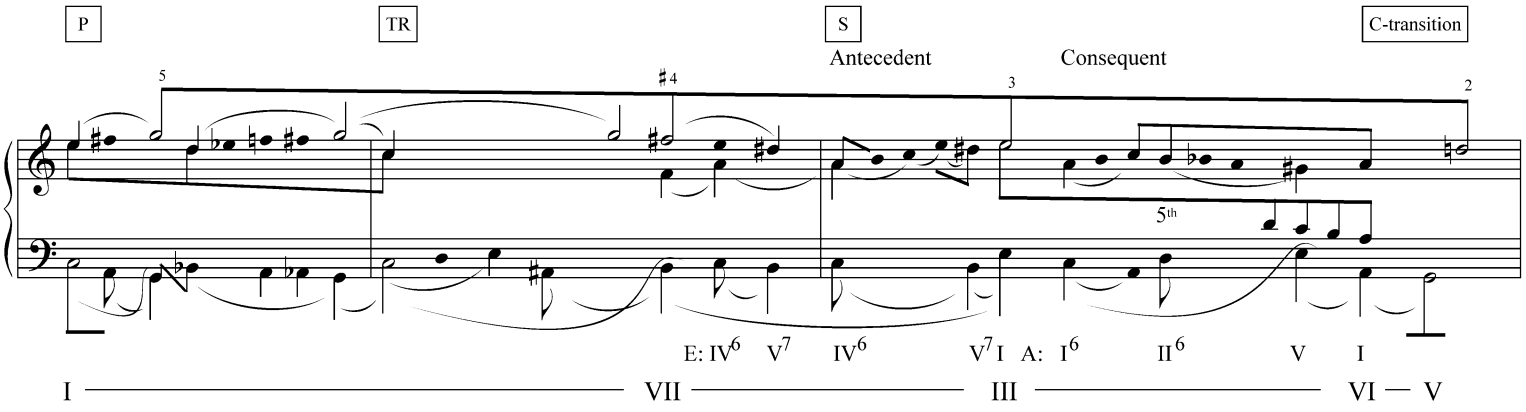
EXAMPLE 5.7a. Brahms, Sonata in C major, Op. 1, I, foreground voice-leading sketch of the exposition, showing how the secondary theme emerges from within an inner voice



EXAMPLE 5.7b. Brahms, Piano Sonata in C major, Op 1, I, sketch showing how the secondary theme composes-out the cadential figure heard at the end of the transition



EXAMPLE 5.7c. Brahms, Piano Sonata in C major, Op 1, I, middleground sketch of the exposition.



The tonic arrival is elided with the return of the pastoral melody from mm. 51–58, but this time the music begins to gain momentum as the local tonic gives way to a G dominant chord for the return of the first reprise back in C major.

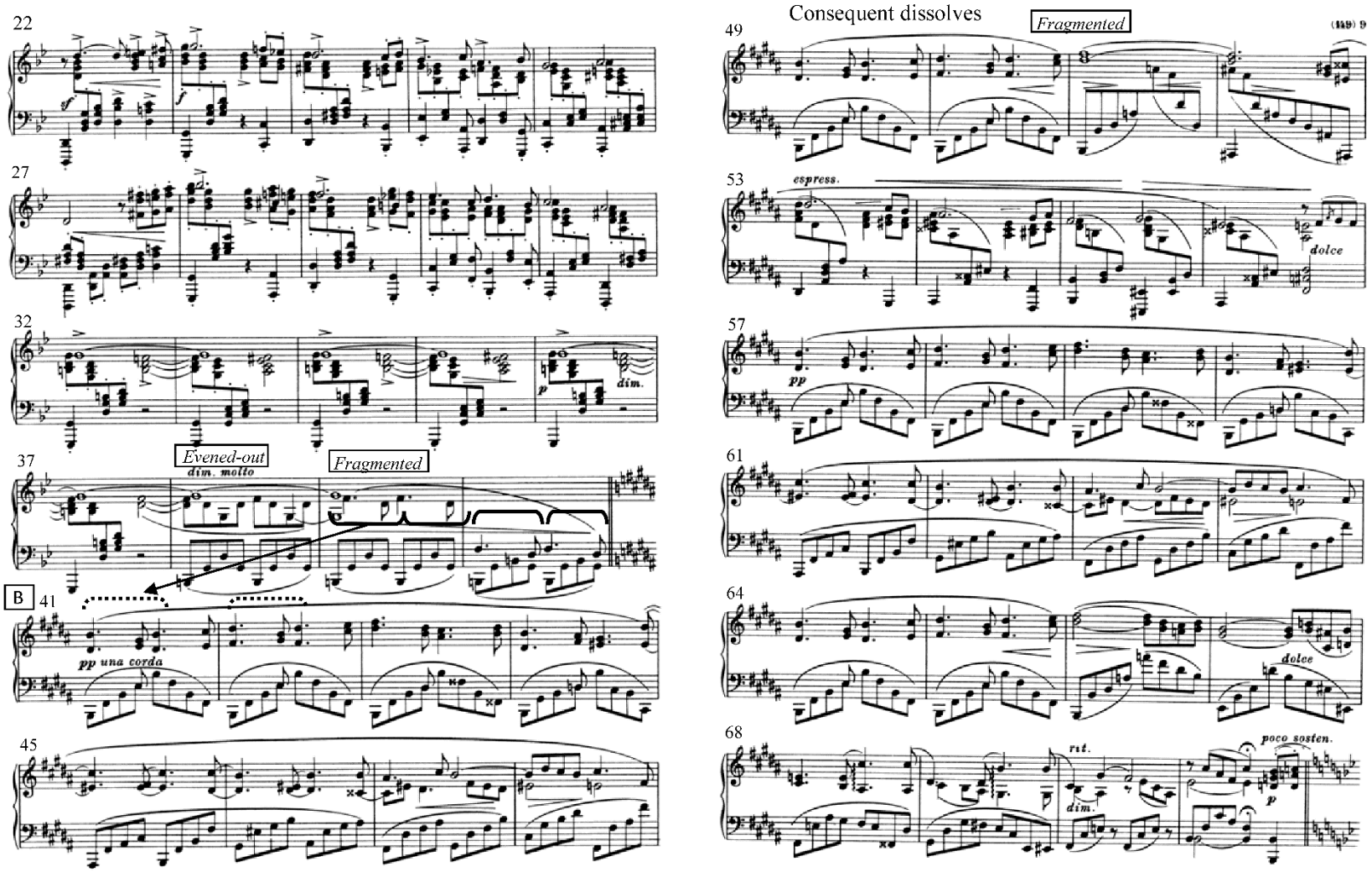
As shown, the second theme in this sonata emerges from an inner voice that is left exposed beginning in m. 39 and concealed back again in m. 51. During this passage, the music seems to turn inward, away from the energetic opening material and towards a *cantabile* melody sounding within. This sonata thus exhibits the tendency that Janet Schmalfeldt recognizes in Romantic music to "turn inward" towards an interior moment in the work.[13] The interior moments Schmalfeldt speaks of are always quiet, *cantabile* secondary themes (as opposed to main themes) of the type found here.

Similarly, in Brahms's shorter piano works the transformation of a supporting inner voice into a new upper melody typically links an opening, outer section with a quiet, internal one. In these shorter works, however, the internal passage corresponds not to the secondary theme of the exposition, but to the B section of an overall ABA ternary form.

This is precisely the function that the inner voice transformation takes on in Brahms's Ballade in G minor, Op. 118 no. 3. The first section of the piece is energetic with a clear outer-voice framework and an unmarked broken-chord accompaniment sounding in-between. After the cadence in m. 32, however, the focus begins to shift from the outer voices towards the inner-voice, as Example 5.8a shows. While the upper voice G gradually decays, the inner-voice arpeggiations oscillate from I through a I^{b7} chord to IV and back to tonic in mm. 32–36.

[13] Janet Schmalfeldt, "Music That Turns Inward: New Roles for Interior Movements and Second Themes," in *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspective on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 136.

EXAMPLE 5.8a. Brahms, Ballade in G minor, Op. 118 no. 3, annotations in the score showing how the B section emerges from within an inner voice



Becoming softer and slower, the inner-voice arpeggiated figure then begins to dissolve over a static I^{b7} chord. The accompaniment first loses its rhythmic shape as it becomes evened out in m. 35 and then vanishes into a repeating two-note figure oscillating between F and D, as shown in Example 8. The process of decay culminates with the transformation of the two-note figure into a new outer-voice melody in m. 41 for the beginning of the pastoral middle section in the distantly related key of ♯III (B major).

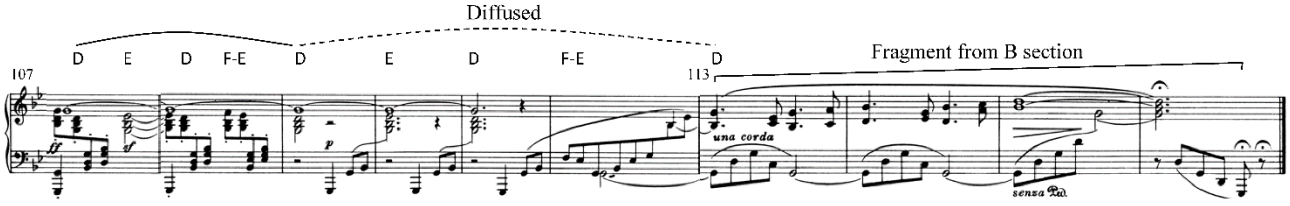
This thematic transformation is much like the one linking the transition to the second theme in Brahms C major sonata. In both cases, a closing melodic gesture functions as the beginning of a new melody in an example of Schenker's linkage technique. Given this linkage, the music sounds as if it were turning inward during the quiet middle section, away from the turmoil of G minor to a serene and pastoral B major.

As was the case with the A major section in the A minor Intermezzo discussed above, in the Ballade, the B major theme eventually fades away without ever reaching structural closure. The theme begins with an eight-bar antecedent answered by a parallel consequent phrase beginning in m. 48. The consequent, however, becomes diffused, and vanishes with the long F♯ held across mm. 51–52 while the B dominant chord is reinterpreted as an augmented-sixth that resolves to an A♯ dominant seventh chord. This leads to the return of a fragment from the opening melody now in D♯ minor, but this too breaks-off on an A♯ dominant chord giving way to a return of the B major theme in m. 57. This time around, the eight-bar antecedent is answered by an eight-bar consequent beginning in m. 64. The consequent continues now past the high F♯ in m. 66 and comes eventually to a cadence in m. 71. But, while the bass does move from V to I, the melody remains on the dominant until it quietly fades away under the fermata. Without reaching harmonic closure, the music returns to the opening thematic idea and begins gathering

momentum for the energetic return of the G minor section. Accordingly, the B minor section dissolves without ever reaching syntactic closure, extending infinitely into silence.

At the end of the G minor section in m. 107, the focus shifts once again towards the inner-voice arpeggiations. Between the framing Gs, the inner-voice arpeggios outline in mm. 107–08 a neighboring motion around D, as shown in Example 5.8. After the music decays to a piano, the neighboring motion becomes diffused across the next four bars and the melody from the middle section returns one last time. But all that is left from the melody is that fragment heard back in mm. 49–52, ascending to and fading away on scale-degree 5. With scale-degree 5 on top, the melody and the intermezzo as a whole are left syntactically open, gradually turning into nothingness.

EXAMPLE 5.8b. Brahms, Ballade in G minor, Op. 118 no. 3, annotated score of the coda



These examples illustrate the technique of transforming an inner voice into a new melody. As they demonstrate, the melody coming from within always emerges in an internal section and eventually fades away, often without reaching syntactic closure. Brahms's practice of formally enclosing these evanescent passages is comparable to the way in which Friedrich and Blechen frame the receding horizon in the paintings reproduced in Figure 5.1. The notion of framing as a formal category describes particularly well how the outer A sections enclose the evanescent B section in the G minor Ballade, but it is applicable to the other examples as well.

5.4. A Longer Analytical Example

The previous section examined three different types of structural inner voices in Brahms's piano works. These are: enfolded melodies, compound melodies that imply a structural inner voice, and melodies that emerge from an inner voice. Of these, enfolded melodies are commonly found at the end of a section or work, while the transformation of an inner part into a new melody generally links an outer with an inner section. Several examples have illustrated each of these types of inner voices. Our final example will show how these interact within a single work: Brahms's Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 76 no. 7. All three coalesce during the middle section, as the following analysis demonstrates.

The notion of framing as a formal category is particularly fitting in describing the way in which the opening and closing phrases contain the evanescent middle section. Just as in Friedrich's *Klosterruine Oybin* (Figure 5.1c), where a ruin frames the sunset, in the intermezzo the framing phrase sounds like a remnant from Chopin's F minor Nocturne, Op. 55 no. 1 now heard in chorale style. The most intriguing aspect of Brahms's eight-bar sentence as compared to the opening of Chopin's nocturne is that the upper voice breaks off in mm. 2–3, exposing the inner-voice neighboring motion from D♯ to E and leaving the repetition of the basic idea without its upper octave, as the sketch in Example 5.9a illustrates. Following this textural break, the upper voice returns in m. 4 and descends now past the *Kopfton* E to complete a fifth-progression in m. 8. Meanwhile, the bass echoes the D♯-E neighboring figure heard back in mm. 2–4 before descending in thirds to A to bring the opening phrase to a close.

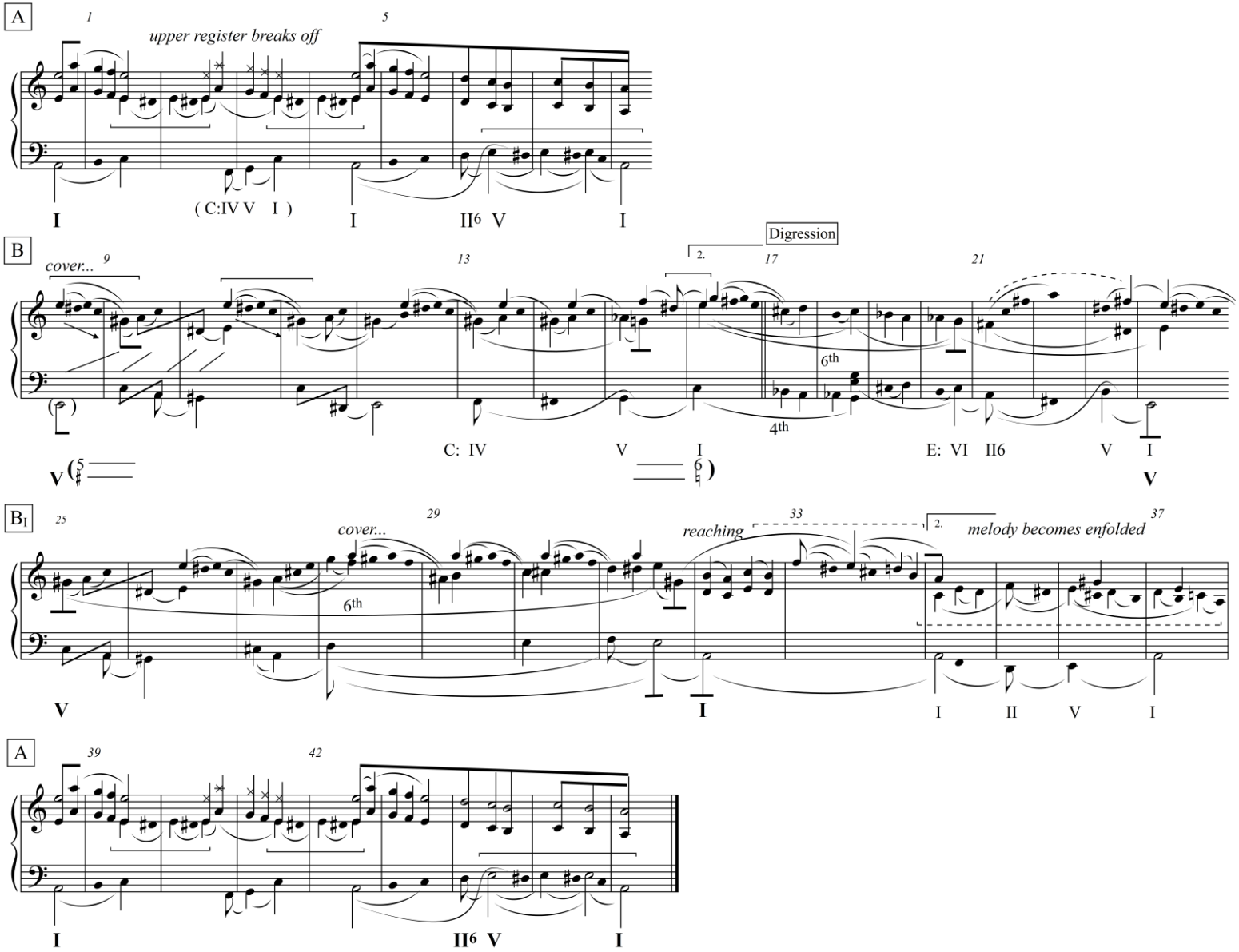
The melody of the middle section emerges from the D♯-E neighboring motion heard first in an inner voice and expanded in the bass by the end of the opening phrase, as the brackets in the sketch show. Whereas this motivic parallelism has been noted by Charles Burkhart, less

attention has been paid to the way in which the new theme gradually emerges from an inner voice and eventually withdraws back by the end of the section.[14]

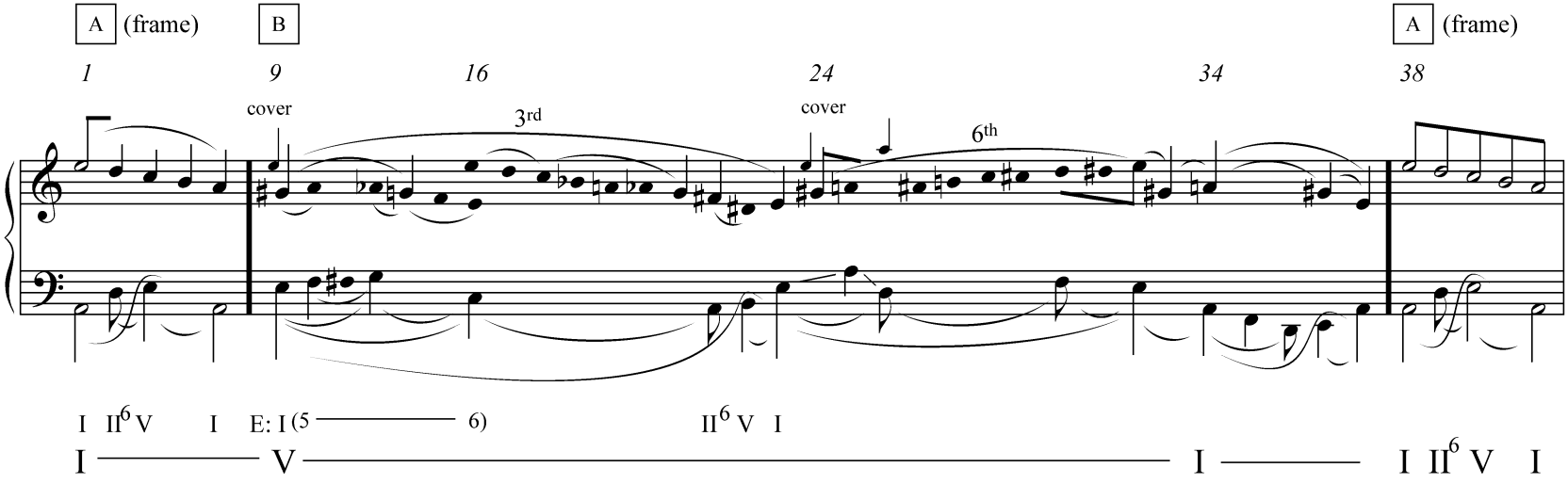
The new theme coming from within is now projected outwards. However, while sounding in an outer voice as a whole, the new melody implies two different melodic strands. Of these, the sketch shows, the inner part carries the structural weight while the upmost part functions as a cover tone. The theme begins with a descending gesture unfolding the dominant from E to G♯. The E functions now as a metrically unaccented cover tone, sounding above the structural and metrically emphasized G♯. This G♯ moves to a neighboring A before continuing downward unfolding the dominant chord through a neighboring D♯-E motion, heard back in the same register as in mm. 2–4. The resolution to E is covered, nonetheless, by the beginning of another descending gesture from E to G♯ in m. 10. Continuing to prolong V, the G♯ ascends to a neighboring A before settling back on G♯ in the following bar. As the bass ascends in m. 13–14 from E through F and F♯, making its way towards an auxiliary cadence in C major, the structural inner voice follows in thirds moving repeatedly from G♯ to A beneath the covering Es. But, when the G dominant chord arrives in m. 15, the G♯ becomes sublimated to A♭ and resolves down to G♮. This resolution takes place in an actual inner voice, below the composing out of the neighboring motion around the cover tone E, as shown in the sketch. Overall, the first reprise may then be heard then as prolonging E dominant harmony through a 5-6 motion, whereby the leading tone becomes inflected downward to G♮ below a cover-tone E. The middleground sketch in Example 5.9b illustrates.

[14] Charles Burkhart, "Schenker's 'Motivic Parallelisms,'" *Journal of Music Theory* 22, no. 2 (1978): 157.

EXAMPLE 5.9a. Brahms, Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 76 no. 7, foreground voice-leading sketch



EXAMPLE 5.9b. Brahms, Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 76 no. 7, middleground voice-leading sketch



The second reprise begins with the same descending gesture, starting now on a superposed G. The melody locally prolongs C major through a sixth-descent moving first from E to C and then continuing downward through a voice-exchange to that low, structural G that was concealed by the cover tones back in m. 15. The G then steps down a third-progression through to E, unfolding the dominant chord as shown in the voice-leading sketch. The F♯ and E, however, are coupled up an octave through the arpeggiation in mm. 16–17 so that the melody can regain the higher register for the return of the first reprise in m. 24.

Much like before, the return of the melody from the first reprise emphasizes the downbeat G♯s below the covering Es. When the music veers off to D minor in mm. 27-28 the structural G♯ ascends to A. Beneath the covering tone A, this ascent continues chromatically up to E for the dominant return in m. 31. Accordingly, as shown in the foreground sketch, the structural inner voice unfolds V through a sixth progression beginning with the G♯ in m. 25 and culminating with the E in m. 31. Upon completing this sixth progression, the melody leaps back down to the leading tone and resolves up to tonic for the cadence in m. 32. This resolution is elided, nonetheless, with a reaching-over gesture that culminates with a neighboring motion around the cover tone E. From there the melody sinks back down to scale-degree 1. In the second ending, the upper voice remains on A, while a fragment from the reaching-over melody echoes in an inner voice and becomes diffused with the elongation of the F in m. 35. Enfolded into an actual inner voice, the last part of the suffix dissolves into an indistinct stream of eighth notes as the section as a whole fades into silence. With the leading-tone G♯ in the upper voice leaping down to E rather than resolving on A, the middle section is left syntactically open, extending infinitely into the distance like Friedrich's twilit horizon. Accordingly, the melody that had

begun in an inner voice ends up by fading back within, much as the second theme from the first movement of Brahms's C major Piano Sonata, discussed above.

To end the work, the opening phrase returns, framing the evanescent middle section in-between. With the return of this ruin, the focus shifts back to the upper register and to the structural descent from E to A. Still, amidst the fissures in the upper voice, one can catch a glimpse of the depths the music conceals within.

In summary, this analysis shows the way in which the three types of structural inner voices discussed above may interact within a single work. In summary, the technique of transforming a supporting inner voice into an upper voice melody links the opening phrase with the middle section. Although sounding as a whole in an upper voice, this new theme is one of those compound melodies that imply a structural inner voice and a covering upper one. With its continuous downward gestures from the covering outer voice to a structural inner one, the melody may be heard as repeatedly withdrawing to an interior space. By the end of the middle section, the melody is enfolded in an inner voice, where it becomes diffused and dissolves into a nondescript eighth-note stream. Once the middle section has faded away, the opening phrase returns framing the evanescent middle section in between.

5.5. Conclusion

Together these examples illustrate Brahms's use of three different types of structural inner voices: enfolded melodies, compound melodies with structural inner strands, and melodies emerging from within. Figure 5.2 lists several other of his piano pieces that employ one or more of these types of inner voices.

FIGURE 5.2. List of Brahms's piano works employing one or more types of structural inner voices

Work	Type(s) of Structural Inner Voice(s)
Piano Sonata in C major, Op. 1, I	1. Enfolded melody 3. Melody emerging from an inner voice
Ballade in D major, Op. 10 no. 2	1. Enfolded melody (coda)
Ballade in B major, Op. 10 no. 4	1. Enfolded melody (middle section)
Waltz in D minor, Op. 39 no. 9	2. Compound melody with structural inner part
Capriccio in F♯ minor, Op. 76 no. 1	1. Enfolded melody (coda)
Capriccio in B minor, Op. 76 no. 2	1. Enfolded melody (coda)
Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 76 no. 7	1. Enfolded melody (end of B section) 2. Compound melody with structural inner part (B section) 3. Melody emerging from aninner voice (B section)
Rhapsody in B minor, Op. 79 no. 1	1. Enfolded melody (B section) 3. Melody emerging from an inner voice (A section)
Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 116 no. 2	3. Melody emerging from an inner voice (return of A)
Intermezzo in E major, Op. 116 no. 4	2. Compound melody with structural inner part (A section)
Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 116 no. 5	1. Enfolded melody (ending) 2. Compound melody with structural inner part
Intermezzo in E major, Op. 116 no. 6	1. Enfolded melody (A section)
Capriccio in D minor, Op. 116 no. 7	1. Enfolded melody (B section)
Intermezzo in E♭ major, Op. 117 no. 1	1. Enfolded melody (A section)
Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2	1. Enfolded melody (end of A section)
Ballade in G minor, Op. 118 no. 2	3. Melody emerging from inner voice (B section)
Romanze in F major, Op. 118 no. 5	1. Enfolded melody (A section) 3. Melody emerging from an inner voice (B section)

While many of the pieces listed here have long been described as having an inward quality,[15] this chapter has sought to explain just how these works are expressive of inwardness. More specifically, this chapter demonstrates that, appearing alongside those processes of sublimation and thematic dissolution discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, structural inner voices in Brahms's music may be heard as enacting the Romantic ideal of fading within.

[15] Some authors who have mentioned in particular the inward quality of Brahms piano works are: Hanslick, "Discovering Brahms"; Rings, "The Learned Self"; Morgan, "6 Piano Pieces, Opus 118."

Chapter 6

Blurring into the Distance: Harmonic Overlaps in Schumann and Brahms

6.1. Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, a blurry quality characterizes the distant in Romantic landscape paintings. Whereas the objects in the foreground are sharply delineated, those in the background delicately merge onto one another, their boundaries vanishing into the horizon. As such, the distant stands at the threshold between the bounded and the boundless, the finite and the infinite.

The blurry quality of the distant is clearly recognizable in paintings such as Friedrich's *Winterlandschaft mit Kirche* (Winter-Landscape with Church), shown in Figure 6.1. While the foreground clearly delimits the figure of a man lying at the foot of the cross, the image of a cathedral gently fades into the horizon amidst an indistinct, pale haze of snow and sky. Highlighting the qualitative difference between foreground and background is the fact that the pines trees surrounding the cross in the foreground map onto the high pinnacles of the cathedral floating in the horizon, such that the latter appears as a transformation of the former. The blurred cathedral depicts then the foreground imagery vanishing in the distance.

Franz Brendel, who in 1845 succeeded Robert Schumann as the editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, recognized a parallel between these blurry, receding backgrounds and certain passages in Schumann's music:

FIGURE 6.1. Caspar David Friedrich, *Winterlandschaft mit Kirche*, 1811. Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Dortmund.

> Schumann's compositions can often be compared with landscape paintings in which the foreground gains prominence in sharply delineated clear contours while the background becomes blurred and vanishes in a limitless perspective; they may be compared with a misty landscape, in which only here and there a sunlit object stands out. Thus the compositions contain certain principal passages, then other passages that should by no means stand out clearly, and are intended only to serve as background; some passages are points lit by rays of sunlight, others fade away in blurred contours. To this inner peculiarity corresponds the exterior one that Schumann is very fond of playing with the constantly depressed pedal, so that the harmonies do not emerge with particular clarity.[1]

Brendel thus links the merging of objects in space with the blending of chords in time that results from playing with the dampers raised. Quoting this passage, Berthold Hoeckner has drawn on this connection in his discussion of the penultimate piece from Schumann's *Davidsbündlertanze*, Op. 6, entitled "Wie aus der Ferne" (As if from a Distance). Hoeckner argues that this piece evokes a sense of distance by echoing the melody heard at the beginning of the set and casting it in a widely spaced piano texture that requires playing with the open pedal, producing those blurred harmonies that Brendel describes.[2] Charles Rosen offers a similar reading, noting how this passage "must swim in pedal…blurring tonic and dominant harmony together in a single mist."[3] The way that "Wie aus der Ferne" recasts the melody from the first piece of the set amidst a hazy blur of tonic and dominant is comparable then to the transformation of the foreground imagery into the blurred cathedral in Friedrich's painting.

This chapter expands on the connection between the hazy, vanishing backgrounds characteristic of Romantic paintings and the blurring of harmonies in Romantic music. The focus, however, is on those works where harmonies blur together as a product of composed-out chord overlaps rather than from the use of pedal. Such overlaps are common to Schumann's works as

---

[1] Franz Brendel, "Robert Schumann mit Rücksicht auf Mendelssohn-Bartholdy und die Entwicklung der modernen Tonkunst überhaupt," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 22 (1845): 89–90. Translation adapted from Franz Brendel, "Robert Schumann with Reference to Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and the Development of Modern Music in General," trans. Jürgen Thym, in *Schumann and His World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 322–23.

[2] Berthold Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute,* 82.

[3] Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 26.

well as Brahms's, where they generally appear as part of a process of decay involving many of the techniques discussed in the previous chapters. Several examples from both composers illustrate how these overlaps work in their music, but the emphasis will remain on Brahms's works.

6.2. Harmonic Overlaps

Harmonic overlaps involve the superposition of two triads or seventh chords. Yet, not all superposed chords blend together in a way comparable to the background of a Romantic painting. Take for example the opening of Brahms's *Der Abend*, discussed back in Chapter 4. The prelude sets an A major chord in sharp relief against the G minor triad. The poignancy of this moment stems in part from the unexpected appearance of the chromatic A major chord and the fact that the two chords share no tones in common. On the other hand, the overlaps we shall discuss in this chapter generally involve chords a perfect fifth apart that share at least a common tone and form part of what would otherwise be a straightforward chord progression. These overlaps may arise from a rhythmic dislocation of melody and bass, as a product of thematic diffusion, or by joining chords through a downward arpeggiation such that the first dissolves seamlessly into the second. Although these are not meant to be mutually exclusive categories, each is discussed separately below.

Overlaps Arising from Rhythmic Dislocations

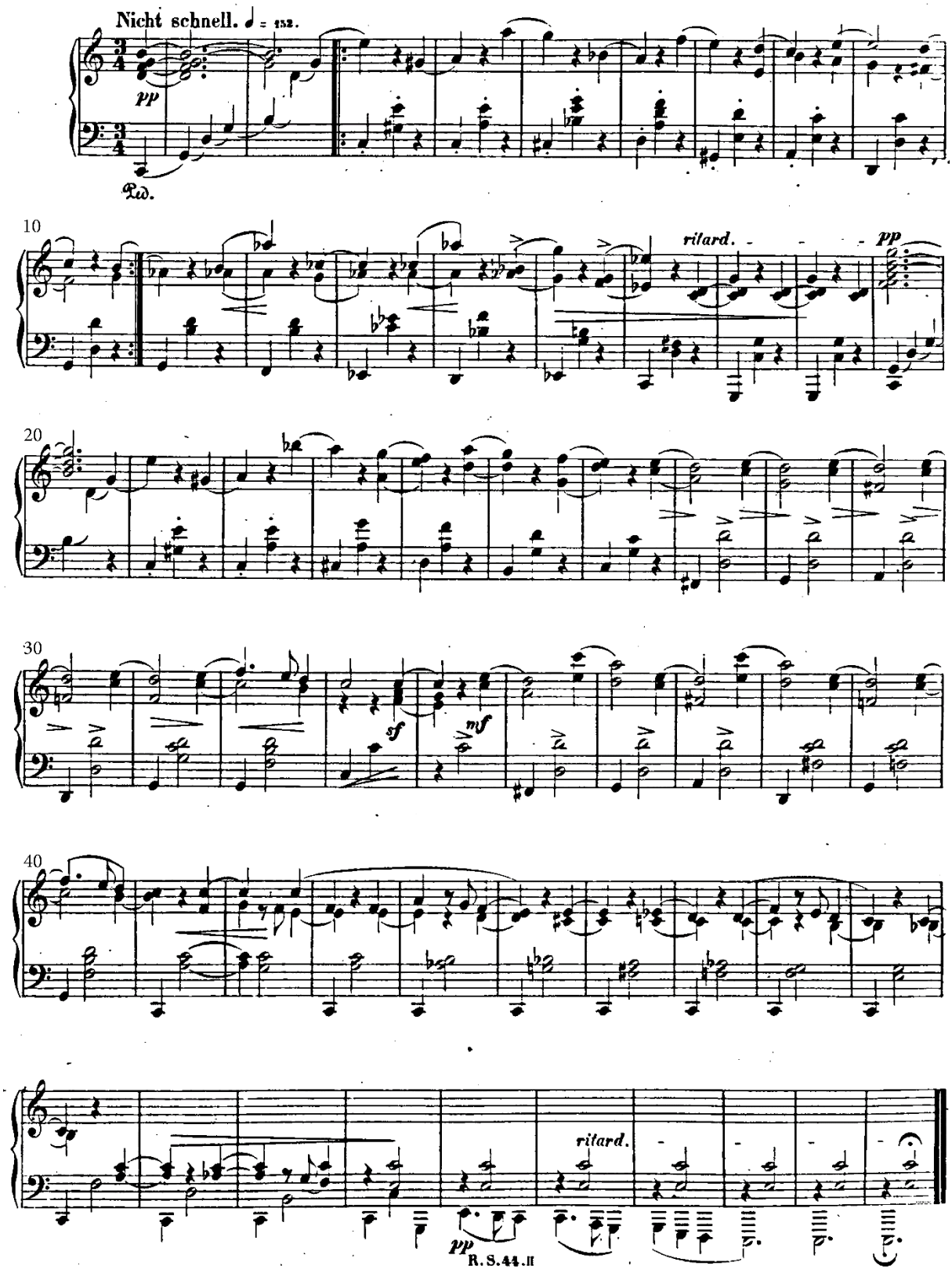
Most harmonic overlaps arise from a rhythmic/harmonic dislocation between melody and bass, whereby one part projects one chord of the progression and a different part another. The process is similar as that which produces a suspension or an anticipation, except that in these cases it is

not clear which harmony is controlling the given time span. The result is not an either/or situation, to use Carl Schachter's term, where one must choose one chord over the other, but rather a both/and situation, to use Peter Smith's term, where the two harmonies merge within a single time span, like snow and sky in the background of Friedrich's painting.[4] Two examples from Schumann and Brahms illustrate.

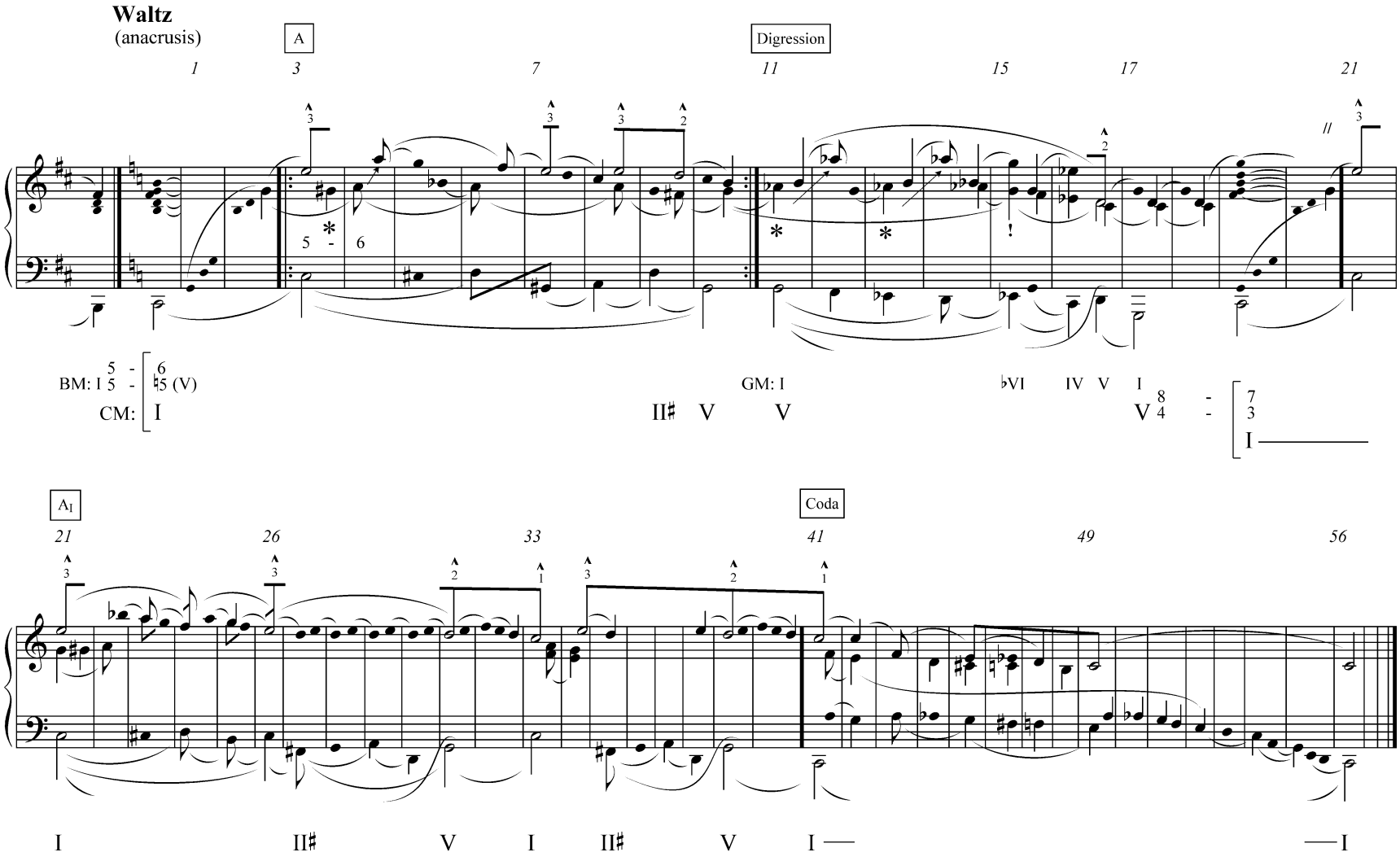
For the first, let us return to Schumann's *Davidsbündlertänze* and consider the ending of "Wie aus der Ferne" together with the waltz that follows. Example 6.1 reproduces the waltz along with a voice-leading sketch. The "Wie aus der Ferne," which evokes a sense of distance through its echoes of the opening melody and blurring harmonies under an open pedal, ends with a quiet plagal cadence in B minor. The final waltz follows with a G dominant seventh chord quietly placed over, and resolving into, a tonic C major chord. The dominant, however, is not simply a tonic embellishment that could be easily left out in a voice-leading reduction. To the contrary, it forms an important link that connects via a chromaticized 5-6 exchange the B minor triad at the end of the previous piece with the C major tonic chord that comes to fruition in m. 3 of the waltz, as shown in the voice-leading sketch in Example 6.1b. From this progression one can infer a hypothetical prototype such as that shown in Example 6.1c, which draws a clear boundary between the G dominant of the anacrusis and the tonic that follows. In contrast, the actual anacrusis overlaps the dominant with its tonic resolution, delicately blurring one with the other.

[4] See Carl Schachter, "Either/or," in *Schenker Studies*, ed. by Hedi Siegel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 165–180; and Peter Smith, "Outer Voice Conflicts: Their Analytical Challenges and Artistic Consequences," *Journal of Music Theory* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 3.

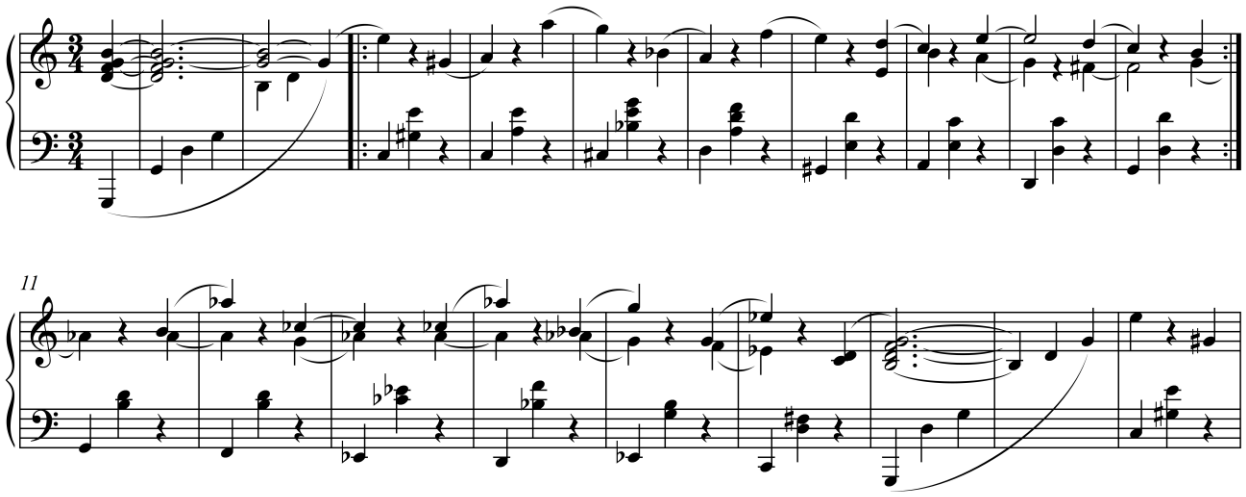
EXAMPLE 6.1a. Robert Schumann, *Davidsbündlertänze*, Op. 6, no. 18, score



EXAMPLE 6.1b. Robert Schumann, *Davidsbündlertänze*, Op. 6, no. 18, voice-leading sketch



EXAMPLE 6.1c. Robert Schumann, *Davidsbündlertänze*, Op. 6, no. 18, hypothetical prototype for mm. 1–21



Given that the dominant arises as a voice-leading elaboration of the B minor chord at the end of the previous piece, the anacrusis may be heard not only as merging dominant and tonic but also as seamlessly dissolving the "Wie aus die Ferne" into the nostalgic waltz that follows.

Tonic and dominant harmonies blur again at the end of the digression, following a process of rhythmic and dynamic decay. The digression begins by bringing to the fore the A♭/G♯ pitch heard as an ascending chromatic passing tone at the beginning of the opening phrase (marked with asterisks in the voice-leading sketch). This G♯/A♭ pushes forcefully upward in mm. 11–14 but it is sublimated when it sinks back to G in m. 15. The sublimation of G♯ sets off a process of decay that culminates with the blurring of tonic and dominant harmonies at the end of the digression. While the bass clearly arrives on V in m. 17, a C continues sounding in an inner voice for two more measures as part of a 4-3 suspension. The suspended C finally resolves in m. 19, bringing the dominant chord to fruition. But precisely at the moment when the right hand settles on V, the bass leaps from G to C, bringing back the tonic chord along with the opening anacrusis. The anacrusis thus blurs the V at the end of the digression with the tonic that begins

the opening phrase. The chord overlap may be heard this time as arising from the delayed arrival of the V chord in the right-hand brought forth by the 4-3 suspension in mm. 17–18. Example 6.1c provides an eight-bar prototype for the digression, which elides the dominant arrival with the beginning of the anacrusis and clarifies the background progression. After the blurring of V and I during the anacrusis, the opening theme returns and cadences on tonic. By the end, the waltz melts away into the closing tonic chord after a long chromatic descent in the coda, shown in the voice-leading sketch.

Similar rhythmic/harmonic displacements characterize several of Brahms's works. In many cases, these displacements bring tonic and dominant chords together in what resembles a cadential 6/4. But, unlike a cadential 6/4, which functions as an elaboration of dominant harmony, the 6/4 in this case combines tonic and dominant function: scale-degree 5 in the bass standing for V, and scale-degrees 1 and 3 for tonic.

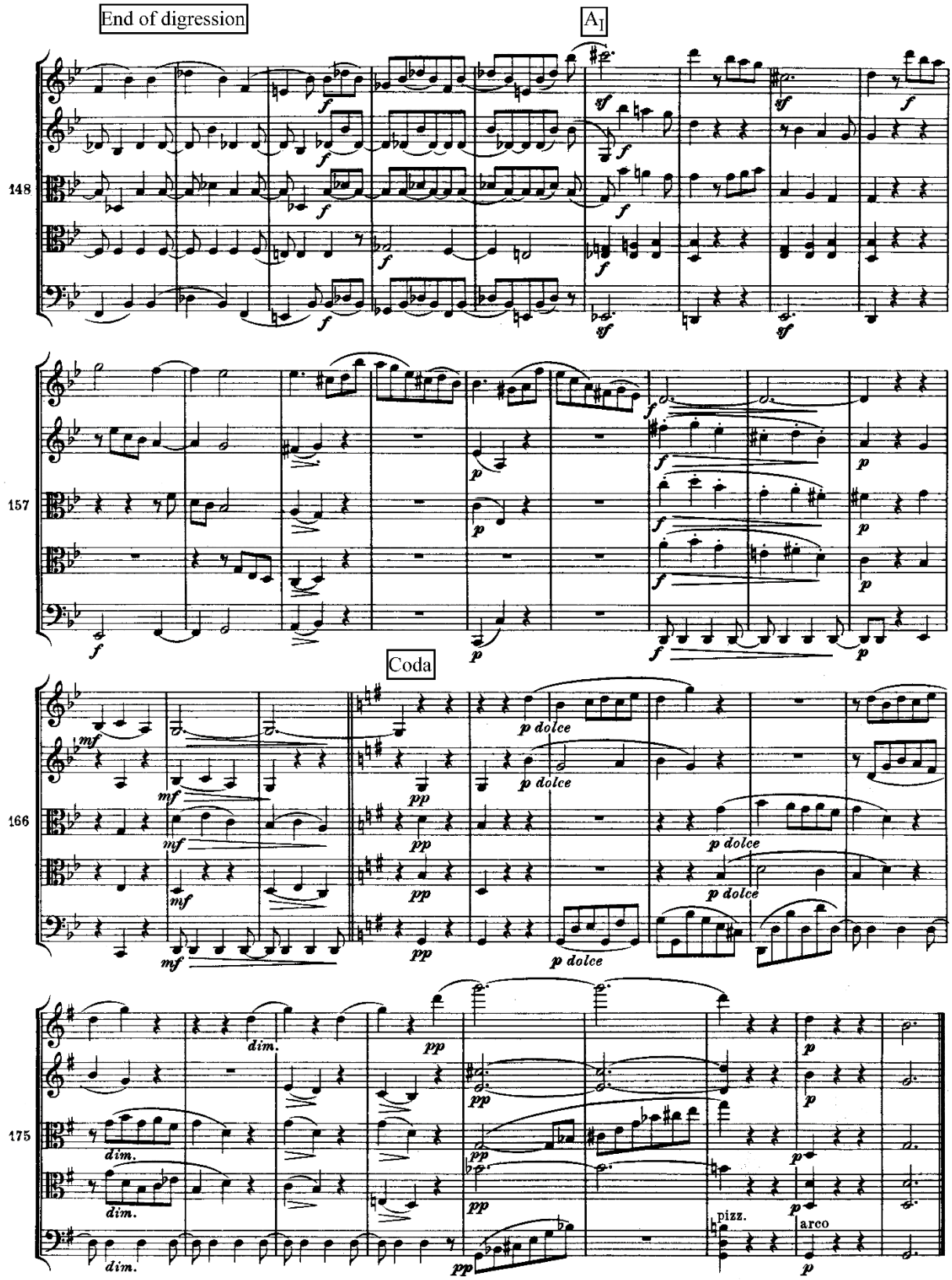
Consider, for instance, the excerpt from the third movement of Brahms's String Quintet in G major, Op. 111, reproduced along with a voice-leading sketch in Example 6.2. As in the Schumann, the overlap appears here as the culmination of a process of dissolution. The excerpt begins near the end of the digression of the A section. Following the digression, the opening theme returns in m. 153 powerfully reversing its yielding D to C♯ motive into an climactic motion from C♯ to D.[5] As the voice-leading sketch shows, the melodic gesture from C♯-D gestured is heard twice, moving each time from a *sf* augmented-sixth chord to an interrupted passing 6/4. The implied third descent in the bass from E♭ to C is interrupted twice in mm. 153–156 but comes to fruition in mm. 157–162, taking now the form of a sixth-ascent from E♭ to C.[6] The much awaited dominant finally arrives in m. 163 only to dwindle away two bars later. The

[5] Frank Samarotto discusses this melodic reversal in detail in his essay, "Sublimating Sharp ^4," para. 24–28.
[6] Samarotto offers a different reading of this passage. He interprets the 6/4 as cadential rather than passing. See his essay "Sublimating Sharp ^4," para. 25–26.

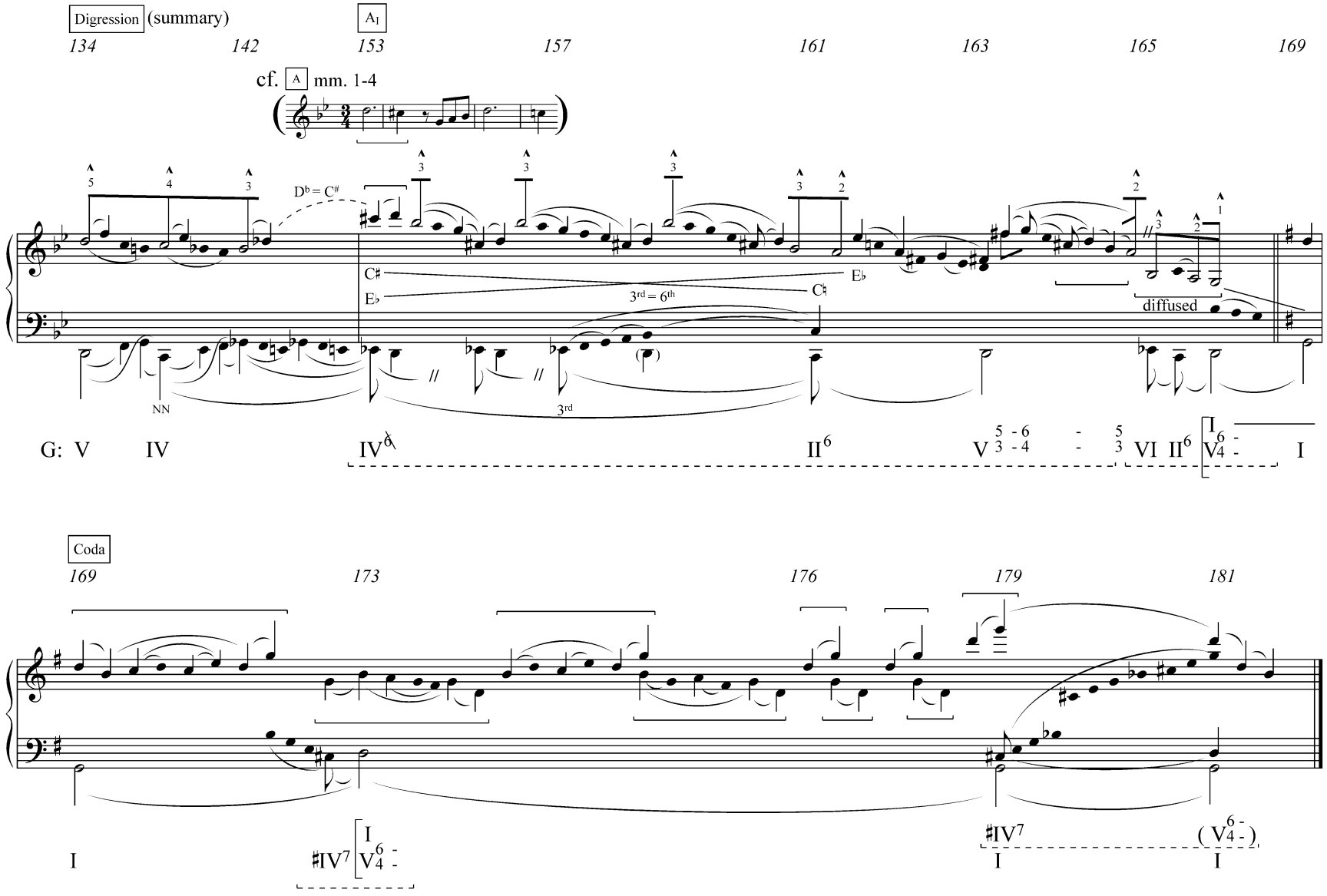
decay of the V chord brings about an interruption on scale-degree 2 in the melody, which functions not as part of half cadence but rather as part of a motion to tonic that fizzles midway through. After the dominant dies out, the bass progression E♭-C-D, which was powerfully foregrounded in mm. 153–165, appears now quietly and reduced to its most basic diatonic form, like a faded memory of its former self. By the moment the cello returns to the throbbing Ds, however, the melody this time has already completed its descent to scale-degree 1, as the voice-leading sketch illustrates. The ensuing 6/4 chord in mm. 167–168 thus blends dominant and tonic function, partly sounding as a cadential 6/4 whose resolution is elided and partly as a tonic chord that finally comes to fruition with the root position G major chord heard *pp* in mm. 169–170. Accordingly, as the brackets in the voice-leading sketch indicate, one may hear the progression that is foregrounded in mm. 153–165 as receding quietly into the background and losing its distinctiveness as the section finally dissolves into tonic harmony for the beginning of the coda.

Dominant and tonic harmonies blur together once again during the coda. The coda begins much like the B section (shown in Example 6.2c), with the two-bar melody echoing between the violins and violas above the cello accompaniment. As before, the head melody appears first over tonic and then over dominant harmony. Instead of resolving back to tonic, however, the cello now continues to prolong the dominant, harkening back in m. 174 to those throbbing Ds heard at the end of the A section (mm. 163–165 and 167–168). Meanwhile, above this dominant pedal, the two-bar melodic fragments prolonging tonic begin to dissolve until all that remains by m. 177 is a two-note gesture from D to G, repeating ever softer like a distant echo.

EXAMPLE 6.2a. Brahms, String Quintet in G major, Op. 111, III, end of A section through coda

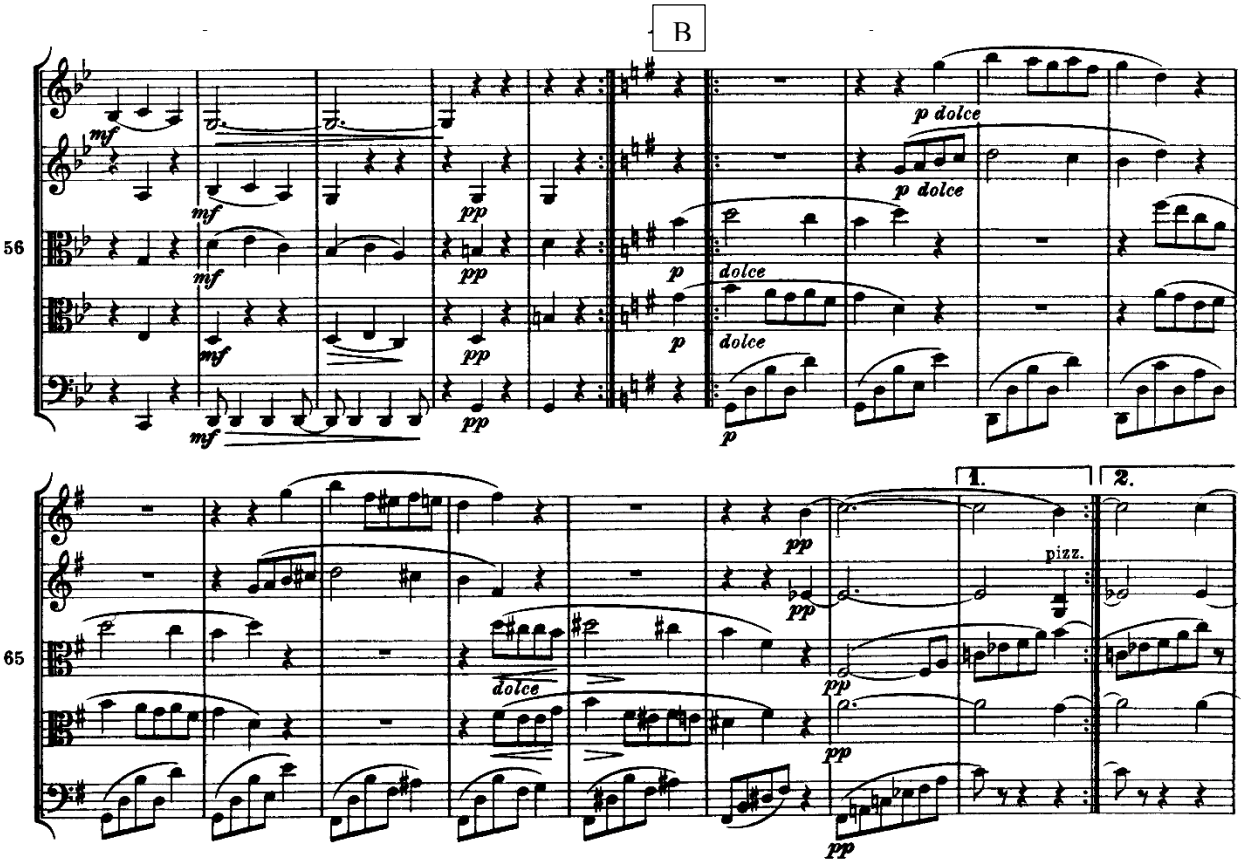


EXAMPLE 6.2b. Brahms, String Quintet in G major, Op. 111, III, voice-leading sketch

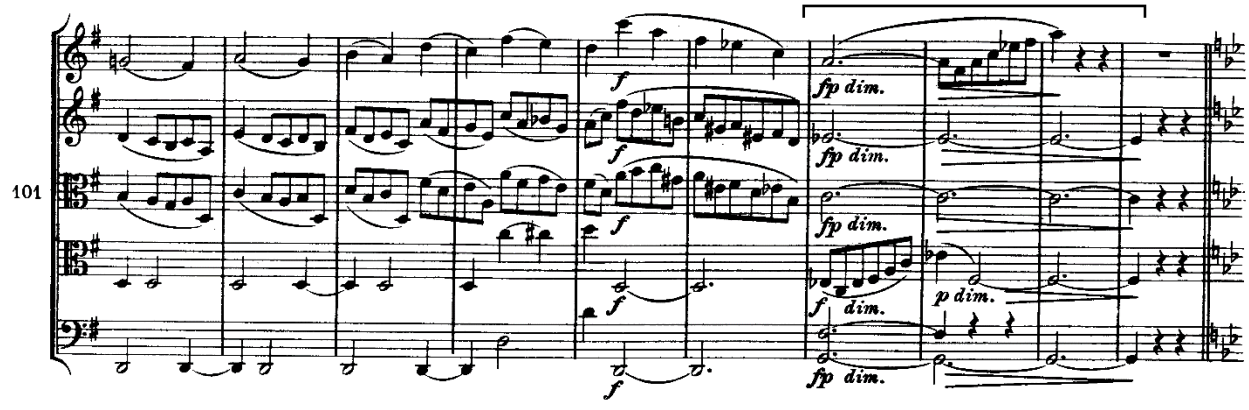


EXAMPLE 6.2c. Brahms, String Quintet in G major, Op. 111, III, excerpts from B section

i) B section, first reprise



ii) End of B section



As a result, tonic and dominant blur together across mm. 174–178 into a 6/4 chord that recalls, with its throbbing Ds, the end of the A section. At the end of the A section, the tonic chord finally comes to fruition when the cello leaps to scale-degree 1. But when the cello leaps to G in m. 179, the harmony shifts to a C♯ diminished-seventh chord that sounds as a vii^{o7} of V. This arpeggiated, diminished-seventh chord recalls in turn the end of the B section, which also features an arpeggiated diminished seventh chord. In the B section, the vii^{o7} chord evaporates over the tonic bass note without ever resolving, as shown with brackets at the bottom of Example 6.2c. In the coda, the diminished seventh chord does resolve, not V, as one would expect, but to I. It is only with the reinterpretation of the vii^{o7}/V as a CT^{o7} that the last remnants of the throbbing dominant chord finally vanish into the closing tonic.

While in both of the examples provided here, the overlaps arise from a rhythmic displacement, those in the Brahms afford a different experience that those in the Schumann. For while in the Schumann the anacrusis combines tonic and dominant function from its very onset, in the Brahms's the 6/4 chords may be heard at first as having dominant function and only later as having tonic function as well. In other words, the 6/4 sounds first like a cadential 6/4 and later as a tonic chord with a delayed arrival of scale-degree 1 in the bass. Such 6/4 chords are rather common in Brahms's works as other examples later in the chapter demonstrate.

Diffused Harmonies

Many chord overlaps arising from rhythmic dislocations appear as the melody becomes diffused and starts lagging behind the bass accompaniment. When the music slows down, the chords become less localized and spread freely onto one another, resulting into a diffused sense of harmonic structure.

An example of a diffused harmonic progression may be found at the end of the first movement of Schumann's C major *Fantasy*, Op. 17. As John Daverio has pointed out, Schumann began composing this sonata to help finance the construction of a Beethoven monument, entitling the first movement "Ruinen" (Ruins).[7] Though later discarded, this title points to the famous quotation from the last of song of Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* that stands at the end of the movement like a Romantic ruin fading into a hazy background.

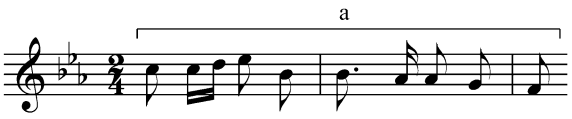
The quoted song is itself richly suggestive. In it, the protagonist tells his beloved to sing those songs during twilight so that they may dissolve what separates them. As shown in Example 6.3a, the quote comes from the melody at the beginning of the last song and its subsequent transformation into the opening melody of the cycle. This transformation occurs just as the voice sings "Dann vor diesen Liedern weichet/ was geschieden uns so weit" (Then through these songs will vanish what sets us apart). The transformation of the melody from the last song into that of the first accomplishes just that, bridging the temporal divide between the beginning and end of the cycle.

When in the *Fantasy* Schumann combines the melody from the last song and its subsequent transformation, these words take on an added meaning. The quote now collapses the temporal divide not only between past and present—Beethoven and Schumann—but also between chords, fusing them together in a common temporal span. As Example 6.3b illustrates, the quote, like a ruin, undergoes a process of decay, gradually slowing down and fading away. By the end, this melodic fragment becomes diffused and its accompanying harmonies start spreading gently onto one another.

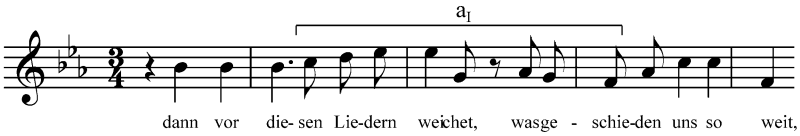
[7] John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York, Schirmer Books, 1993), 20.

EXAMPLE 6.3a. Quoted melody in Robert Schumann's *Fantasy*, Op. 17, I

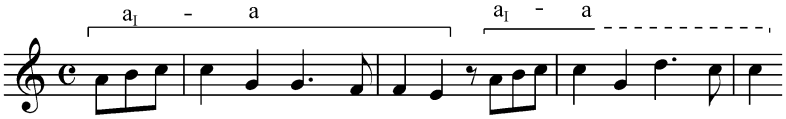
An die ferne Geliebte, no. 6, mm. 1-3



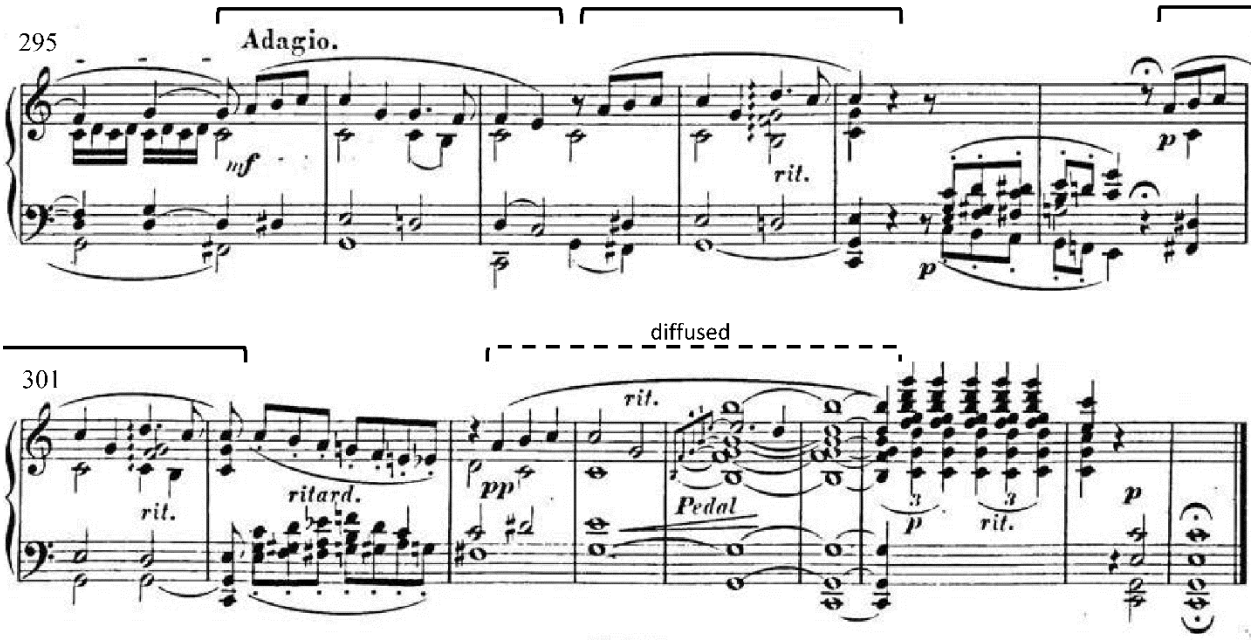
An die ferne Geliebte, no. 6, mm. 40-44



Fantasy, I, mm. 296-99



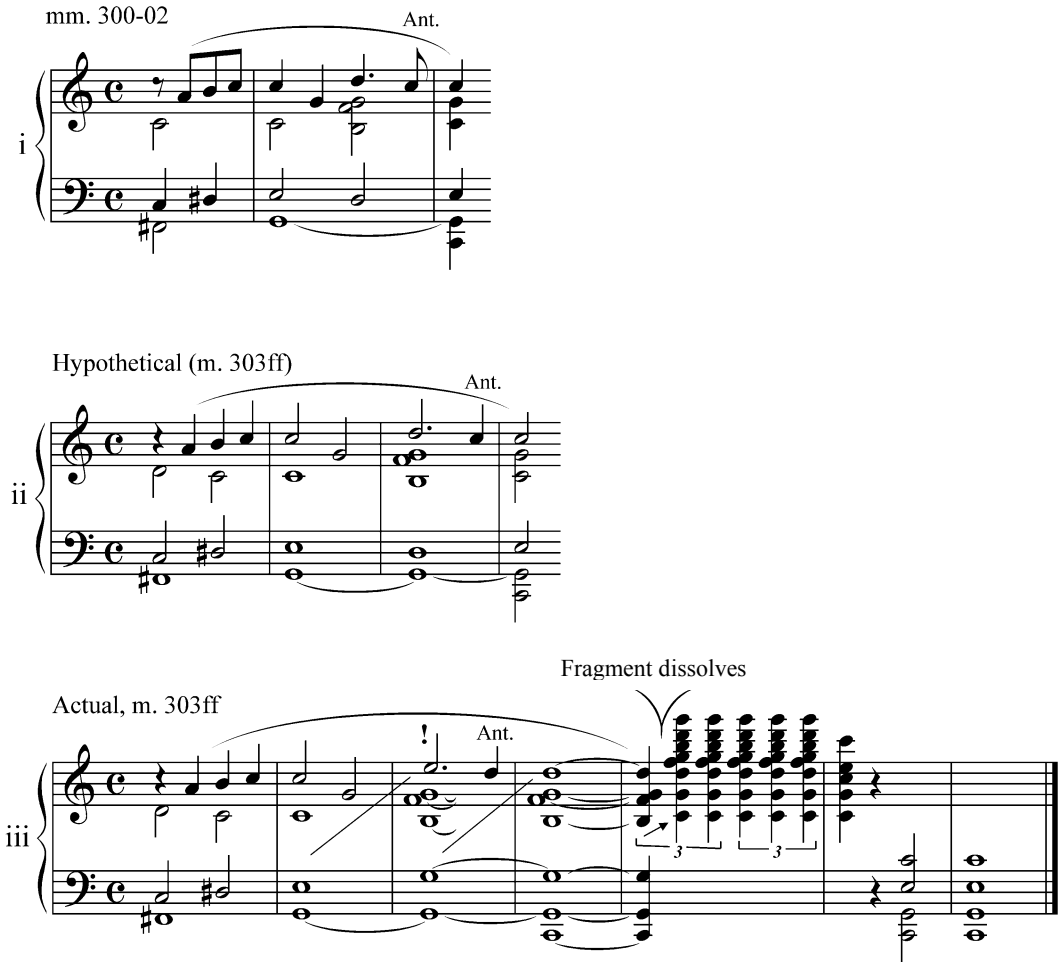
Example 6.3b. Schumann, *Fantasy*, Op. 17, I, ending



Example 6.3c illustrates in three steps how the final chords come to blur together. On top is the quoted melody as it appears in mm. 301–302. The staff below then provides a hypothetical intermediate step, where the melody is diffused but each harmony remains localized. Finally, the bottom staff provides a reduction of the actual ending, which shows the upper-voice suspensions spreading and blurring into their resolution. First, it is the high E that, appearing in place of the expected D, spreads the cadential 6/4 from m. 304 into the V^7 chord that follows. This overly extended 6-5 suspension is structurally marked in that it does not resolve with the 4-3 suspension, stretching instead for another three-quarter notes and combining with B and F.[8] By the moment the E finally resolves to D in m. 306, the bass has already reached the final tonic. At first, the D, along with the rest of the V chord, sounds more or less like a regular suspension (except that it is not adequately prepared). But, at the moment one would expect this suspension to resolve, the quote breaks off and Schumann blurs the dominant with its tonic resolution in a set of repeating chords. The suspended V chord seems partly to resolve with the appearance of middle C in m. 307, while at the same time continuing to be held over until it finally resolves to tonic in the penultimate bar. Accordingly, the suspended V chord spreads into the time span of its resolution and blends seamlessly with the final tonic chord. Amidst this blur the fragment dissolves away like a distant memory. But, merging together those chords that were previously separated, the ever more diffused quote from the song achieves at a structural level what its words promise; namely, to bring together what was once separate.

[8] Whereas in a cadential 6/4 the fourth above the bass often resolve later than the sixth above the bass, it is much less common for the sixth to resolve after the fourth.

EXAMPLE 6.3c. Diffused harmonies at the end of Schumann's *Fantasy*, Op. 17, I



Whereas in the *Fantasy* the diffused V chord blurs with but eventually resolves to the final tonic, in several of Brahms's works the diffused harmony spreads above the next without ever resolving. The effect is one where the resolution seems to disappear as if in the distance. For a particular striking example let us turn to the coda of the first movement of his Violin Sonata in A major, Op. 100.

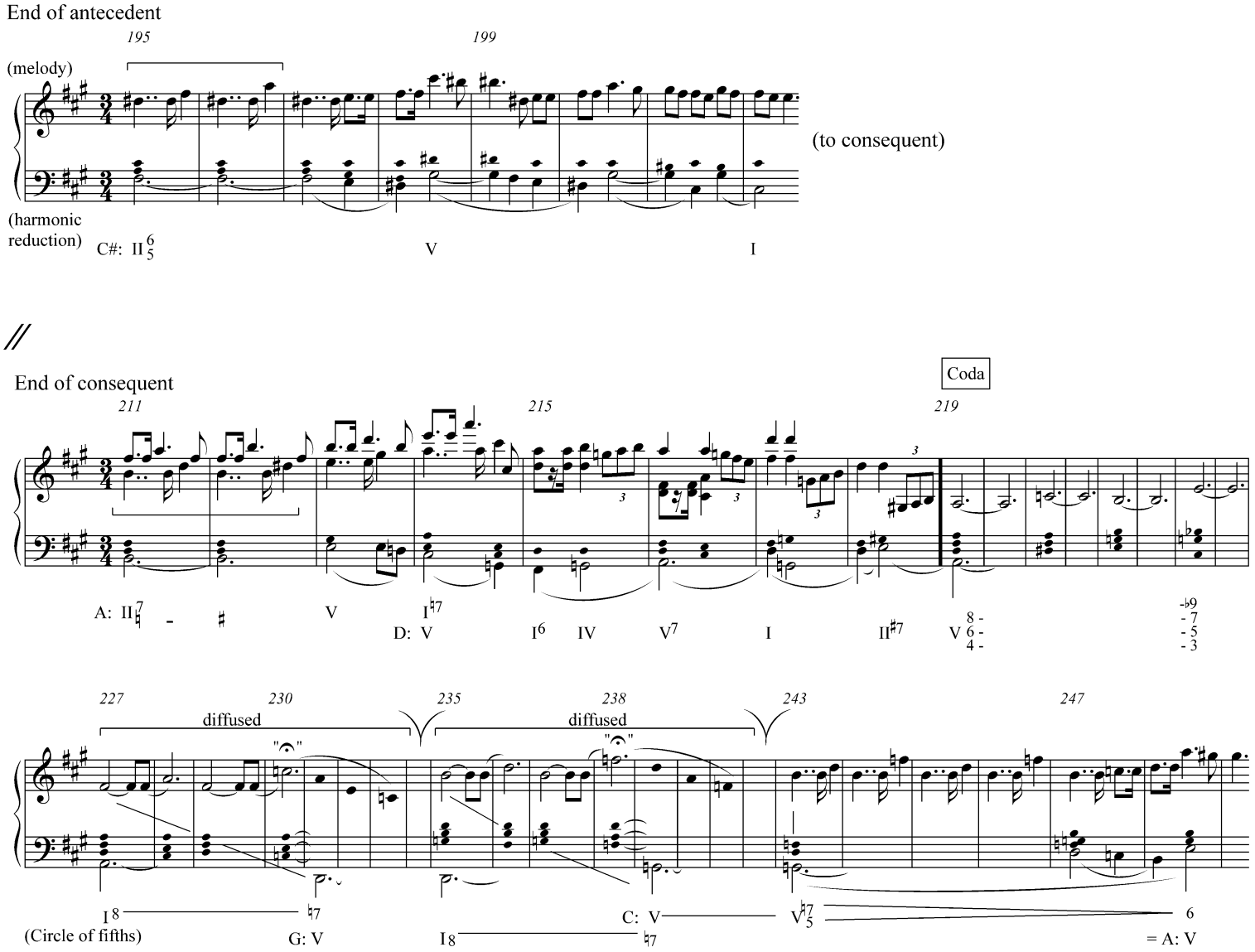
The coda begins with a remarkable transformation of the secondary theme. The theme resembles a double period, consisting of four phrases grouped in an antecedent and a consequent pair. At the end of each pair, the cantabile theme wanders off into a passage characterized by its double-dotted rhythms. The passage reproduced at the top of Example 6.4a corresponds to that at

the end of the antecedent, and the one at the bottom corresponds to that at the end of the consequent. The second time around the music becomes louder and more intense, with the violin playing a diminution of the ascending gestures heard in the piano. At first the consequent seems en route to a perfect authentic cadence in the tonic key (A major), but by m. 214 it veers off into the subdominant key, arriving on a powerful cadential 6/4 chord in m. 219. At this point in the form, this arrival suggests the beginning of a cadenza-like passage. Instead of a flashing display of virtuosity, however, the music loses all its impetus, fading over the pedal A to a *pp* by m. 227. At this moment, fragments of the energetic, dotted theme return now only diffused and fading away into a "quasi-fermata," as shown at the bottom of Example 6.4a. As each diffused fragment fades away, the accompanying harmonies become less localized and start merging onto one another.

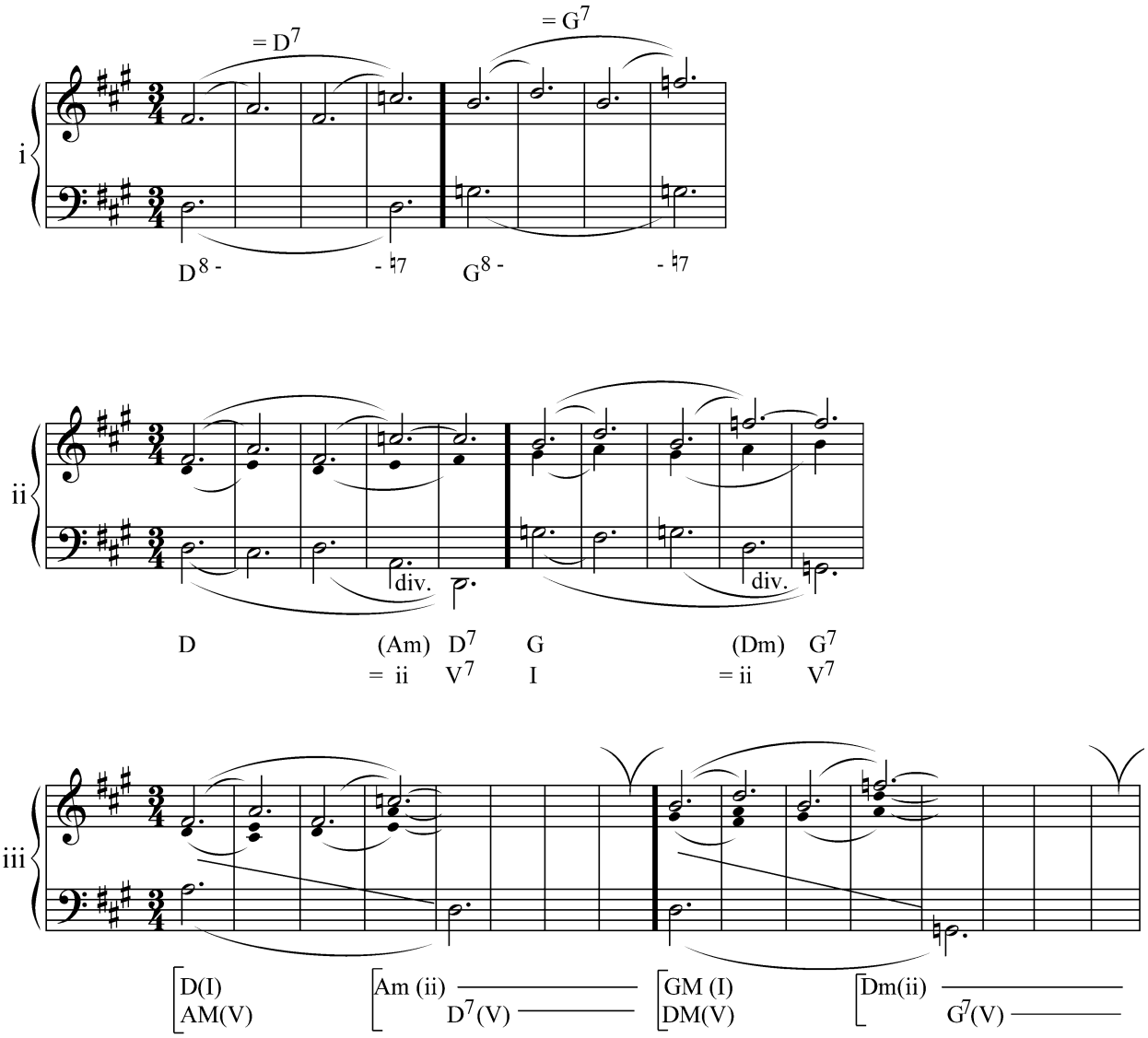
Example 6.4b reveals the harmonic progression blurred across mm. 227–242. The topmost staff shows the two melodic fragments moving sequentially, the first unfolding a D dominant chord and the second a G dominant chord. The middle system illustrates the prolongation of these two chords, first by a neighboring motion and then through a passing motion that receives consonant support through a fifth-divider. Finally, the bottom system provides a rhythmic reduction of the actual passage, showing how this progression becomes blurred as melody and bass move out of sync.

As shown in the bottom system, chords begin to blend together as early as m. 227. Here, the upper voices arrive on a clear D major chord, but the bass remains on a pedal A, continuing to prolong the previous dominant (V of D). In m. 230, the prolonged D triad turns into a dominant seventh chord as the melody arpeggiates up to C♮. This C♮ is harmonized with an A minor chord that functions as a fifth-divider of D (as shown in the middle system).

EXAMPLE 6.4a. Brahms, Violin Sonata in A major, Op. 100, I, diffusal of the secondary theme in the coda



EXAMPLE 6.4b. Diffused harmonies in the coda, mm. 227–242



At this moment melody and bass seem to finally come together, but in the next bar the bass leaps down from A to D while the upper voices continue to expand the A minor chord. Consequently, the D dominant chord implied by the bass and its fifth-divider, A minor, blur delicately onto one another just as the melody fades away into a indistinct arpeggio. The superposed A minor triad becomes so diffused across the four-bar quasi-fermata that its resolution to the D dominant chord is lost as if in the distance, turning this passage truly into a fragment of the secondary theme.

This eight-bar fragment then repeats across mm. 235–242, now prolonging G dominant harmony. As before, bass and melody are out of sync, and the fragment dissolves with the D minor fifth-divider diffused above the G dominant chord. When in m. 243 the double-dotted theme finally returns in its original rhythm and dynamics, melody and bass sync together onto a clear dominant prolongation that corresponds to that in the prototype given at the top of Example 6.4c (four bars of the prototype become 2 bars of the Vivace). As part of a chromaticized 5-6 exchange, the prolonged G eventually turns into an E dominant chord for the return of the primary theme back in the tonic key at the end of the coda.[9]

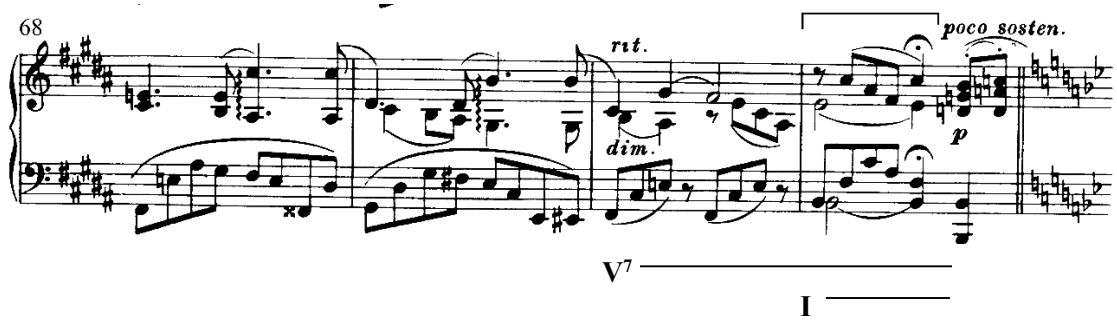
Accordingly, the passage in mm. 219–242 may be heard as if sounding at a distance. Harmonically, the music veers off away from A minor to D minor, at a moment when one expects a strong cadence in the tonic key. But rather than a sense of failure, this modulation transport us to a distant realm, where the second theme becomes diffused and fades amidst a haze of blurred harmonies, like the pine trees mapping into the hazy cathedral in Friedrich's painting. As the coda begins its journey back to the home key, the music returns to its original pacing and chord boundaries become sharply delineated once again.

The most striking aspect of this passage is the way in which the upper-voice chords at the end of each of the diffused fragments spread over the next chord in the progression without ever resolving. For another example of this technique let us return to the passage from Brahms's Ballade in G minor, Op. 118 no. 3, reproduced in Example 6.5. As one may recall from the previous chapter, this passage comes at the end of the middle section, whose melody emerges from an inner voice. As shown with the Roman numerals below the example, this section ends with the dominant chord sustained with a fermata over its tonic resolution. The resolution of the

[9] This large scale motion from G major (VII) to an E dominant chord (V) may be heard as composing out the motion from VII to V heard at the beginning of the primary theme, mm. 8–9. In both cases, the G major triad unfolds the third of the dominant chord.

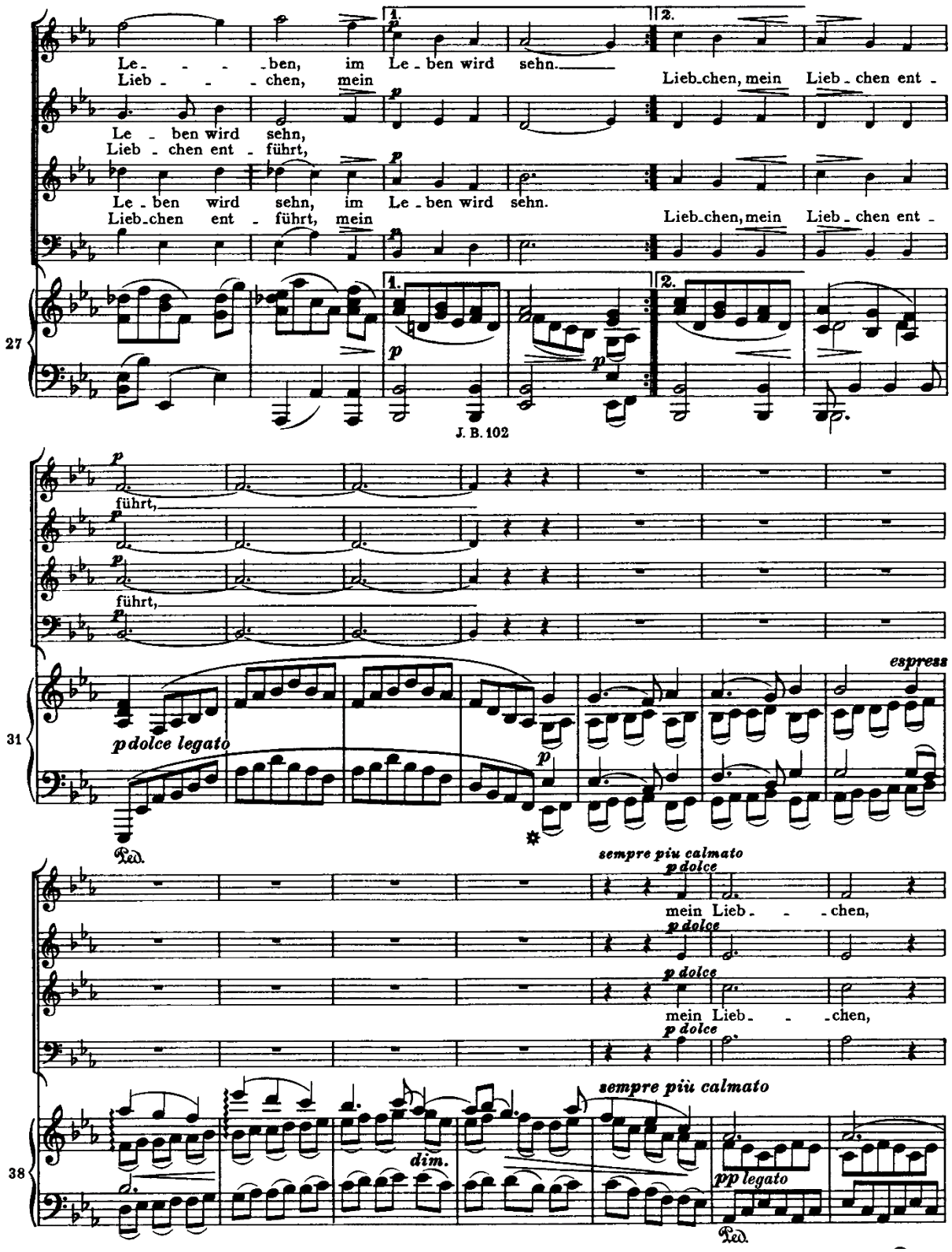
V chord in the upper voices seems to simply fade within, and instead the music begins an energetic return to the opening section. The passage from the violin sonata works exactly in the same away, except that in the sonata the fermata is composed-out and the overlapping chords function locally as ii and V rather than V and I.

EXAMPLE 6.5. Brahms, Intermezzo in G minor, Op. 118 no. 3, end of B section

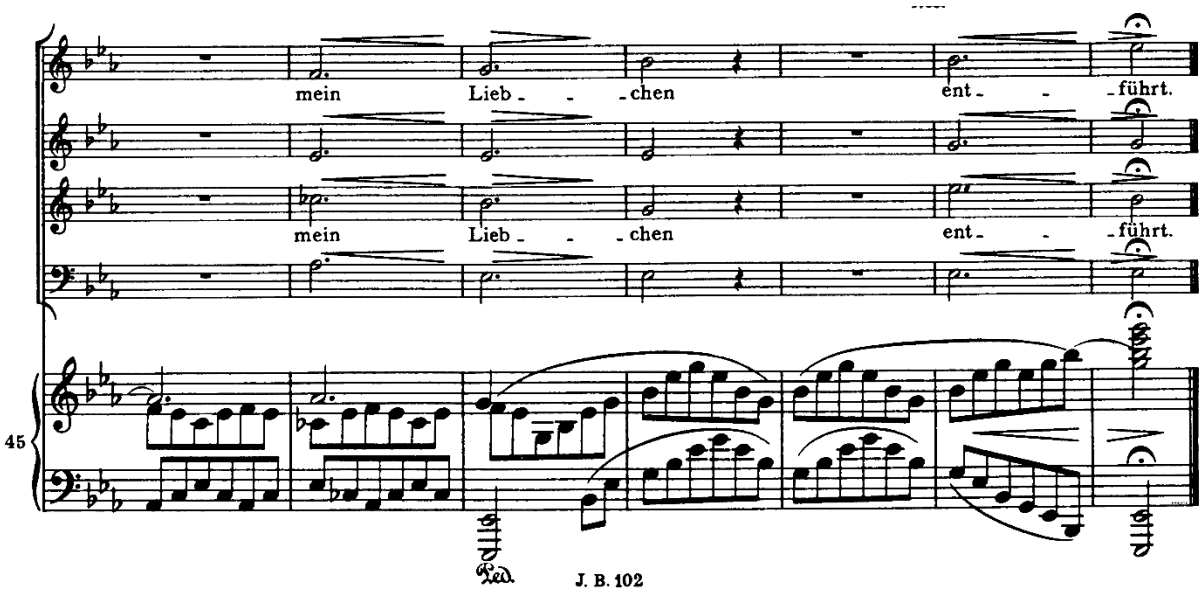


Brahms employs this same technique to a particular expressive effect in his vocal quartet "Der Gang zum Liebchen" (The way to his sweetheart), Op 31 no. 3. In the song, the protagonist hurries to his darling as the moon gleams down and sinks. The relevant passage, reproduced under Example 6.6, comes at the point of formal and structural closure, where the protagonist implores for his beloved not to be taken away. Voices and piano arrive on the structural dominant in m. 29 and the piano resolves to tonic two bars later, as expected. The voices, however, continue to expand V for four more bars and eventually drop off without resolving to I. The lack of resolution makes for a powerful setting of the word "entführt" (take away). In this case, however, the voices return with the same top voice and the same text on which they left off, melting plagally into a quiet tonic chord by the end of the piece.

EXAMPLE 6.6. Brahms, "Der Gang zum Liebchen," Op 31 no. 3, ending



EXAMPLE 6.6 continued



For our last example of diffused, overlapping harmonies let us turn to Brahms's choral song "Abendständchen" (Evening Serenade), Op. 42 no. 1. The title alone evokes those evanescent twilight backgrounds characteristic of landscape painting. In keeping with the title, the poem, reproduced in Example 6.7 along with the score, beautifully blends the image of distant sound with that of the fading day.

Brahms sets the poem strophically and adds a historical dimension to its imagery by employing quasi-canonic antiphony and open-fifth cadences. Accordingly, the evening serenade seems to come from a far-removed period and style, like a sonic ruin of a bygone age. The archaic style, and the hermeneutic interpretations it offers, takes a larger meaning within the context of the cycle: the next song builds on the theme of distance and decay by describing the ruins of the sunken city of Vineta, and the third song sets a poem by Ossian detailing the end of an entire race.

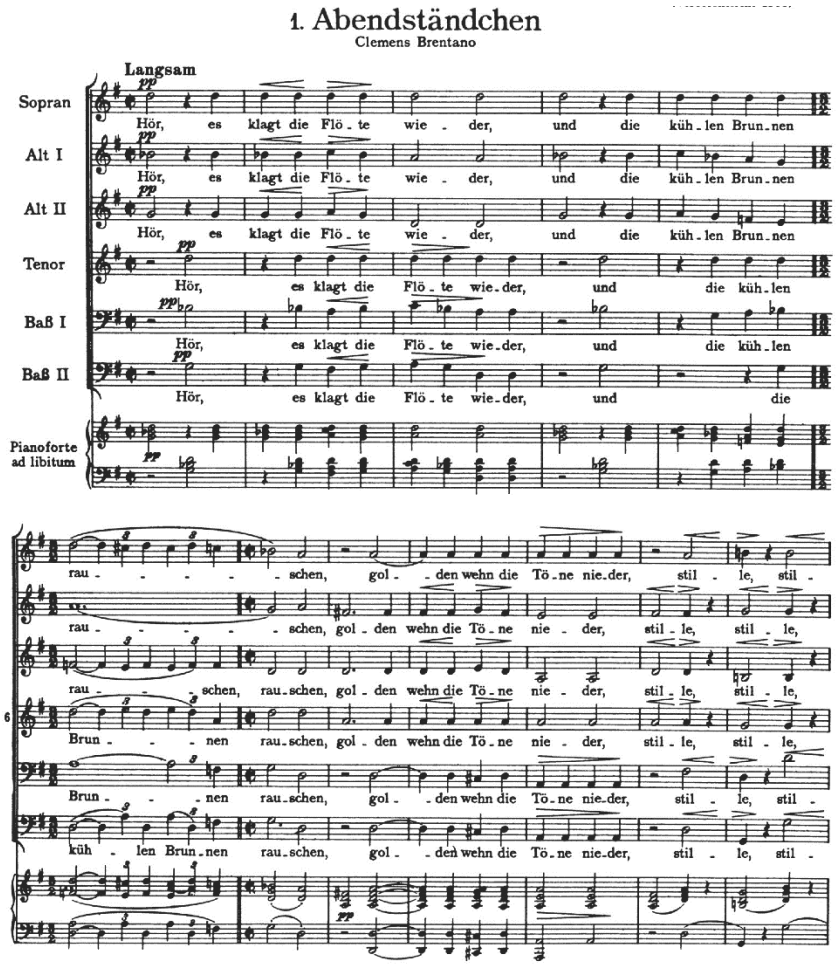
EXAMPLE 6.7. Brahms, “Abendständchen”, Op. 42 no. 1

a) Translation of Clemens Brentano’s poem by Emily Ezust

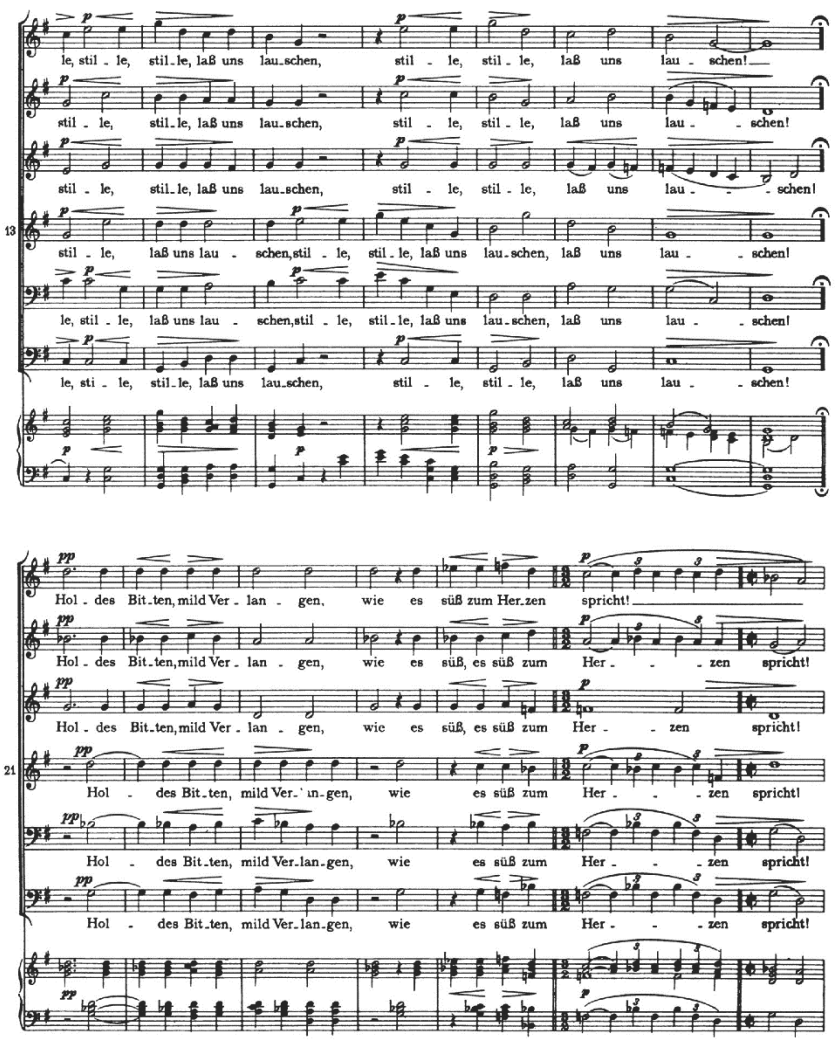
Hark, the flute laments again
and the cool springs murmur;
golden, the sounds waft down -
be still, be still, let us listen.

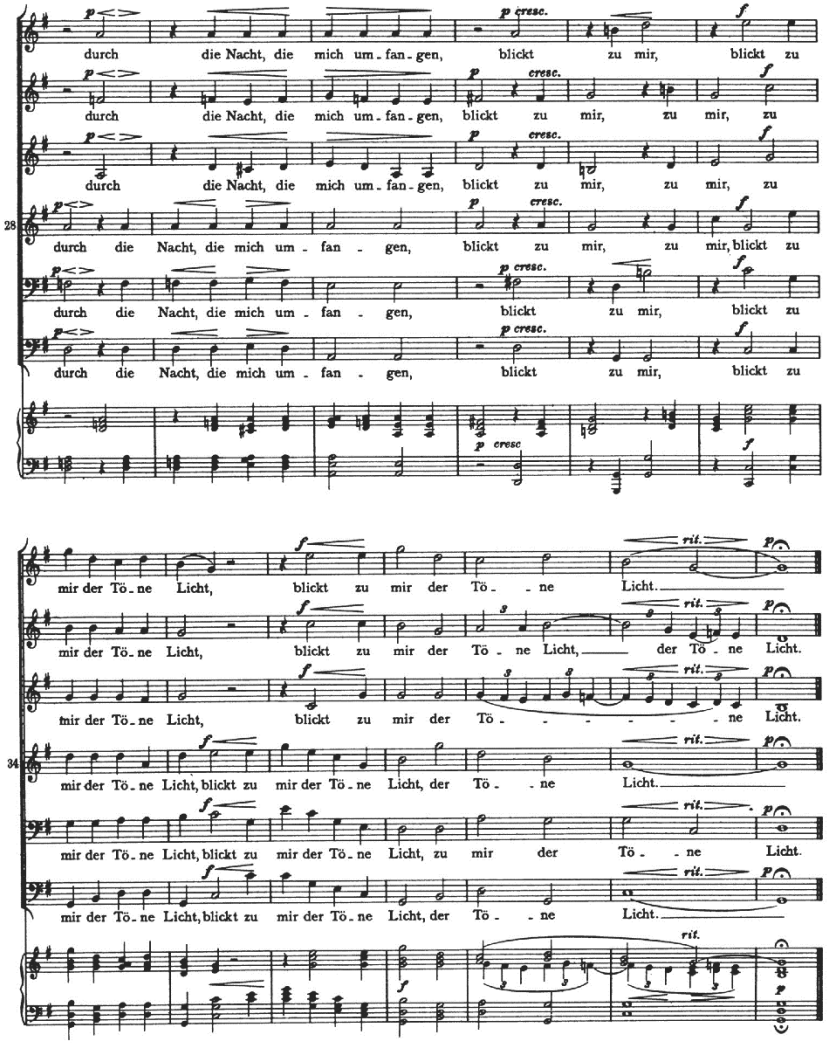
Lovely supplication, gentle longing,
how sweetly it speaks to the heart!
Through the night that enfolds me
shines the light of the music.

b) Score



EXAMPLE 6.7b continued

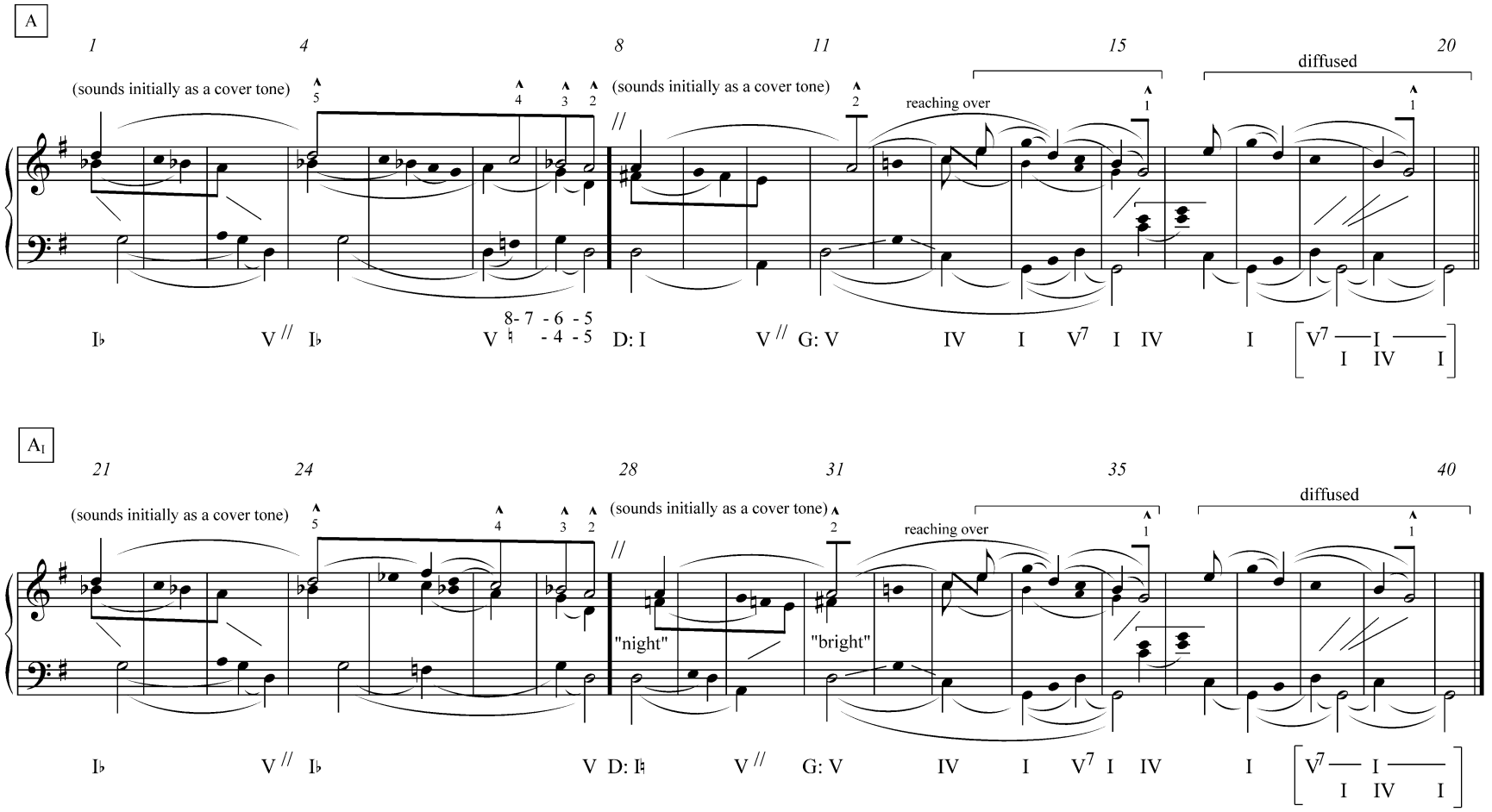




The quasi-canonic antiphony in the first song also produces rhythmic displacements between the two groups of voices. This rhythmic displacements bring about subtle harmonic overlaps and anticipate the conspicuous blurring of harmonies that occurs as the melody becomes diffused at the end of each stanza. A diagonal line in the voice-leading sketch in Example 6.7c shows tonic and dominant overlapping already by m. 3, as the upper-voice *dux* arrives on V while the lower-voice *comes* continues to prolong I up until the half bar. The quasi-canon then breaks with the long, melismatic depiction of the murmuring waves that leads to the cadence on V in m. 8.

The consequent phrase begins much like the antecedent, the inner voices now leading the outer ones to the fifth divider in 10. The antiphony continues as the upper voice begins ascending by step, retracing its path from the structural A up to the C in m. 13. But when the upper voice leaps to a climactic G with the tonic chord in m. 14, the voices join together in clear homophony in preparation for a perfect authentic cadence in m. 15. Up to this point, the consequent phrase has followed a similar trajectory as the antecedent, from an antiphonal beginning to homophonic ending. But just at the point when the upper voice descends to scale-degree 1 in m. 15, the tenors evade the cadence by repeating the melody heard in the upper voice back in m. 14. The outer-voices then follow antiphonally and in imitation. Except that now, the melody becomes diffused and starts to lag behind the lower voices. As shown in the voice-leading sketch, the lower voices move to tonic in m. 19 before the C in the melody can resolve down to B; and, by the moment this C resolves to B and G, the lower voices sing a IV chord that resolves plagally.

EXAMPLE 6.7c. Brahms, “Abendständchen”, Op. 42 no. 1, voice-leading sketch



The result is what looks in m. 20 like a IV^7 chord. Yet, the B does not function as a seventh, for it does not resolve down to A. Instead, the sonorities in mm. 19–20 may be better interpreted as part of a set of overlapping harmonies: V diffused over I in m. 19, and I over IV in m. 20. The voice-leading sketch illustrates.

From the passage in mm. 13–15 one can infer a hypothetical prototype for mm. 16–20 where each chord is clearly set apart from the others. In the actual ending, the chords in this progression spread onto one another and blur seamlessly, such that one cannot tell if the final tonic arrives with the bass in m. 18, with the melody in m. 19, or only by the end of the plagal elaboration in m. 20. Instead, the ending melts seamlessly into the final tonic. The effect is one where the sharply delineated harmonic boundaries of the passage heard in mm. 13–15 dissolve as the melody becomes diffused across mm. 16–20. The rhythmic/harmonic displacement between upper and lower voices responsible for these overlaps may be heard in turn as arising from the quasi-canonic antiphony characterizing much of the work.

For the second stanza, the music repeats with only a few changes, the most significant of which is the juxtaposition of the minor and major dominant in mm. 28–31 to set the contrast between the enfolding night and the sense of inner illumination the protagonist experiences. From there on the music continues much like before, the closing harmonies merging onto one another as the voices move once again out of sync. With the basses now joining the tenors from m. 35 onwards, the harmonic asynchrony characterizing the end of the stanza becomes even more strongly tied to the antiphonal style permeating the rest of the work. At the end, the archaic sounds become diffused once again and the evening serenade quietly fades away amidst a blur of harmonies.

These works exemplify the use of diffused harmonies in the music of Schumann and Brahms. In each case, chords blur together as the melody slows down and begins to lag behind the bass accompaniment. The ensuing overlaps thus constitute a subtype of those arising from rhythmic displacements discussed above. Their effect is especially remarkable, nonetheless, for here the harmonies become diffused too, slowing down, spreading onto one another, and often vanishing altogether.

Descending Arpeggiations that Dissolve One Chord into the Next

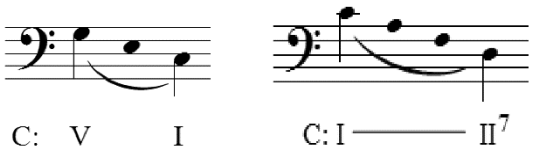
The last type of chord overlap we will be discussing involve descending bass arpeggiations that connect two chords a fifth or seventh apart and unfolds the second one of the pair, as shown in Example 6.8a. Schenker briefly mentions this sort of progression in *Free Composition* during his discussion of possible prolongations of the bass arpeggiation at later structural levels, where he argues that the V–I motion may be prolonged by an arpeggiation of the descending fifth from dominant to tonic that proceeds through the third.[10] He illustrates this point through a set of schematic examples reproduced under Example 6.8b. The first example shows the descending arpeggio from V to I in its basic form, and subsequent examples present different elaborations of this progression. In each case, the arpeggiation composes out the tonic triad, but the Roman numerals indicate a dominant prolongation up to the last note of the arpeggio. Schenker's reading thus shows an overlap where the forthcoming tonic chord is prolonged back into the time span of the dominant. He then analyzes all descending arpeggiations that connect two harmonies a fifth or seventh note apart in this way, regardless of the scale-degrees involved.[11] In keeping with Schenker's reading, William Rothstein has argued that this sort of downward arpeggiation

[10] Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), 69.
[11] Ibid., 82

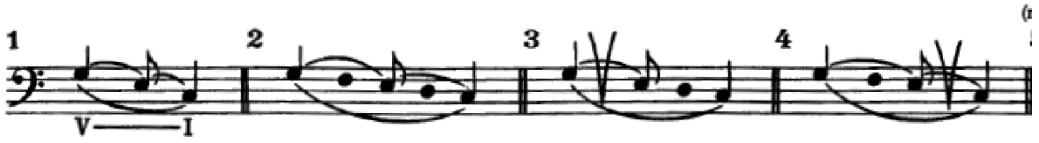
functions as anticipatory.[12] While this is often the case, there are several cases, nonetheless, where there is not a clear boundary setting apart the two chords, and instead one hears the first chord dissolving seamlessly into the next during the overlapping arpeggiation.

EXAMPLE 6.8. Descending bass arpeggiations unfolding a forthcoming harmony

a) The arpeggiations serve to connect chords a fifth and a seventh apart



b) Schenker's reading of such arpeggiations (Figure 69 from *Free Composition*) shows overlap



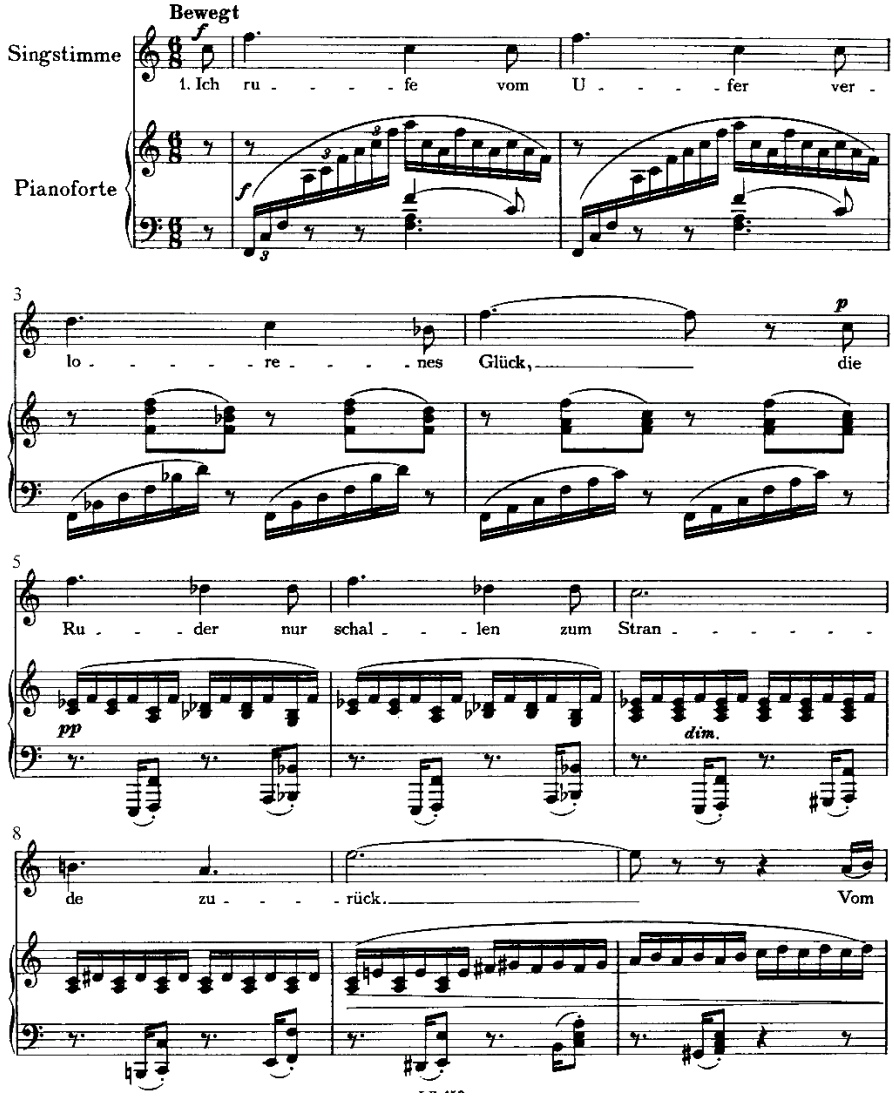
This section explores two particular ways in which this situation may arise. The first is when the arpeggiation prolongs and connects a cadential 6/4 to the following root-position tonic, such that the 6/4 stands at once for a cadential 6/4 and a tonic inversion. This is precisely what happens in the refrain of Brahms's song "Vom Strande," Op. 69 no. 6. In this song, the protagonist calls out to her beloved as he sails away in the distance. The refrain, reproduced under Example 6.9, is heard at the beginning, middle, and end of the song, to the words:

> I call from the shore
> To my lost happiness;
> Only the sound of the oars
> Echoes back to the beach.
>
> Translation copyright © by Emily Ezust, from
> The Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Archive –
> http://www.lieder.net/

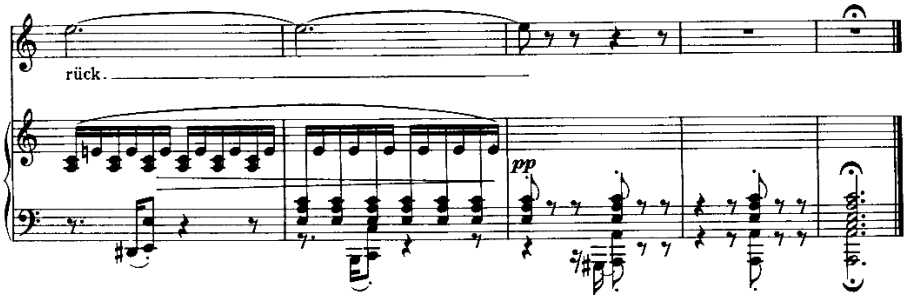
[12] William Rothstein, "Rhythm and the Theory of Structural Levels" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1981), 130.

EXAMPLE 6.9. Brahms, “Vom Strande,” Op. 69 no. 6, score excerpt

a) Refrain, mm. 1–10



b) Ending



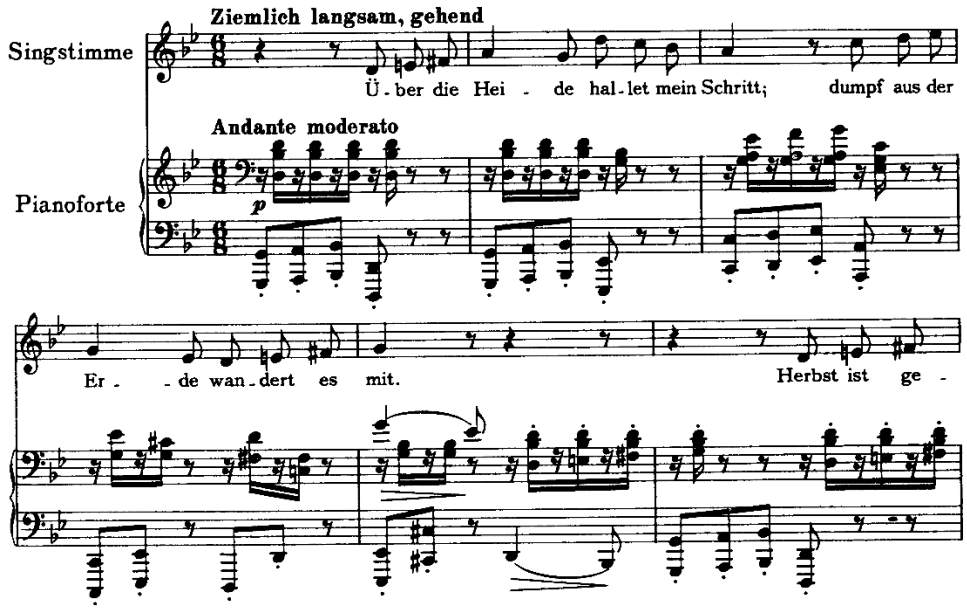
The refrain starts energetically, prolonging what sounds at first like a tonic F major chord but turns into a dominant by m. 5. The F dominant chord becomes then reinterpreted as a German augmented-sixth when it resolves to a cadential 6/4 in m. 9. The cadential 6/4 seems, on the one hand, to resolve by mid bar as the right hand of the piano steps up to the leading tone to cadence on tonic in the next measure. As the right hand steps to the leading-tone, however, the bass arpeggiates down from E through C to A, unfolding an A minor chord. Accordingly, it is not clear whether the 6/4 resolves to the dominant by the middle of m. 9, or forms part of a tonic prolongation beginning in m. 9 and continuing through the next bar. In other words, the 6/4 blends together dominant and tonic function. The effect is one where, as the music becomes ever fainter, the dominant vanishes seamlessly onto the final tonic, like the image of the beloved fading into the distance.

When the refrain returns one last time at the end of the song, Brahms slightly alters the final cadence. This time, as Example 6.9b shows, the cadential 6/4 does not resolve; instead, A minor continues sounding while the bass descends from E through C to A. This is thus one of those 6/4 chords discussed earlier on, which combine dominant and tonic function. Except that here, the implied dominant melts gradually to I as the bass arpeggiates down the final tonic.

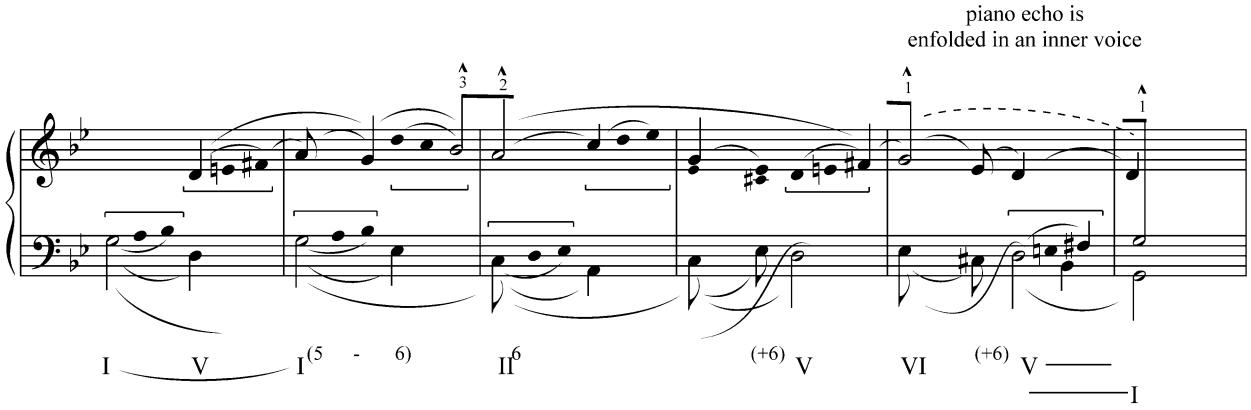
Brahms employs this overlapping technique to a similar expressive effect in his song "Über die Heide" (Across the Heath), Op. 86 no. 4. The poem describes how as the protagonist wanders across the heath in a misty autumn day he contemplates how life, like the spring, has passed by. Brahms sets the poem in an AABA form and captures the imagery by dissolving the dominant chord onto the closing tonic at the end of each of the A sections. Example 6.10 reproduces the opening A section along with a voice-leading sketch.

EXAMPLE 6.10. Brahms, "Über die Heide," Op. 86 no. 4, A section

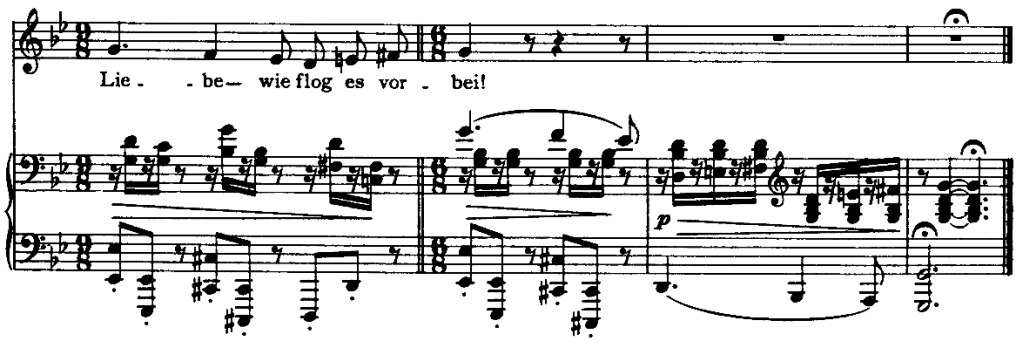
a) Score



b) Voice-leading sketch of mm. 1–6



c) Ending



The piece begins with the ascending-third G-A-B♭ in the piano echoing on the dominant as the voice sings the ascending third D-E-F♯. The voice continues to answer the thirds in the piano and eventually returns to its opening D-E-F♯ motive when the Ger^{+6} resolves to V in m. 4. While the voice goes on to cadence on tonic as expected, the piano echoes the melody from m. 4, going back to the Ger+6 and continuing to a cadential 6/4. But, as the D-E-F♯ motive unfolds the dominant in an inner voice, the bass arpeggiates down from D through B♭ to G expanding the 6/4 chord and connecting it with the following tonic. As a result, the dominant seems to fade away with the overlapping tonic arpeggiation, creating that sense of evanescence depicted in the poem.

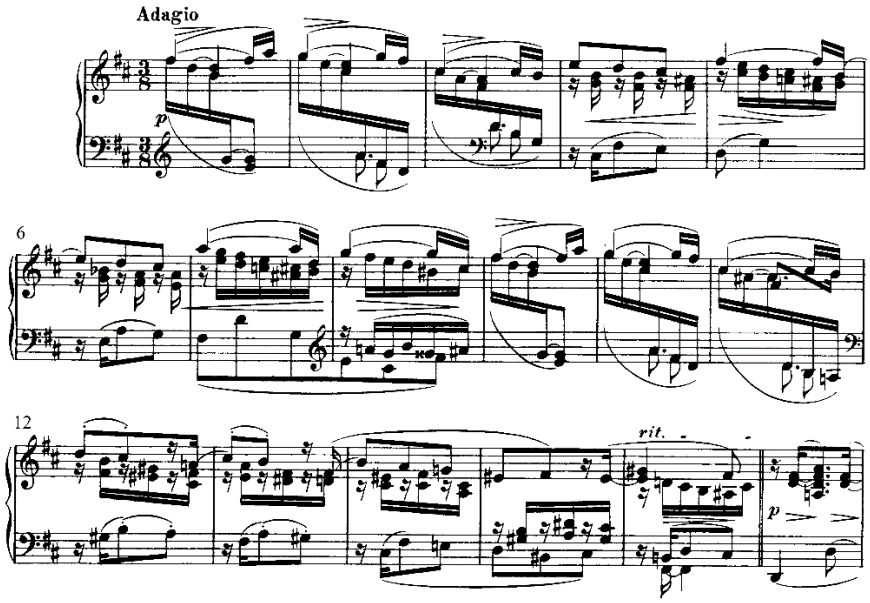
The cadential dominant fades onto tonic harmony again with the subsequent repetitions of the A section. As Example 6.10c shows, the A section becomes even more autumnal by the end of the song, with the Ger^{+6} and the V chord each lingering now for an entire measure and rendering the dissolution of the final dominant that much slower and gradual.

The second situation in which a descending arpeggiation connecting two chords seems to dissolve the first into the second is when there is not enough contextual information to draw a clear rhythmic boundary between the harmonies. Rather than functioning as an anticipation followed by a clear arrival, the descending arpeggiation in these cases gradually transforms one chord into the next.

This is precisely what happens in the opening period of Brahms's B minor Intermezzo, Op. 119 no. 1, reproduced in Example 6.11a. As Example 6.11b shows, the antecedent phrase begins by moving down a circle of fifths across mm. 1–5, with a 7-10 linear intervallic pattern between melody and bass. In the actual music, however, the first chord in each bar is sustained across the time span of the second, simulating the sound of an open pedal and blurring one chord

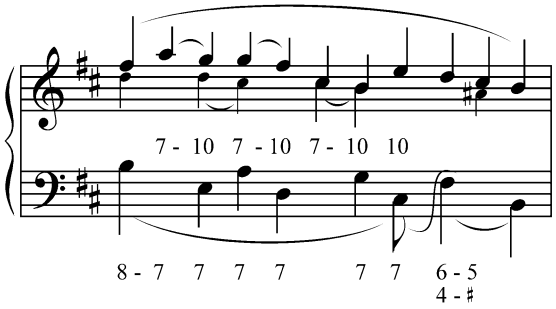
into the next. Just as remarkable are the descending arpeggiations that join together the chords within each bar in a single mist of sound. By delaying the arrival of the root of each chord in mm. 1–3, these descending arpeggios cause harmonies to emerge and fade away without any particular clarity. As Daniel Beller-McKenna puts it, in a "welter of harmonic diffusion, the basic identity of the passing harmonies fades and, in essence, is left behind."[13]

EXAMPLE 6.11a. Brahms, Intermezzo in B minor, Op. 119 no. 1, opening period

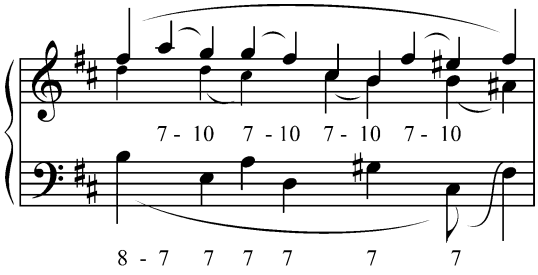


EXAMPLE 6.11b. Brahms, Intermezzo in B minor, Op. 119 no. 1, descending circle of fifths

i) mm. 1–5

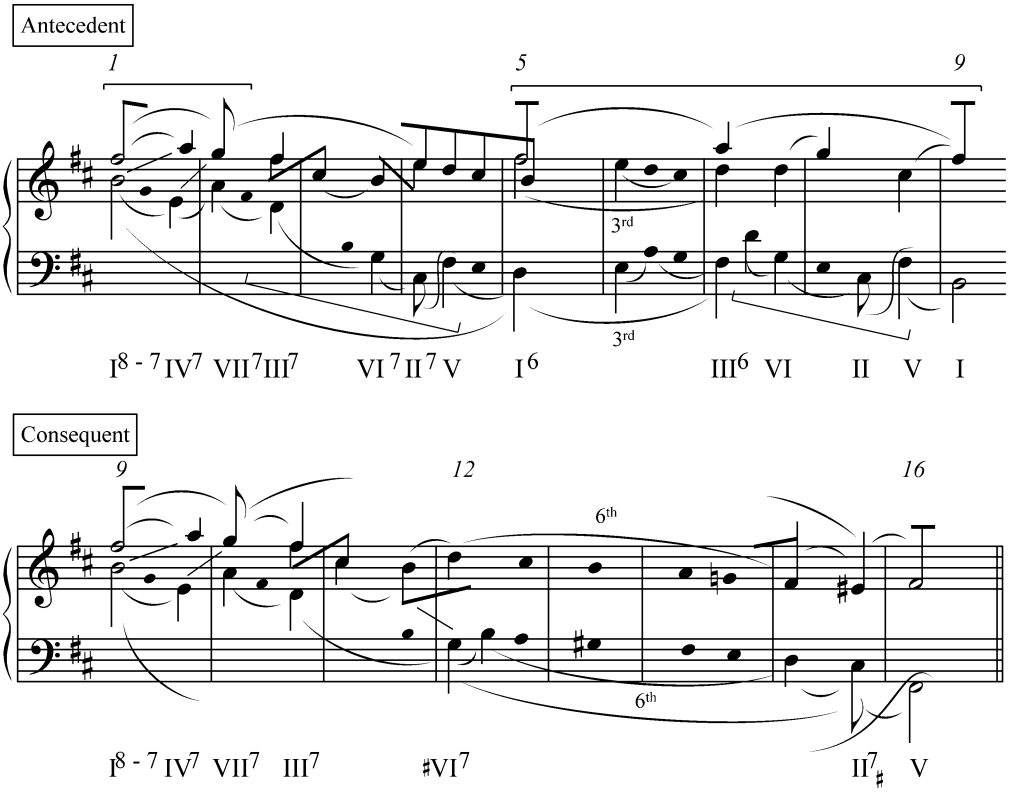


ii) mm. 9–16



[13] Daniel Beller-McKenna, "Reminiscence in Brahms's Late Intermezzi," *American Brahms Society Newsletter* (Fall 2004): 6.

EXAMPLE 6.11c. Brahms, Intermezzo in B minor, Op. 119 no. 1, voice-leading sketch



Another factor that contributes to the blurry quality of the opening bars is the fact that the melody lags harmonically behind the accompaniment. As the diagonal lines in the voice-leading sketch in Example 6.11c indicate, the A in m. 1, which functions as the seventh of the B minor chord (see Example 6.11b), arrives when descending tonic arpeggiation has dissolved into the following E seventh chord. The A resolves, as expect, to the third of the E seventh chord, but the G materializes just as the accompaniment begins arpeggiating the next chord of the descending fifth sequence. The 7-10 pattern concealed in m. 1 becomes more distinctive in the next two bars, with the seventh of A seventh resolving down to the third of the D seventh chord in m. 2, and the seventh of the D chord resolving down to the third of the G seventh chord in m. 3. The pattern dissolves nonetheless with the dominant chord in m. 4. The V chord resolves to a clearly articulated tonic chord for the beginning of a third progression across mm. 5–7. As the bass

ascends from D to F♯, the melody follows in parallel tenths composing out the opening melodic figure from F♯ to A.[14] The high A in m. 7, much like that in m. 1, functions as a seventh within a tonic prolongation, resolving downward to G and then continuing F♯ for the beginning of the consequent phrase in m. 9.

The consequent phrase begins exactly as the antecedent, descending through a circle of fifths with the outer voices moving in a 7-10 linear intervallic pattern. As noted above, in antecedent phrase the 7-10 pattern was loosely implied in the first bar but then became clear as as the G resolved to F♯ (7-10) in m. 2 and the C♯ to B (7-10) in m. 3. In the consequent, the melody proceeds in the same way, except that this time, by the moment the C♯ resolves to B at the end of m. 11, the downward arpeggiation of the VI chord is still in its way to articulating the root of the chord (G♯), as the diagonal line in the sketch illustrates. The arrival of the B midway through the downward arpeggiation that dissolves the previous D seventh chord into the forthcoming G♯ seventh chord creates an illusory tonic chord by the end of m. 11 that Schenker and Allen Cadwallader have taken as an actual tonic harmony, but could be better understood as corresponding to the seventh, fifth, and third of the G♯ seventh chord that comes to fruition in m. 12.[15] This G♯ seventh chord is then prolonged through a sixth descent in the bass and in the melody until it finally gives way to C♯ for a perfect authentic cadence on V at the end of the phrase. Accordingly, as shown in Example 6.11b, the phrase as a whole may be understood as one long descent through the circle of fifths from B to F♯, with the outer voices moving in 7-10 intervallic pattern. In the actual music, however, this progression is blurred by the downward arpeggiations that dissolve one chord seamlessly into the next.

[14] Allen Cadwallader makes a similar motivic connection between the melody in mm. 1–2 and 5–9. See his essay entitled "Motivic Unity and Integration of Structural Levels in Brahms's B Minor Intermezzo, Op. 119, No. 1," *Theory and Practice* 8, no. 2 (December 1983): 8–10.
[15] See Schenker, *Free Composition*, Figure 87.3d; and Cadwallader, "Motivic Unity," 12.

These three examples illustrate how two chords may blur together when a descending bass arpeggiation prolongs the second one into the time span of the first. The result is one where the first chords dissolves as the second gradually emerges with each new note of the arpeggiation. The arpeggiations thus project into the music an attenuated harmonic quality.

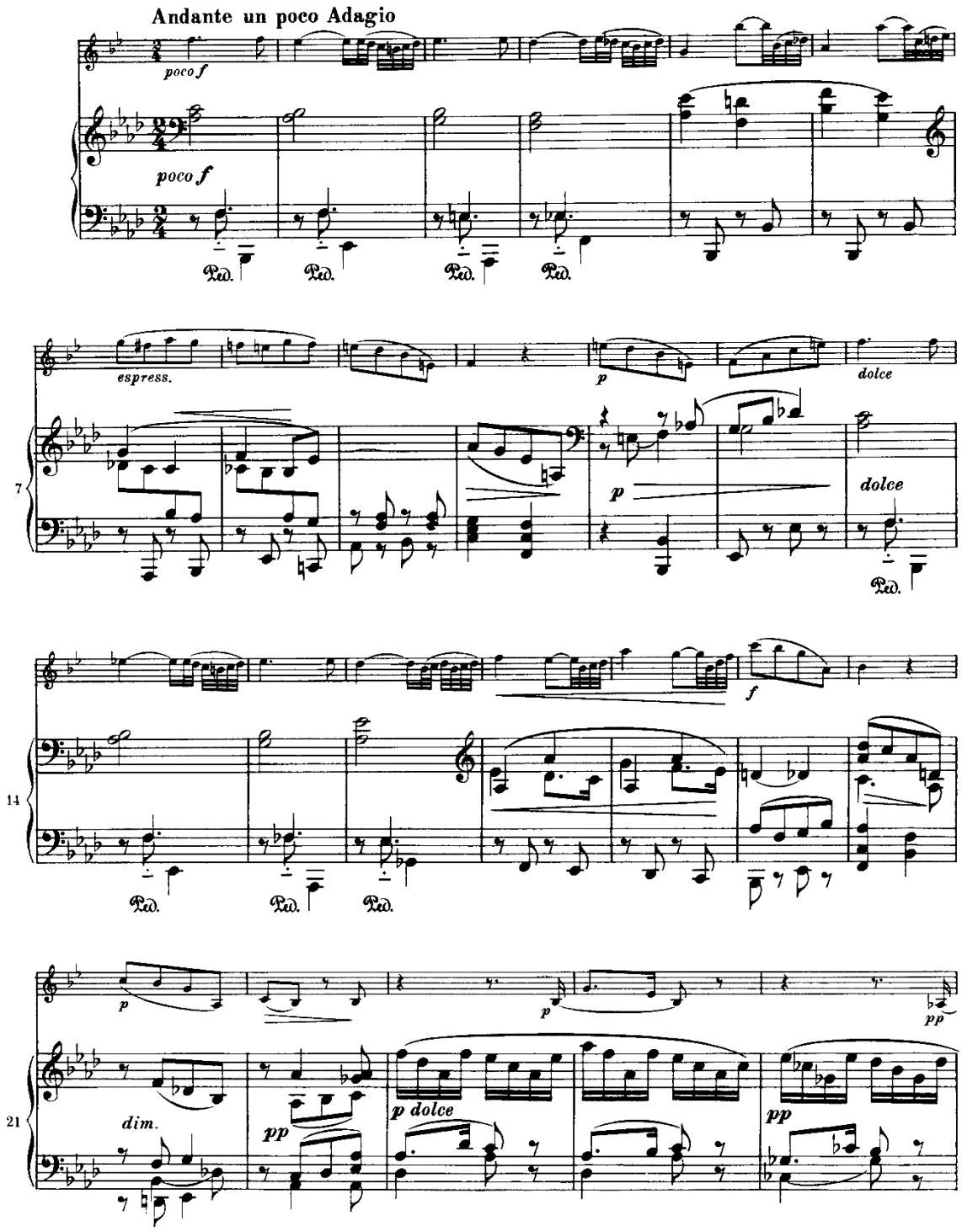
6.3. A Longer Analytical Example

The previous section examined three different ways in which harmonies may overlap and blur onto one another. To summarize, such overlaps may arise from a rhythmic displacement between outer voices, from a process of diffusion, or through a descending bass arpeggiation that joins two different chords. Our last example shows all of these working together, giving the second movement of Brahms's Clarinet Sonata in F minor, Op. 120 no. 1 the blurry quality of something seen fading into the distance. The focus will be in the opening section, reproduced in Example 6.12a.

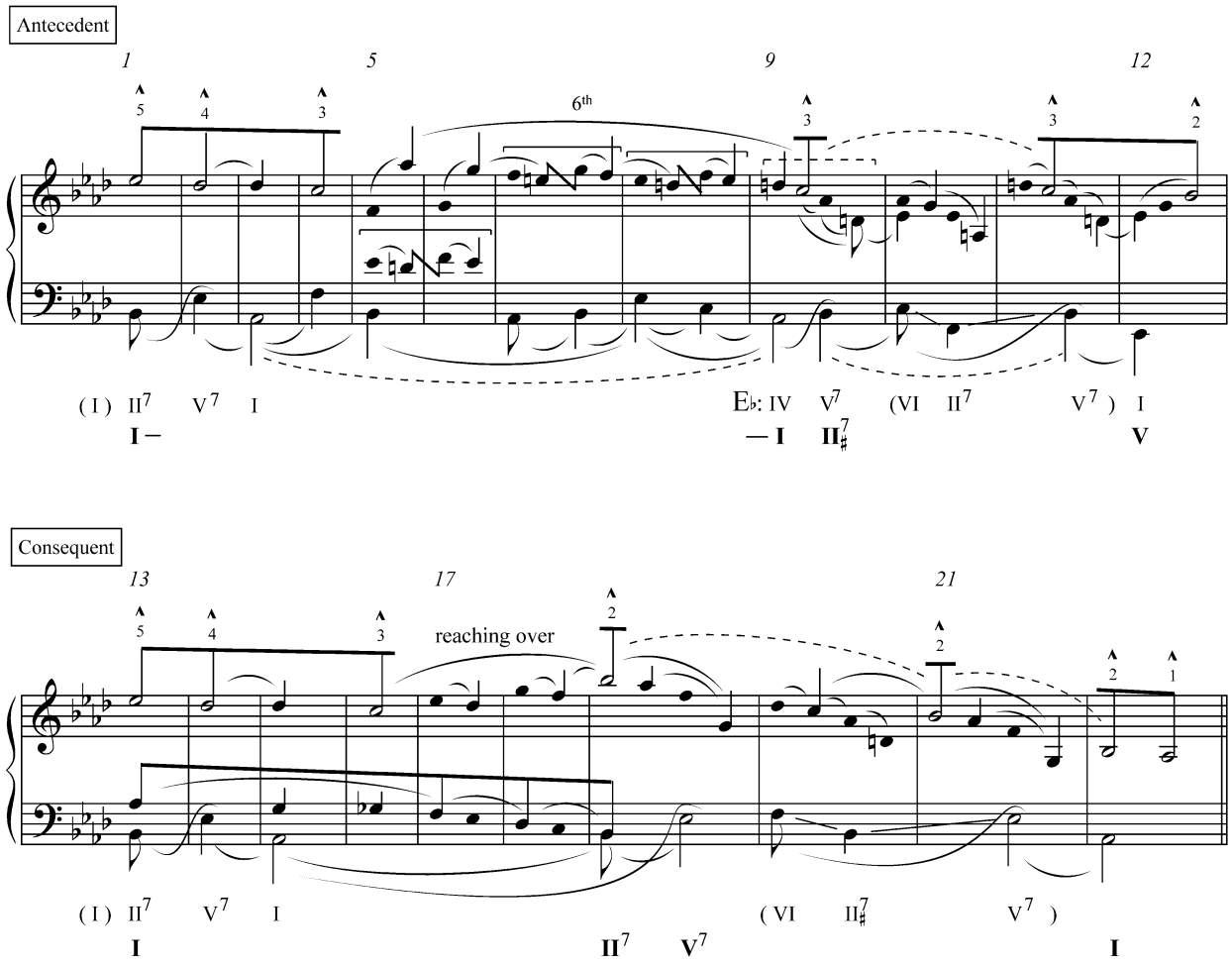
This section comprises two phrases that form a parallel interrupted period. The antecedent phrase begins with a third-descent that prolongs tonic across mm. 1–4, as shown in voice-leading sketch in Example 6.12b. The harmonic underpinning for this third-descent would be rather straightforward were not for the rhythmic displacement of the bass, which causes each chord to overlap into another. Example 6.12c shows the opening progression at various levels of elaboration. The topmost system reveals the basic harmonic progression implicit in mm. 1–4, where each chord is clearly delimited to one bar. This progression is blurred, however, as the bass becomes displaced by one measure. Accordingly, as shown in the level iii, the harmonies projected by the upper voices overlap with those projected by the bass. In the first measure I overlaps with II, in the second II with V, and in the third vii^{o7} with I. The displacement of the

bass also makes room for a VI chord in m. 4, which is itself approached through the chromatization of the dominant into the E diminished-seventh chord.

EXAMPLE 6.12a. Brahms, Clarinet Sonata in F minor, Op. 120 no. 1, II, opening period



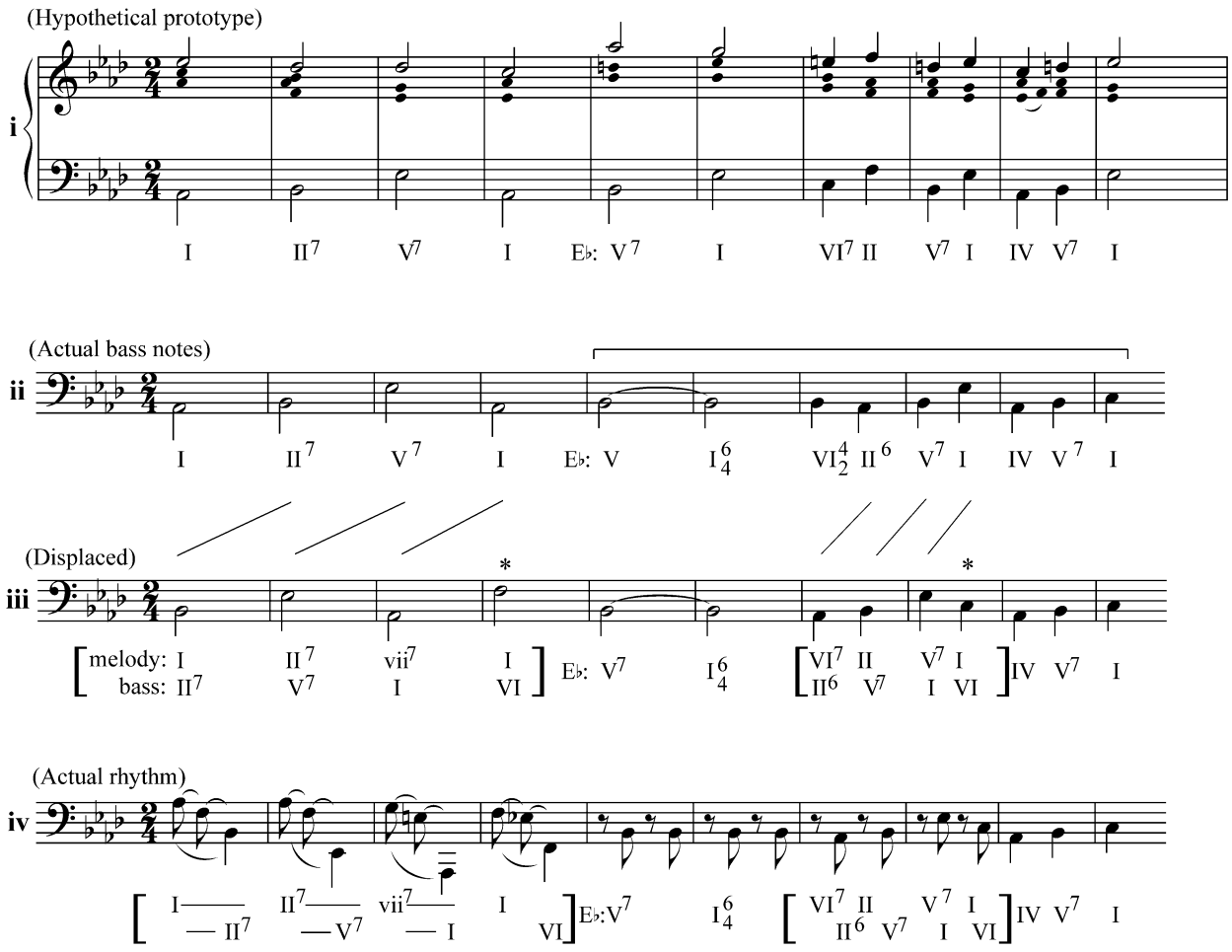
EXAMPLE 6.12b. Brahms, Clarinet Sonata in F minor, Op. 120 no. 1, II, voice-leading sketch



The chords in mm. 1–4 do not arrive, however, with the clarity that level iii in Example 6.12c would seem to suggest. Blurring the progression still further are the downward bass arpeggiations that characterize the opening. These arpeggiations delay the arrival of the root of each chord by a quarter note, such that one hears the upper-voice harmonies melting seamlessly onto the harmonies implied by the bass. The opening tonic is, for instance, absorbed into the II as the bass descends to B♭, as the Roman numerals at the bottom system of Example 6.12c indicate. Similarly the II^7 chord in the downbeat of m. 2 melts into the V, and the vii^{o7} into I in m. 3. The overall effect of the progression is thus one where each chord emerges and vanishes seamlessly as it overlaps with those surrounding it. Adding to this evanescent quality is the sublimation of

the E♮ in m. 3 to E-flat in m. 4, shown in the voice-leading sketch. This chromatic passing tone becomes structurally significant later on, as Frank Samarotto has pointed out.[16]

EXAMPLE 6.12c. Brahms, Clarinet Sonata in F minor, Op. 120 no. 1, II, overlapping harmonies



After the blurry opening bars, the harmonic structure seems to come into focus when melody and bass arrive in m. 5 on the clear B♭ dominant-seventh chord. But such clarity does not last for long. The bass starts moving out of joint with the upper voices starting in m. 6. Whereas the upper-voices arrive on a local E♭ tonic chord, the bass remains on the dominant B♭ pedal,

[16] In an unpublished analysis, Frank Samarotto shows how the motion from F through E to E♭ heard in mm. 1–5 is composed out in the B section through the modulation from IV (supporting F) to ♭VI (supporting F♭/E) and finally back to A♭ (supporting E♭).

undermining the local V^7-I resolution. This leads then to a more marked rhythmic and harmonic displacement of the bass in mm. 7–8. Here, the melody repeats in diminution the four-note figure heard in the piano in mm. 5–6, as shown with brackets in the voice-leading sketch. Implying a similar V-I progression as in mm. 5–6, these four-note figures are strung together into a descending-fifth sequence—the whole passage amounting to a VI^7-II-V^7-I progression in E♭ major. The topmost system of Example 6.12c reveals the sequential underpinning of mm. 7–8. Whereas the right hand of the piano joins the melody in this sequence, the left hand does not. The second level shows, nonetheless, that the bass, despite not moving sequentially, does projects a similar harmonic progression as the upper voices. But, as the third level illustrates, each of the bass notes comes a beat too early, causing harmonies to overlap and blur together. Accordingly, while in the first beat of m. 7 the upper voices are on a V of F minor, the bass has already resolved to a first inversion F minor chord; and when the upper voices resolve to F minor, the bass is already in the next harmony, and so forth. The situation thus closely resembles that in mm. 1–4, where the bass also moves ahead of the upper voices to a similar expressive effect.

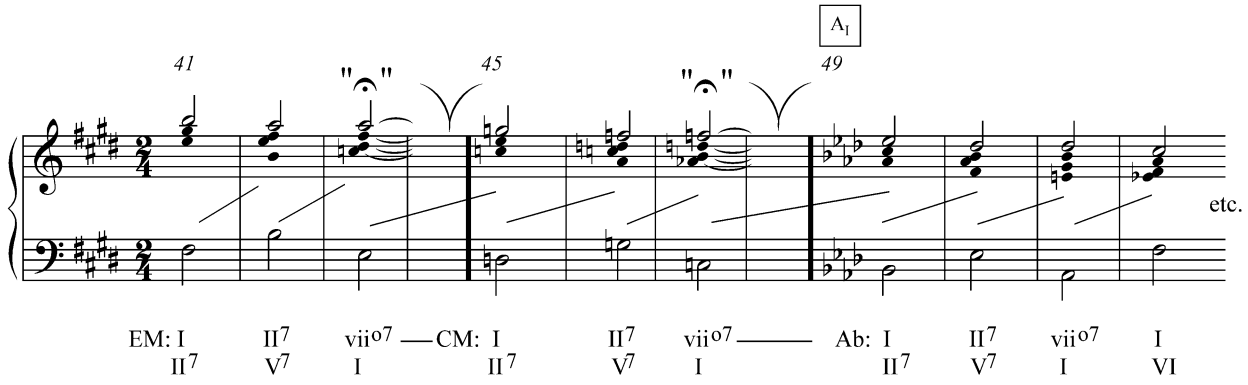
The harmonic structure finally comes back into focus in m. 9 as melody and bass arrive together on a predominant A♭ major chord. Here, the melody continues the sequential repetition of the four-note figure except that now the last note sinks down an octave, as if in complete surrender. After the evaded cadence in m. 10, the clarinet repeats once again this yielding melody, coming finally to a quiet cadence in V for the end of the antecedent phrase.

Much like the antecedent, the consequent begins with its harmonies emerging and vanishing seamlessly across the overlaps. The one difference is that the bass moves in m. 16 to G♭ rather than F to begin a stepwise descent spanning a seventh from A♭ to B♭, as shown in the voice-leading sketch. The seventh descent from A♭ to B♭ recalls that arpeggiated descent in the

first bar of the antecedent and consequent phrases, with the II chord growing-out of an evanescent tonic. Similarly, the II^7 chord emerges gradually from the bass descent until finally rising from the fog, as it were, in m. 19. While the bass descent unfolds the forthcoming II^7 chord, the melody reaches over from scale-degree 3 up a seventh to scale-degree 2 only to sink back down to scale-degree 1 for the evaded cadence in m. 20. From there, the melody continues sinking until it quietly completes its fifth-descent on A♭ with the cadence in m. 22, bringing the opening section to a close.

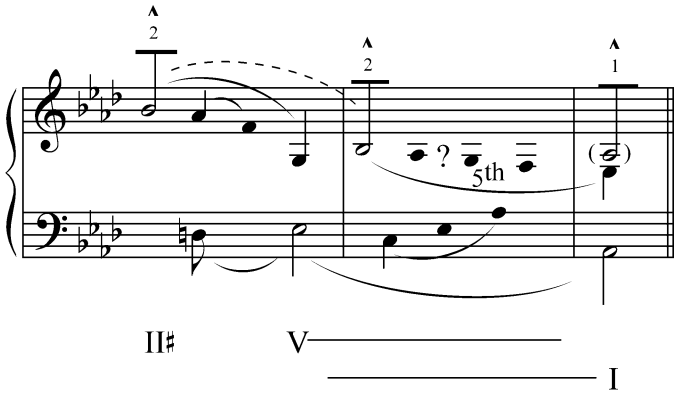
When the opening theme returns by the end of the middle section, it becomes diffused. The theme appears first in E major (♭VI), beginning in m. 41. As Example 6.12d reveals, melody and bass are once again out of sync and harmonies blur onto one another. As before, the bass moves ahead of the melody and completes a II^7-V^7-I progression. But this time the melody becomes diffused and quietly fades away over a long held vii^{o7} without ever resolving to tonic. The four-bar fragment repeats then a third lower in C major, only for the melody to fade again over a quasi-fermata without resolving to the local tonic.

EXAMPLE 6.12d. Brahms, Clarinet Sonata in F minor, Op. 120 no. 1, II, diffused theme



The A section finally returns on the home key starting in m. 49. The period unfolds much as before, except that the sixteenth-note accompaniment now renders the harmonies at the beginning of the phrase even more elusive. The most striking alteration, however, is the one that affects the cadence at end of the section, shown in Example 6.12e. In m. 70, one expects a root-position tonic chord to arrive with the resolution of the B♭ appoggiatura in the melody, just as in the end of the opening section. Instead, tonic arrives initially in first inversion and only a bar later in root-position for the beginning of the coda. Meanwhile, the melody elongates the B♭ and now descends by step to E♭, such that is not clear whether the A♭ stands for tonic or for a passing motion prolonging dominant. The result is a chord overlap between V and I, where the dominant gradually dissolves as the tonic chord begins to emerge with the descending bass arpeggiation from E♭ through C to A♭. In other words, whereas there is a clear dominant in m. 69 and a clear tonic in m. 71, m. 70 corresponds to a liminal state where the first harmony starts to dissolve into the next. The expressive effect is one where not only the dominant, but the whole of the A section seems to vanish away into the tonic chord at the start of the coda. The work finally comes to an end with the sublimated leading tone (G♭) yielding chromatically to E♭ as the last the vestiges of the opening phrase die away.

EXAMPLE 6.12e. Brahms, Clarinet Sonata in F minor, Op. 120 no. 1, II, end of A_I section



As shown, this movement alternates from moments of more sharply defined harmonic boundaries to passages where chords overlap and blur together. While, the blurred portions are fairly localized to those measures discussed in greater detail in the course of this analysis, such passages have an effect over the rest of the movement, giving the whole a diffused, blurry quality of something that stands in the threshold between the material and the ethereal, the bounded and the boundless. This effect may be compared to that which Friedrich achieves in the painting discussed toward the beginning of the chapter, for while some parts of the cathedral do emerge with greater clarity, it is those blurred parts that give the cathedral as a whole its distant, spiritual character. In short, in this movement, as in the other works discussed above, the blurred passages may be fairly localized, yet they condition our experience of the whole.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the use of blurred harmonies in Brahms works and compared to the depiction of distant, attenuated objects in Romantic painting. Whereas it was Brendel who first made this connection, this chapter has expanded on it by focusing on those cases where it is composed-out overlaps, rather than the use of pedal, that cause harmonies to merge onto one another, producing those "unreal, ghostly backgrounds" that Karl Geiringer heard as characteristic of Brahms's twilight style.[17]

[17] Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Works*, 3rd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 337.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1. Summary

This study has argued that Brahms's works reflect the highly spiritualized notion of dissolution cultivated during the nineteenth century. In doing so, it has brought together key aspects of the composer's reception history and Romantic philosophy in a close analytical study focusing on particular thematic, harmonic, and textural issues in his music. The result is an approach to his works that is grounded historically, philosophically, and analytically.

Taking as point of departure the common perception that Brahms's music sounds autumnal, this study has shown that this expressive quality may be more richly understood as part of a larger trend in Romantic aesthetics that saw the process of dissolution as a form of transcendence. After examining in Chapter 2 this spiritualized notion of dissolution in its various manifestations, subsequent chapters demonstrated how Brahms's works may be heard as expressive of this Romantic ideal. Chapter 3 discussed several forms of thematic decay in his in his music and the formal roles these take. Chapter 4 expanded on Frank Samarotto's idea of sublimation to describe the way in which upward melodic impulses evaporate in several of his songs depicting the imagery of twilight. Chapter 5 argued that Brahms's use of structural inner voices alongside a process of dissolution may be heard as embodying the Romantic ideal of fading within. Finally, Chapter 6 showed different ways in which harmonies quietly blur together in his music like objects fading onto one another in the distant horizon of a Romantic landscape painting. While each chapter focused on a particular musical issue, the analyses in each chapter incorporated the findings from previous chapters. Now, as way of conclusion, an analysis of the first section of Brahms's Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2 (Example 7.1a), shows all of

these techniques working together within a single work, imbuing the intermezzo with that twilight quality that scholars have long recognized as quintessentially Brahmsian.

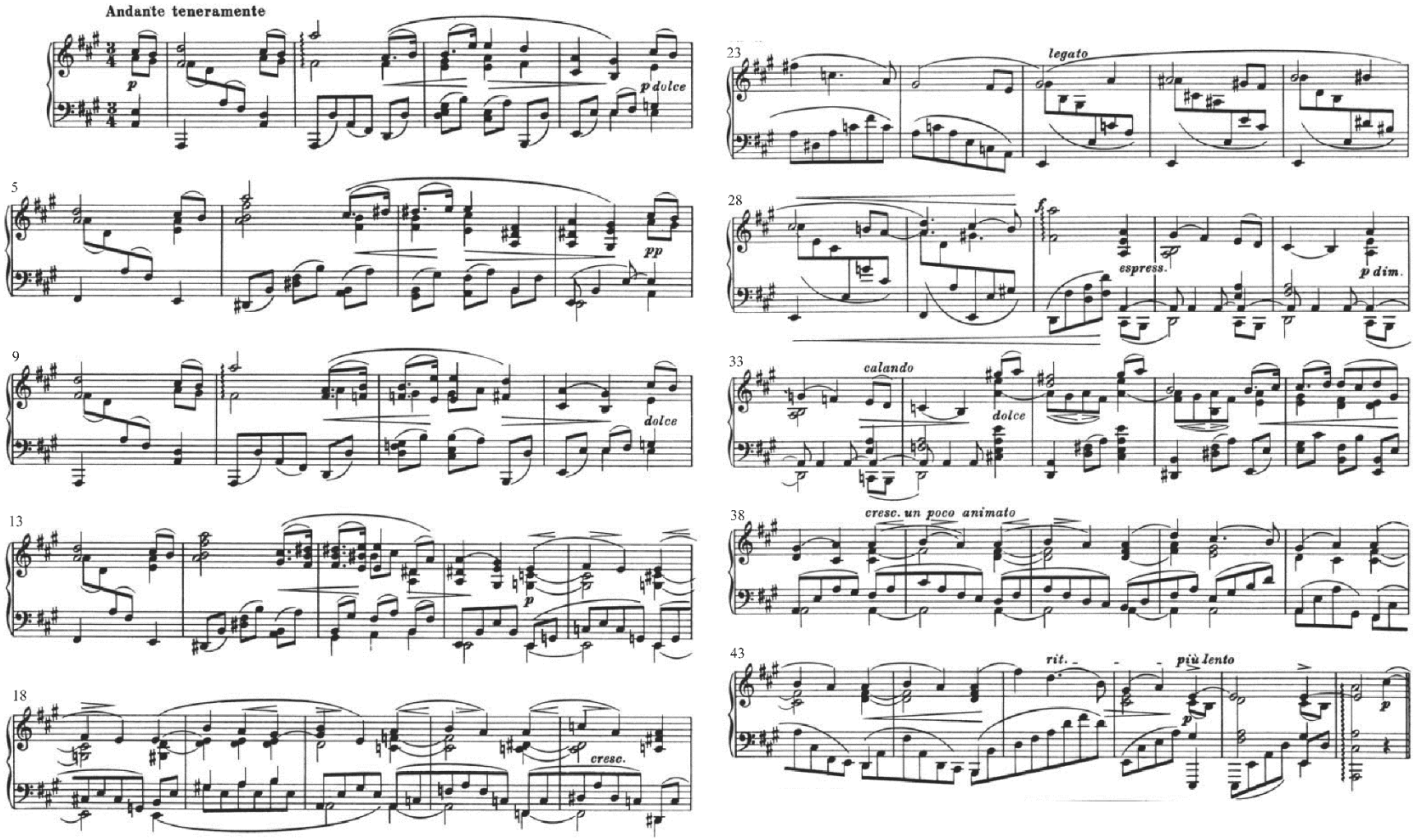
7.2. Capstone Analysis

While Brahms's Intermezzo Op. 118 no. 2 is one of the hallmarks of the composer's autumnal style, the various published analyses of this work have done little to illuminate this aspect of the music.[1] The following analysis fills this gap, addressing several issues in the piece that have been overlooked thus far and bringing a new perspective to those that have been noted before. I will argue, in particular, that as the upward melodic impulse characterizing the opening phrase stalls throughout the course of the work so the music becomes diffused and turns inward.

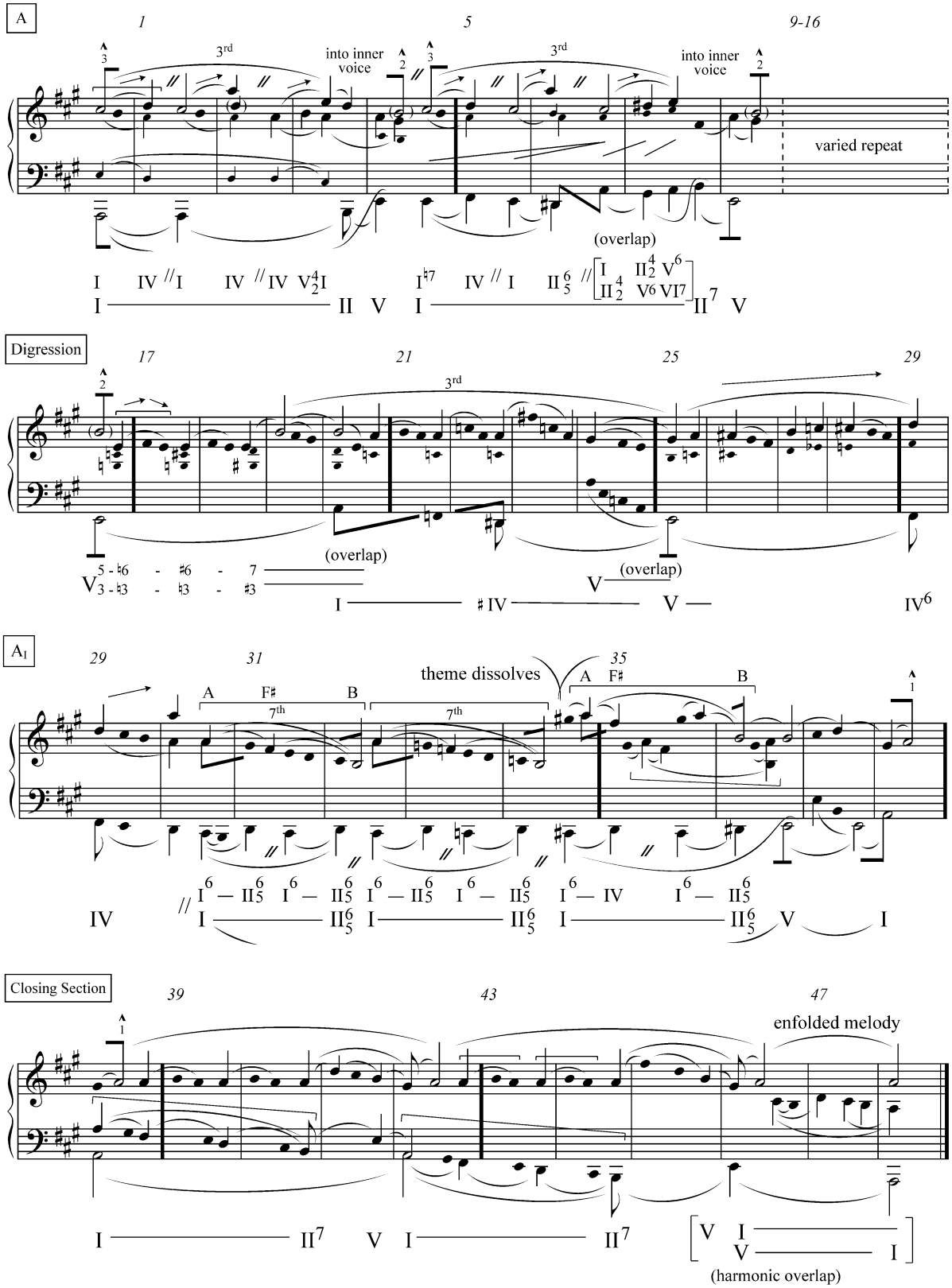
As the voice-leading sketch in Example 7.1b illustrates, the opening melody is torn between two opposing trajectories extending outwards from the *Kopfton* C♯. The C♯ begins by descending to a passing B, but a contra-structural upward impulse interrupts this passing motion. As the arrows indicate, the upward impulse drives the melody to a D in m. 1 and then to a high A in the following bar, dislocating the expected resolution of the passing B up an octave. But after each of these upward leaps, the melody seems to lack the energy to keep going, and the harmonic/surface rhythm stalls on the downbeats. By comparing the opening melody to a hypothetical prototype featuring a regular quarter-note rhythm, Example 7.1c shows that while the C♯ and B are compressed into a quarter-note anacrusis, the D and A become diffused across mm. 1–2, creating a rhythmic disjunction midway through the phrase.

[1] See, for instance, Robert Snarrenberg, "The Play of *Différance*: Brahms's Intermezzo Op. 118, No. 2," *In Theory Only* 10, no. 3 (1987): 1–25; Allen Cadwallader, "Foreground Motivic Ambiguity: Its Clarification at Middleground Levels in Selected Late Piano Pieces of Johannes Brahms," *Music Analysis*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1988), 59–91; Steven Rings, "The Learned Self," 19–24.

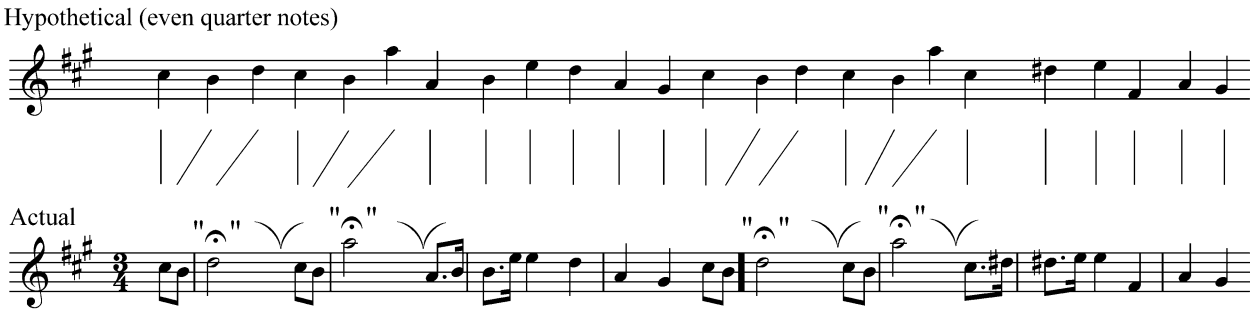
EXAMPLE 7.1a. Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2, A section



EXAMPLE 7.1b. Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2, voice-leading sketch of A section



EXAMPLE 7.1c. Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2, rhythmic irregularities in the opening melody

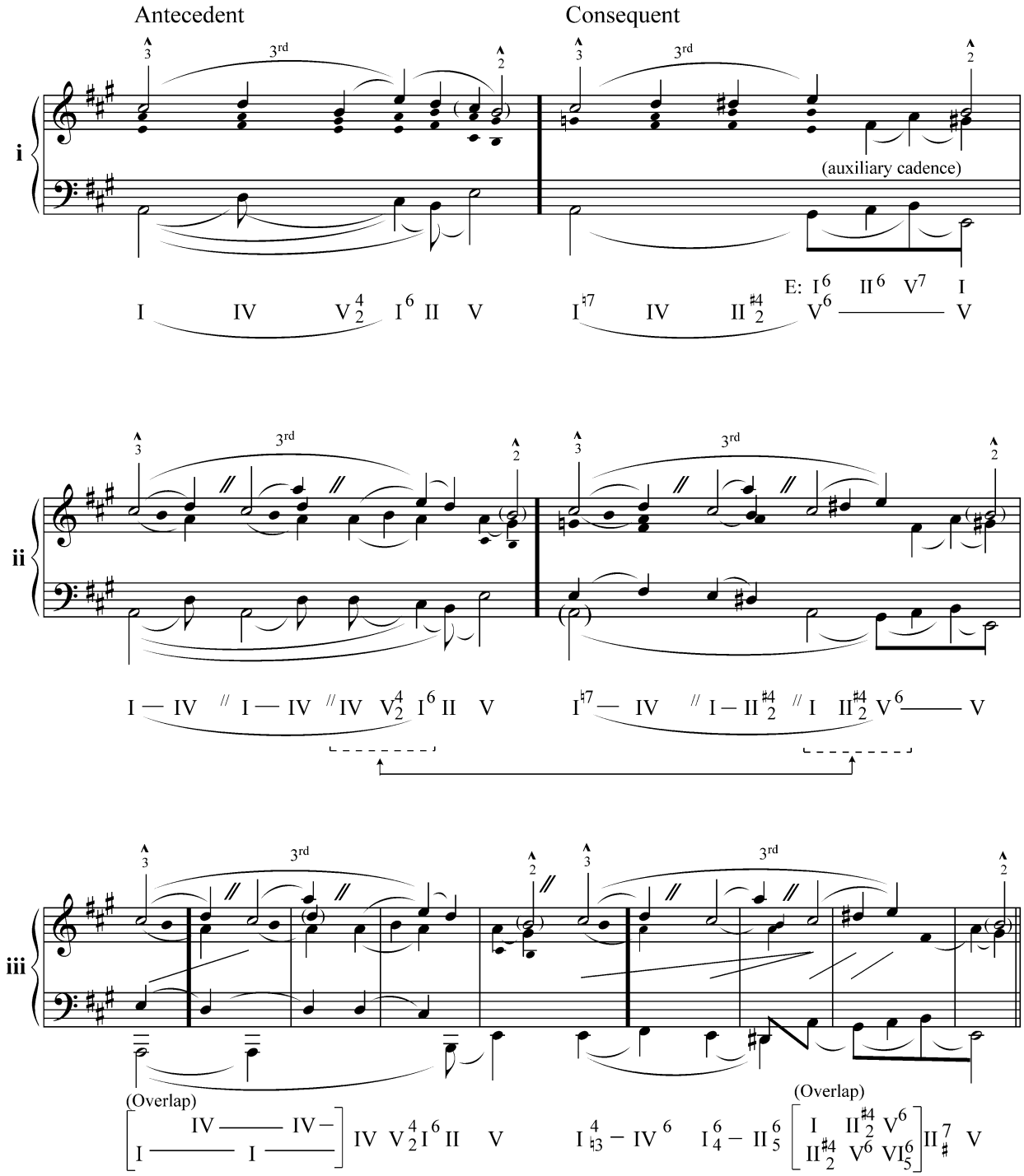


Example 7.1d reveals that, as the melody stalls on D and A, the voice-leading of the opening phrase becomes fragmented as well. The topmost system provides the background harmonic progression for the opening phrase. As shown, the D major chord supports a third progression in the upper voice from C♯ through D to E. But as shown in the middle system, in the opening phase this third-progression dissolves midway through as the music stalls on a diffused D major chord in m. 1 and then again in m. 2. Accordingly, the opening tonic prolongation (I-IV-V4/3-I6) breaks into two I-IV fragments, which correspond to the basic idea (m. 1) and its varied repetition (m. 2).[2]

While mm. 1–2 may be parsed into two I-IV fragments (as shown in the middle system), the bottom system shows that neither chord emerges with any particular clarity. In the actual opening, the bass A expands the anacrustic tonic chords into the time span of the downbeat IV chords, blurring the two harmonies into a 6/4 sonority. In turn, the diffused IV chord in m. 1 continues to spread in the left hand through the end of the bar, overlapping with the repetition of the basic idea.

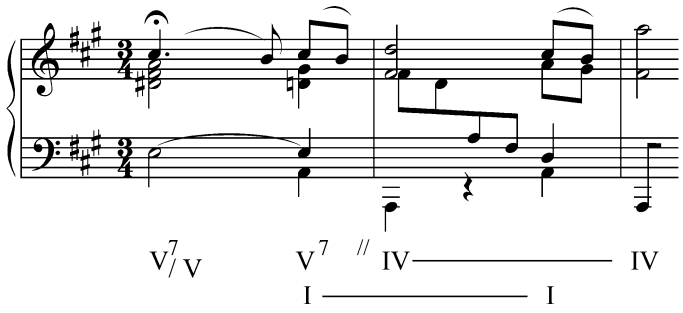
[2] A similar fragmentation of the harmonic structure characterizes the opening sentence of Schumann's *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68, no. 30. The result is a wistful character akin to that of the intermezzo.

EXAMPLE 7.1d. Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2, fragmentation and harmonic blurring in the opening period



The result is not a re-contextualization of the pick-up C♯ as a passing tone, as Allen Cadwallader has argued, [3] but a delicate blurring of the diffused D major chord with the upbeat tonic chord that gives the opening a distant, ethereal quality. When the A section returns following the B section, Brahms blurs the opening harmonies even more, for now the resolution of the vii^{o7}/V chord in m. 76 overlaps with the tonic harmony at the beginning of the theme, as shown in Example 7.1e. The expressive effect is one where the B section fades seamlessly into the blurry harmonies of the opening theme.

EXAMPLE 7.1e. Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2, return of A section



From the blurred contours of mm. 1–2, the rest of the phrase emerges with greater clarity. As shown in the sketch (Example 7.1b), the melody in the continuation picks up from a D major chord now in root position and completes the tonic prolongation by leaping to the high E, bringing to fruition the third ascent that had stalled in mm. 1–2. After reaching the high E, the melody sinks to a conceptual inner voice, continuing now the downward trajectory of the opening melody through A to G♯ as the music settles on a half cadence for the end of the antecedent phrase.

The consequent phrase, mm. 5–8, unfolds much in the same way as the antecedent, except this time it is in the continuation rather than in the basic idea where harmonies blur

[3] Cadwallader, "Foreground Motivic Ambiguity," 67.

together. Example 7.1d reveals the fragmented and blurry nature of the consequent. The upper system provides the background harmonic progression. As in the antecedent, the melody prolongs tonic through a third ascent from C♯ to E and then sinks back down to a G♯, settling on V via an auxiliary cadence. The middle system shows, nonetheless, that in the actual music this third-ascent dissolves midway through, as the basic idea stalls first on a IV chord and then on a $II♯^7$ chord. It is only during the continuation that the melody climbs finally from C♯ through D♯ to E, completing the fragmented third-ascent. This melody (C♯-D♯-E) implies a motion from I through $II♯^4/_2$ to V^6. This harmonic progression is the same as that heard at the corresponding place in the antecedent phrase, transposed now to the key of V, as the brackets below the Roman numerals indicate. But as the bottom system reveals, the chords implied by the melody overlap with those supplied by the left hand accompaniment. Instead of providing consonant support for the melody, the left hand begins the continuation on a II^4_2 chord, which resolves to the V^6 in the downbeat of m. 7. Accordingly, the melody lags behind the right hand, blurring each harmony with the next into a set of illusory seventh chords. Melody and accompaniment finally sync back together as the consequent comes to a cadence on V in m. 8.

In summary, then, the opening period is heard amidst blurry contours, pushing upward, stalling, and becoming diffused midway through each phrase. As the following analysis demonstrates, the upward impulse that characterizes the opening phrase continues to stall in the course of the intermezzo until it finally becomes sublimated.

After a varied reprise of the opening period, the digression begins in m. 16 by dissolving the intermezzo's head motive into an indistinct neighboring figure. As the brackets in the sketch indicate (Example 7.1b), the accented neighboring motion from E to F♯ recalls the upward impulse from C♯ to D in m. 1. But now the rhythm of the head motive is reduced to a stream of

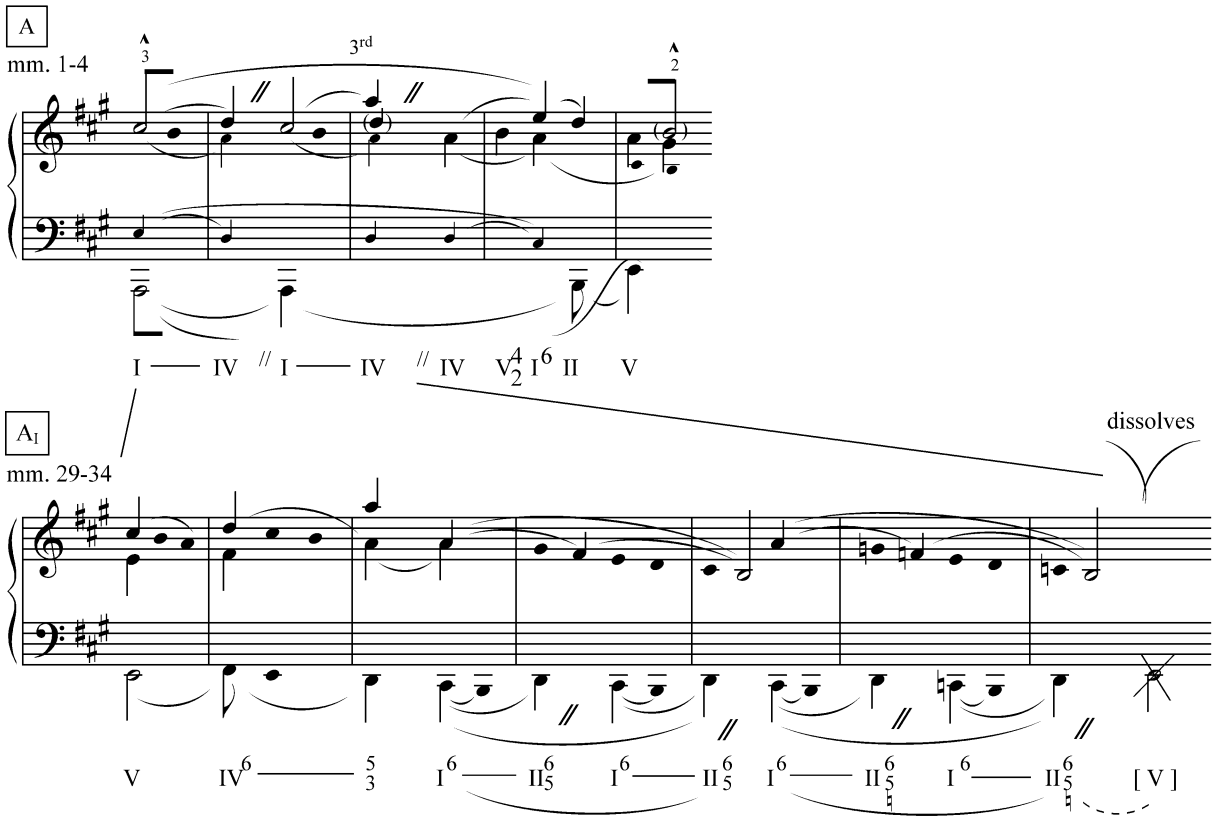
quarter notes as the upward impulse gives in and the F♯ collapses a quarter note later back to E. As such, in the digression the C♯-D upward impulse deflates to a E-F♯-E neighboring figure. Following the repetition of this neighboring figure across mm. 16–18, the melody leaps to a B, outlining the prolonged dominant chord. In keeping with the four-bar phrase rhythm, the dominant resolves to tonic on the downbeat of m. 20 as the bass leaps from E to A. The melody, however, continues to prolong V through the end of the phrase, blurring the dominant with its tonic resolution but without ever resolving.

The harmonies sync back for the beginning of the next phrase only to become displaced and blur again four bars later. The melody begins by expanding A through a neighboring motion while the bass unfolds a D♯ diminished-seventh chord that resolves to V by the end of the phrase. In keeping with the four-bar phrase rhythm, the melody arrives on V in m. 24, completing a third-progression from B through A to G♯ that prolongs V. In the accompaniment, however, the diminished-seventh chord becomes diffused and blurs together with the V chord until finally resolving in m. 25 for the beginning of the re-transition. Overall, then, the melody during the digression sounds like a shadow of the opening theme that blurs away by the end of the each phrase like a distant, fading memory.

After deflating to a neighboring figure across the digression, the upward melodic impulse from the opening becomes re-energized, driving the melody from G♯ chromatically upward to D and then to a climactic A for a powerful return of the opening theme in m. 29. Instead of continuing to a cadence as one would expect, however, the theme dissolves midway through as the basic idea (C♯-B-D) echoes ever softer in the bass and the melody yields slowly from A down to B, unfolding a II6/5 chord across mm. 31–34. With the head motive echoing in the bass, the dissolution of the opening theme may be heard as an expansion of the diffused D major chord

heard in m. 1, as Example 7.1f illustrates. Lacking the will to continue up to an E, the upward impulse continues now to stall on a pre-dominant chord until the theme finally dies away by m. 34 over a dejected ii^{ø}6/5 chord. As it does, one recognizes in the disjunct and diffused D major chord in m. 1 the fissure whence the theme eventually crumbles, turning, as it were, onto a Romantic ruin.

EXAMPLE 7.1f. Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2, dissolution of the opening theme upon its return



By the moment the opening theme returns in m. 34, all upward impulses have vanished. Instead of climbing to the high A, the melody now inverts the basic idea, sinking from the high A down through F♯ to B. Spanning a seventh from A to B, the inversion of the basic idea emerges in turn from the stepwise melodic descent from A to B heard in mm. 31–34, as the brackets in

the sketch indicate (Example 7.1b). The melody now appears an octave higher, but the descent from A to B continues to resound in the middle register as the basic idea echoes quietly in an inner voice. The result is an inward moment of complete resignation that arises as the culmination of a long process of dissolution harkening back to the very opening phrase. With the theme's upward impulse sublimated, the music now continues to the dominant and settles on tonic with a perfect authentic cadence in m. 38.

The closing section that follows combines the process of thematic decay from the digression with the sublimation of the melody in mm. 31–36 for an ending of quiet inwardness. In the closing section, as in the digression, the upward melodic impulse from the opening phrase deflates to a repeating neighbor figure that oscillates in straight quarter notes between A and B. Meanwhile, the melodic descent from A to B that characterized the dissolution and sublimation of the theme in mm. 31–36 unfolds now in an inner voice, as the brackets in the sketch illustrate. This descent seamlessly dissolves the tonic chord in m. 38 into the II^7 chord in m. 40, which then continues to V and I for the end of the phrase in m. 42. After the cadence, this four-bar phrase is heard once more. But this time, the harmonies start to blur together as melody and accompaniment start moving out of sync by the end of the phrase. As shown in the sketch (Example 7.1b), the right hand keeps moving at the same pace as before, settling back on tonic in m. 46. The left hand, however, starts to slow down as the II^7 chord becomes diffused across mm. 44–45, delaying the dominant arrival to m. 46. Accordingly, the bass arrives on the dominant at the moment the melody is settling on scale-degree 1 for the end of the phase. The result, then, is not a cadential 6/4 (where the A would function as a dominant embellishment), but a delicate blurring of tonic and dominant harmonies across mm. 46–47. The rhythmic displacement between the two parts responsible for producing this harmonic overlap carves the space for the

opening theme to return enfolded now in an inner voice. With the upward impulse sublimated, the inner C♯ finally melts through B down to A as this section, and later the intermezzo as a whole, fades quietly within.

In summary, the analysis shows how the upward melodic impulse stalls throughout the intermezzo, giving the work its characteristic autumnal quality. In the opening, the upward impulse stalls on the diffused D major chords in mm. 1–2. In the digression and the closing section, this impulse deflates to a neighboring motion as the opening theme is reduced to indistinct quarter-note melody that fades away amidst blurred harmonies by the end of each phrase. The impulse becomes re-energized in m. 25, leading to a climactic return of the opening theme. But the theme dissolves midway through as the head motive continues to stall on a pre-dominant chord and the melody yields down by step from A to B. From this descent, the opening melody re-emerges inverted, turning the ascent to the high A into a seventh-descent from A to B. During the closing theme, this descent is heard in the left hand while the opening theme deflates once again to a neighboring figure in the right hand. Finally, as tonic and dominant blur together in mm. 46–47, the opening theme becomes enfolded in an inner voice with the C♯ yielding down through B to A.

Although focused around the sublimation of the opening upward impulse, this analysis has drawn on the findings of each of the previous chapters. The discussion of thematic processes of decay in Chapter 3 informs the analysis, particularly of the way in which the opening theme fades upon its return in m. 29 and becomes evened out during the digression and closing sections. The study of structural inner voices in Chapter 5 sensitizes us to passages like that at the end of closing section, where the melody withdraws to an inner voice as part of a process of de-intensification. Chapter 6 provides the conceptual framework for understanding and

interpreting the chord overlaps found in the opening phrase, the digression, and the closing section. Finally, the notion of sublimation discussed in Chapter 4 underpins much of the analysis, as summarized above. In general, the analysis shows how in this intermezzo, as in the other works discussed in this study, these compositional techniques work together to imbue the music with that inward, autumnal quality long associated with Brahms's musical style.

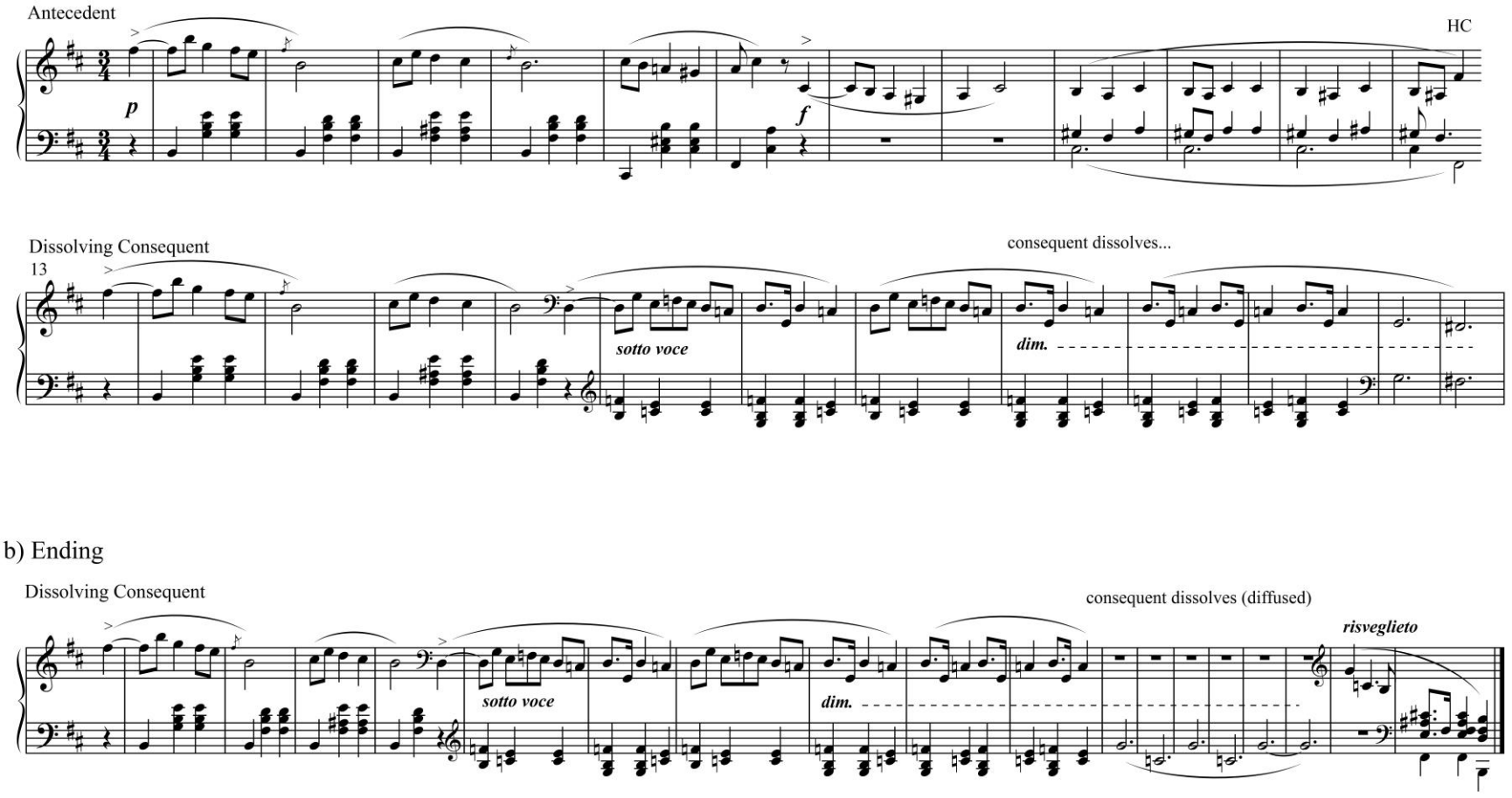
7.3. Directions for Further Research

While this dissertation has focused on the music of Brahms, the findings it presents have applications beyond this particular repertory. Further research will show that the Romantic idea of decay plays a central role in the music of other nineteenth-century composers. In the course of this study, Schumann's works have already served to illustrate several concepts. The next two examples briefly show that the process of decay plays an important role in Chopin's music as well.

Chopin's B minor Mazurka, Op. 33 no. 4, features, for instance, a dissolving theme of the type discussed in Chapter 3. As shown at the top of Example 7.2, the first twelve measures of the theme function as an antecedent phrase ending on V. The next phrase follows much like the first, in what sounds like the beginning of a parallel consequent. The consequent begins to dissolve, nonetheless, as it continues oscillating between bII and its dominant. The process of dissolution is more drawn out when the theme returns at the end of piece. As shown at the bottom of the Example 7.2, this time the tonicization of the Neapolitan dissolves into a diffused G-C dyad that repeats ever quieter under an open pedal. After the theme vanishes over a long G, the music comes to a close with a cadence back in the tonic key.

EXAMPLE 7.2. Chopin, Mazurka in B minor, Op. 33 no. 4, dissolution of opening theme

a) Opening theme, mm. 1-24



b) Ending

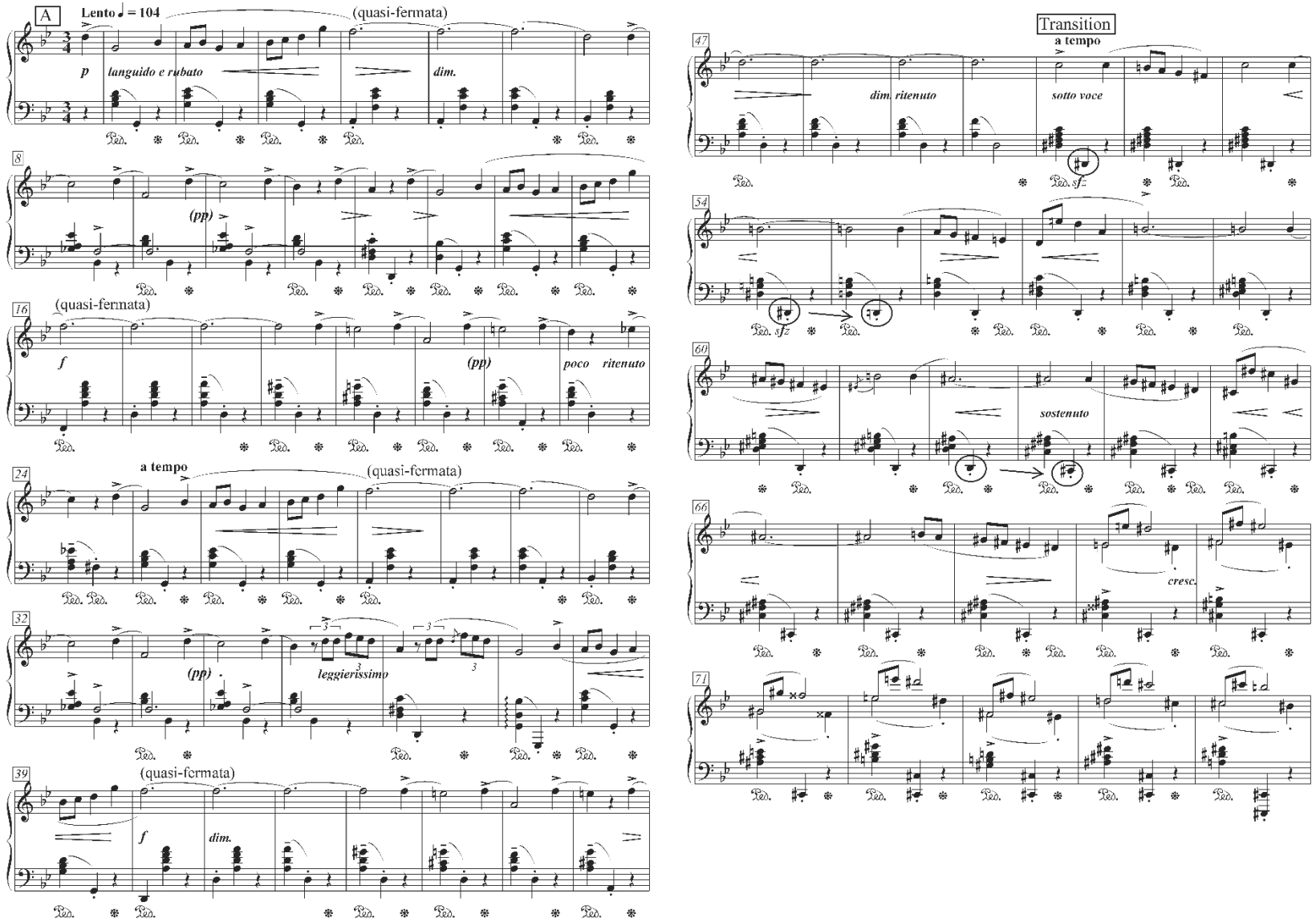
Another work by Chopin shaped by decay is his Nocturne in G minor, Op. 15 no. 3, reproduced with annotations in Example 7.3. Unlike the flowing melodies that characterize the beginning of most of his nocturnes, the opening melody is in this case rather fragmentary, coming to a halt with the long held Fs heard near the beginning of each phrase. Contributing to this fragmentary quality is the fact that the theme ends by fading away over a V chord across mm. 47–50, mid-way through the fourth phrase.

The next passage develops the opening theme and functions as a transition to the B section. Marked *sotto voce*, the transition begins by inflecting the V upward to a D♯ diminished-seventh chord. Instead of resolving to E minor, however, the D♯ diminished-seventh chord resolves to a G major cadential 6/4 as the D♯ in the bass becomes sublimated to D♮ in m. 55. This phrase then repeats down a step with the bass D now yielding to C♯, and then again another step beginning in m. 64. But this time, the music starts gathering momentum until it reaches a half cadence on a C♯ dominant chord in m. 79. Through the next couple of bars, the cadence echoes ever quieter until the bass C♯ is all that remains. Continuing the chromatic bass descent already traversed from D♯ through D to C♯, the bass C♯ finally yields to C♮ in m. 89 for the beginning of the B section in the key of F major (♭VII).

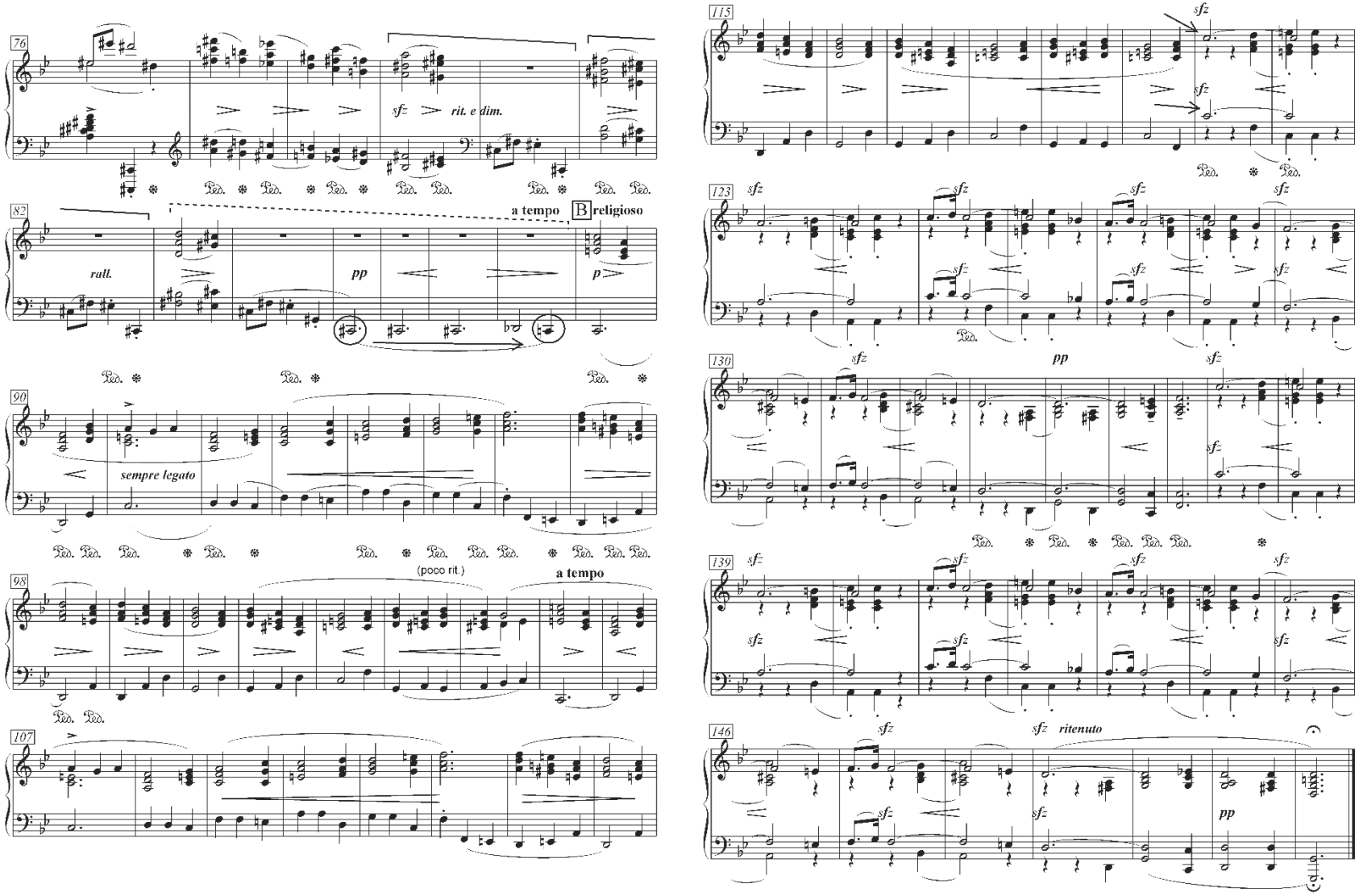
The B section is an archaic sounding chorale. In m. 121, however, a mazurka-like melody appears enfolded into an inner voice between the homophonic, chorale-style chords.[4] While the dotted-rhythms and the accents in beat two give the melody its mazurka-like character, the long time span separating each of the notes or motives gives the theme a fragmentary quality.

[4] Jeffrey Kallberg discusses several other aspects of this nocturne that are in dialogue with the genre of the Mazurka, including the accents in beat two in the A section and the modal chorale. See Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 3–29.

EXAMPLE 7.3. Chopin, Nocturne in G minor, Op. 15 no. 3, annotated score



EXAMPLE 7.3 continued



Enfolded within, the fragmented theme thus sounds like a distant, dwindling memory of a mazurka. The lack of a return to the opening theme after this mazurka-like melody also contributes to the fragmented quality of the theme and the nocturne as a whole. Given that in Chopin's nocturnes a return to the opening section always follows a contrasting B section, the missing return, in the context of this repertory, is a felt absence. As Jeffrey Kallberg has noted, a surviving manuscript reveals that Chopin had in fact intended for the opening theme to come back.[5] Chopin's sketch shows the B section ending on V, rather than I, followed by a "da Capo" return.[6] Missing its characteristic return to the opening, the nocturne as a whole is itself a fragment. Accordingly, as the disjunct, mazurka-like theme dies away by the end of the B section, the nocturne may be heard as fading midway through, with the fragmentary opening theme dissolving into nothingness.

In drawing on the concepts discussed in previous chapters, these two examples show how the findings from this study may be expanded to include the music of other nineteenth-century composers such as Chopin. Another direction for expanding the present research is to examine the treatment of quotations and allusions in Romantic music. In the course of this study, we have already encountered two quotations. Both evince a process of decay and may thus be heard as Romantic ruins. The first of these was Brahms's loose reference to Chopin's Nocturne in F minor, Op. 55 no. 1, at the beginning of his A minor intermezzo, Op. 76 no. 7. As noted in Chapter 4, Chopin's melody appears now fragmented, with the upper voice breaking off in mid-phrase. The second was Schumann's quotation of Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* at the end of the first movement of his Op. 17 *Fantasy*. In this case, the quoted melody becomes ever more

[5] Ibid., 14–16.
[6] Chopin's sketch indicating a da capo return after the B section is part of the R.O. Lehnman collection on deposit at the Morgan Library and Museum, New York. This sketch is reproduced in Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries*, 14.

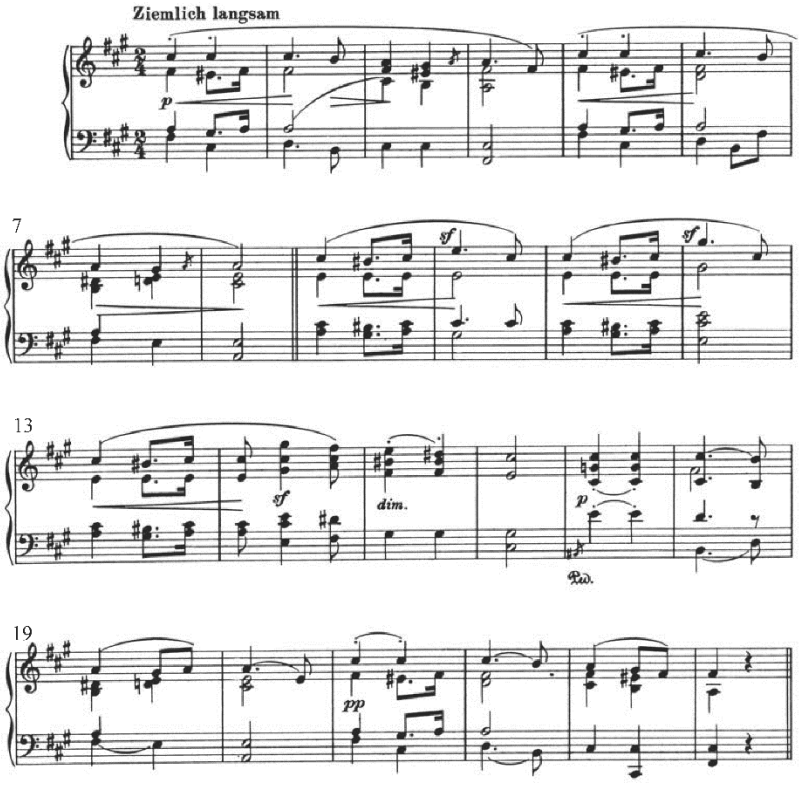
diffused until it finally fades away in blurry contours. As noted before, it is clear that Schumann meant for this quotation to be heard as a ruin, for he initially entitled this movement "Ruinen."

Another work made to sound like a ruin is the fourth piece of Schumann's *Bunte Blätter*, Op. 99, reproduced as Example 7.4a. By drawing on the imagery of autumn, the title of the collection (Colorful Leaves) depicts the beauty in decay. The piece itself is written in the style of a funeral march, with characteristic 2/4 meter, dotted rhythms, homophonic texture, and use of the minor mode. In the context of this piece, then, the imagery of autumn aestheticizes death as another form of decay.

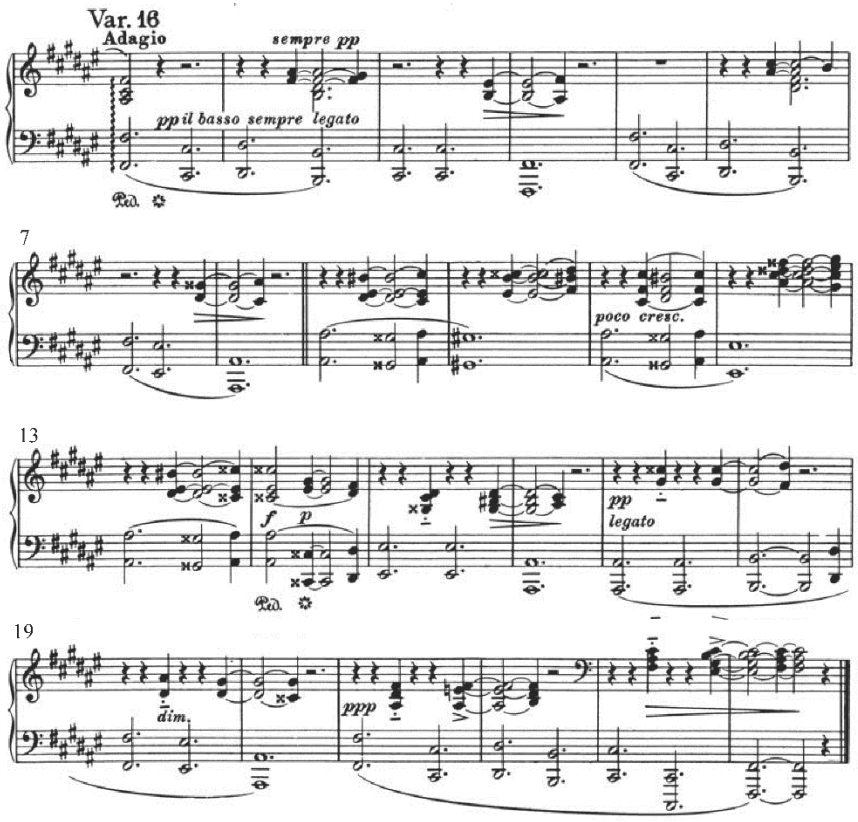
It was precisely during the time of Schumann's own declining health that Brahms's wrote his Op. 9 variations on this theme. Among the most striking aspects of this set is that it ends not with a climactic variation, as most variations sets do, but with a withered return of the theme, reproduced in Example 7.4b. The theme's opening period returns quieter and in the major mode; the bass is evened-out into an indistinct stream of dotted-half notes, and the melody has disintegrated into a set of two-note fragments. As Example 7.4c shows, the melodic fragments follow the contour of the original melody. But in m. 14, instead of leaping upward to a climatic G♯, the melody deflates quietly to the lower G♯. Sounding now an octave lower than before, the G♯ then continues downward to C♯ for the end of the digression. Fragmented and dejected, the original melody ends up completely dissolving upon the return of the opening. In mm. 17–19 of the final variation, the upper voice still resembles the original melody. But after the expected G-double-sharp (which would have resolved up to A for the cadence in m. 20) yields to G♯, any resemblances between the upper voice and the original melody disappear. All that is left are the accompanying chords sounding pianississimo as the music fades away into a quiet F♯ major chord. By the end of the set, Schumann's colorful leaf has withered and fallen.

EXAMPLE 7.4. Schumann's *Bunte Blätter*, Op. 99 no. 4, and the last of Brahms's variations on this theme

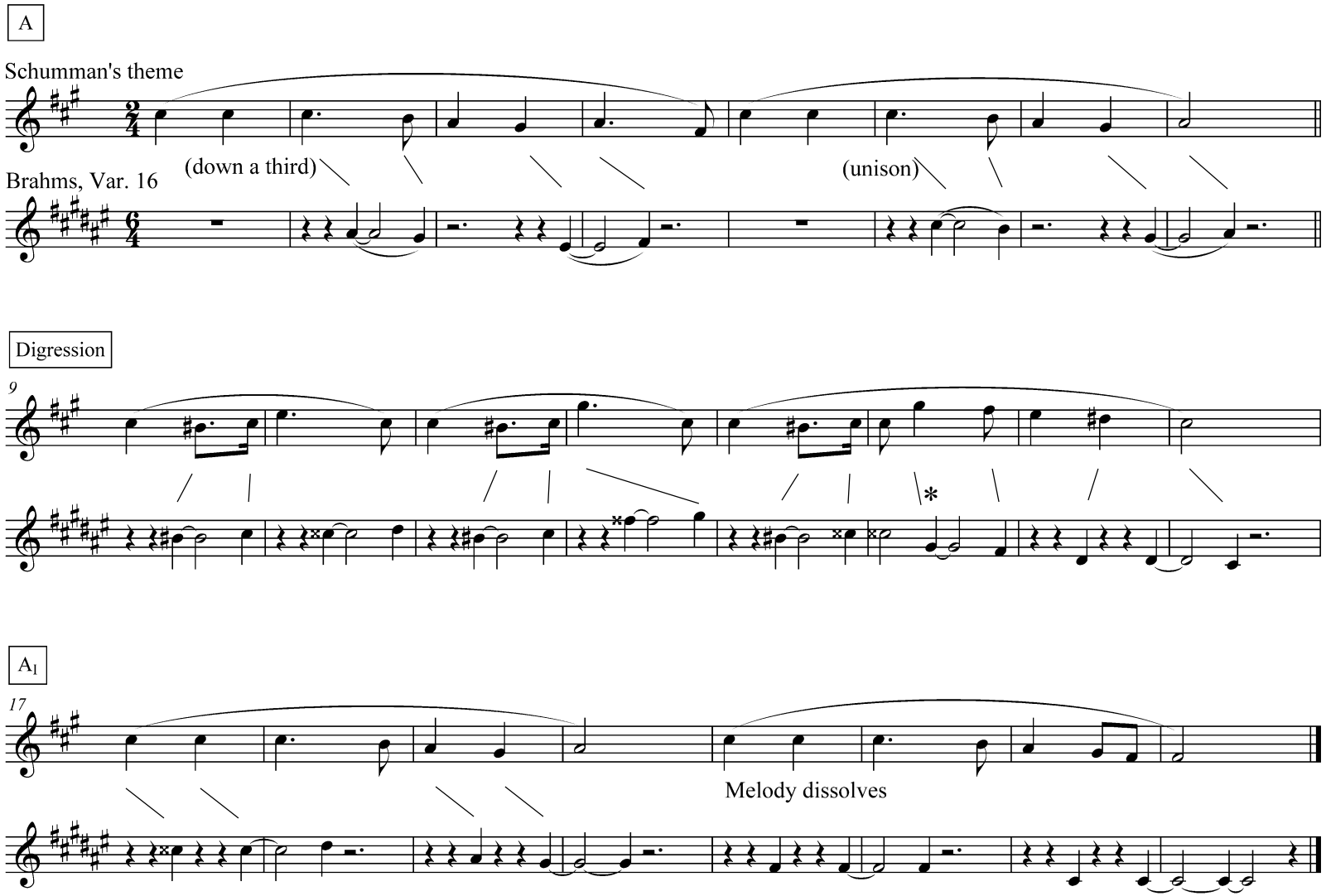
a) Schumann, *Bunte Blätter*, Op. 99 no. 4



b) Brahms, Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 9



EXAMPLE 7.4c. Fragmentation of Schumann's theme in the last of Brahms's Op. 9 variations



These brief examples show how the present research on the topic of dissolution can be expanded to include the use of quotation in Romantic music. By examining the significance of the quoted theme or phrase, these analyses begin to draw attention to the importance of *what* is dissolving in addition to *how* it dissolves. In the Op. 9 variations, for instance, the dissolution of the theme may be heard as aestheticizing Schumann's own failing condition through the image of colorful, autumnal foliage. Studying the subject of decay is also relevant in cases where the passage that dissolves alludes to particular a style or genre. Take for example the ending of Chopin's Nocturne in G minor, discussed above. Here is not just any melody, but a mazurka that appears in fragments across the final section. Accordingly, the process of dissolution in this piece, as in many other of Chopin's works, may be heard as carrying nationalistic overtones, romanticizing a Poland that was no longer. Further inquiry into the role of decay in Chopin's works could then inform existing research concerning the socio-political conditions surrounding the composer's music, much in the same way as this study has expanded upon the view of Brahms the autumnal.

Taking as point of departure the widely held notion that Brahms's works sound autumnal, this study has closely examined the role of dissolution in his music from both a philosophical and an analytical perspective. The conclusion reveals, nonetheless, that the findings of this study are also applicable to the music of other nineteenth-century composers and could also contribute to a better understanding of the role of quotations and allusions in Romantic music in general.

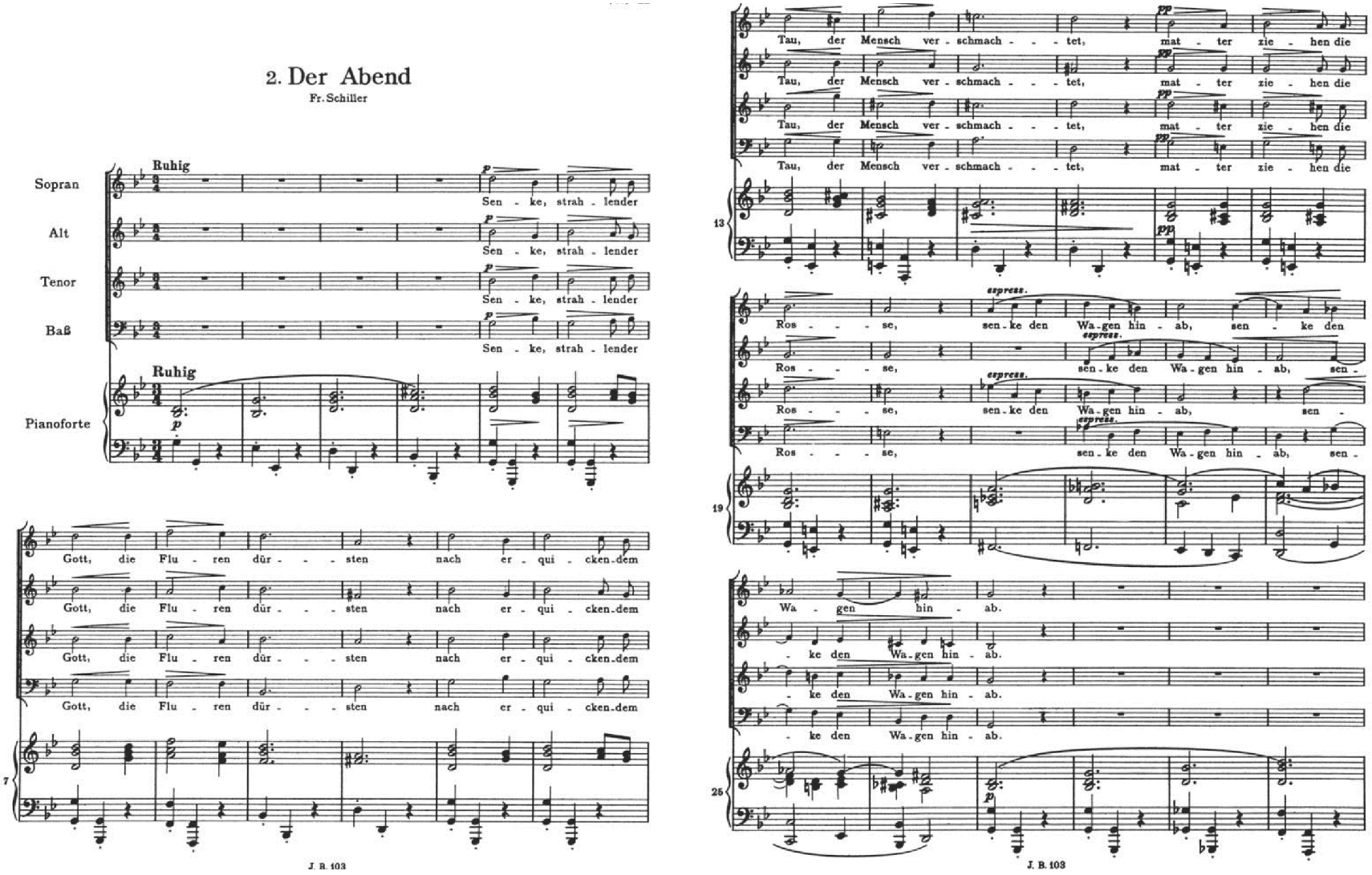
7.4. A Final Reflection

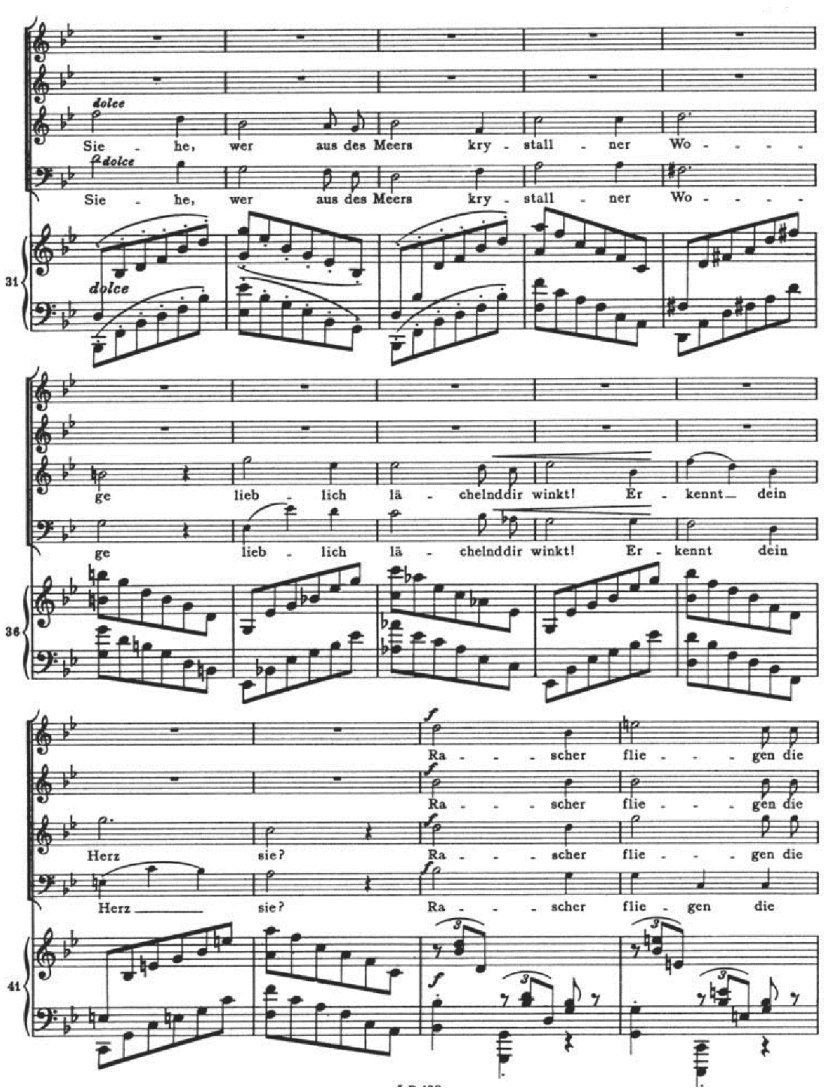
In arguing that Brahms's music is expressive of the Romantic ideal of dissolution, this study complements the view of Brahms as an autumnal composer. It suggests that through the compositional means discussed in previous chapters his works not just reflect but also

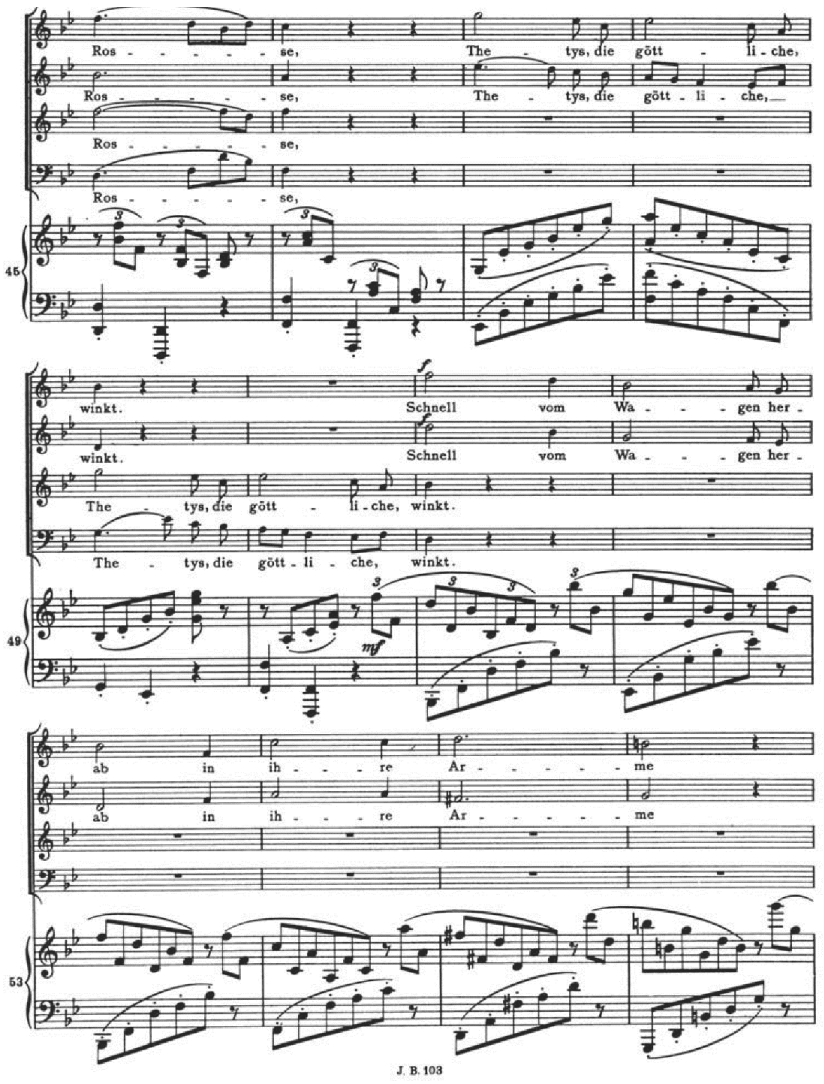
aestheticize the end of tonal tradition they embody. In beautifully depicting the passing of its era, his music is a comforting and uplifting commentary on the transience of existence. Smiling through tears, it says everything must end and that end is beautiful.[7]

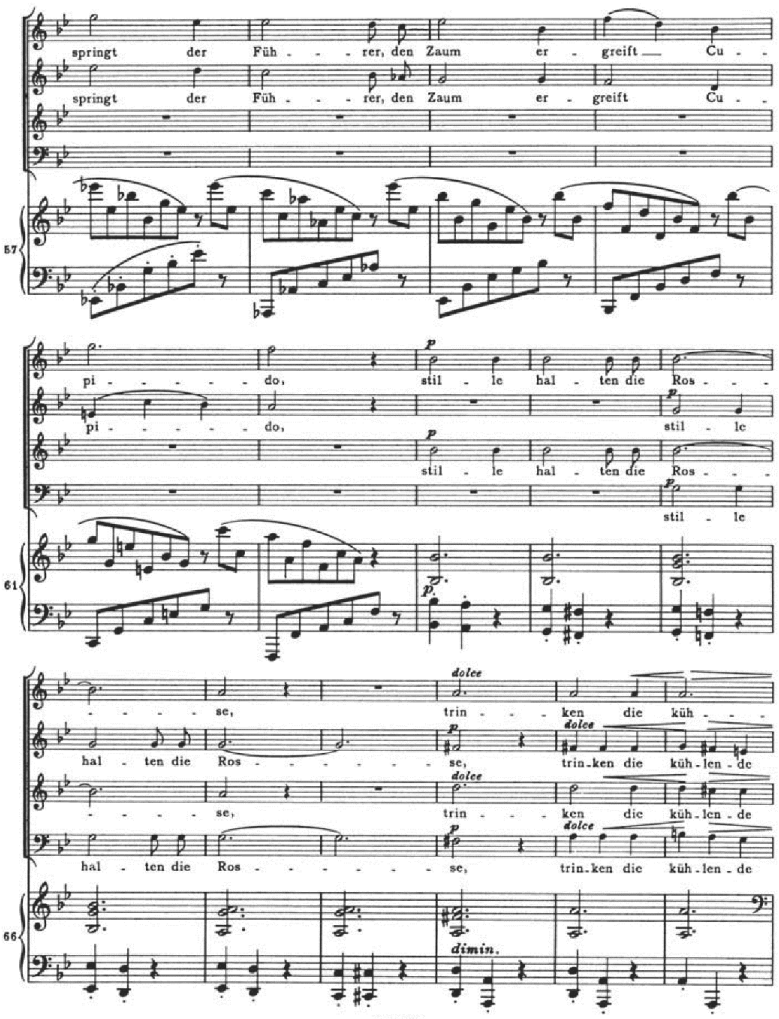
[7] Two prominent Brahms scholars have used the phrase "smiling through tears" to describe the composer's music. Walter Niemann (1929) employs it in to reference to the pensive quality of the piano intermezzi; Karl Geiringer (1947) employs it to describe the tender character of Brahms's Violin Sonata in G major, Op. 78. The phrase adequately captures the double valence of the process of dissolution in Romantic art.

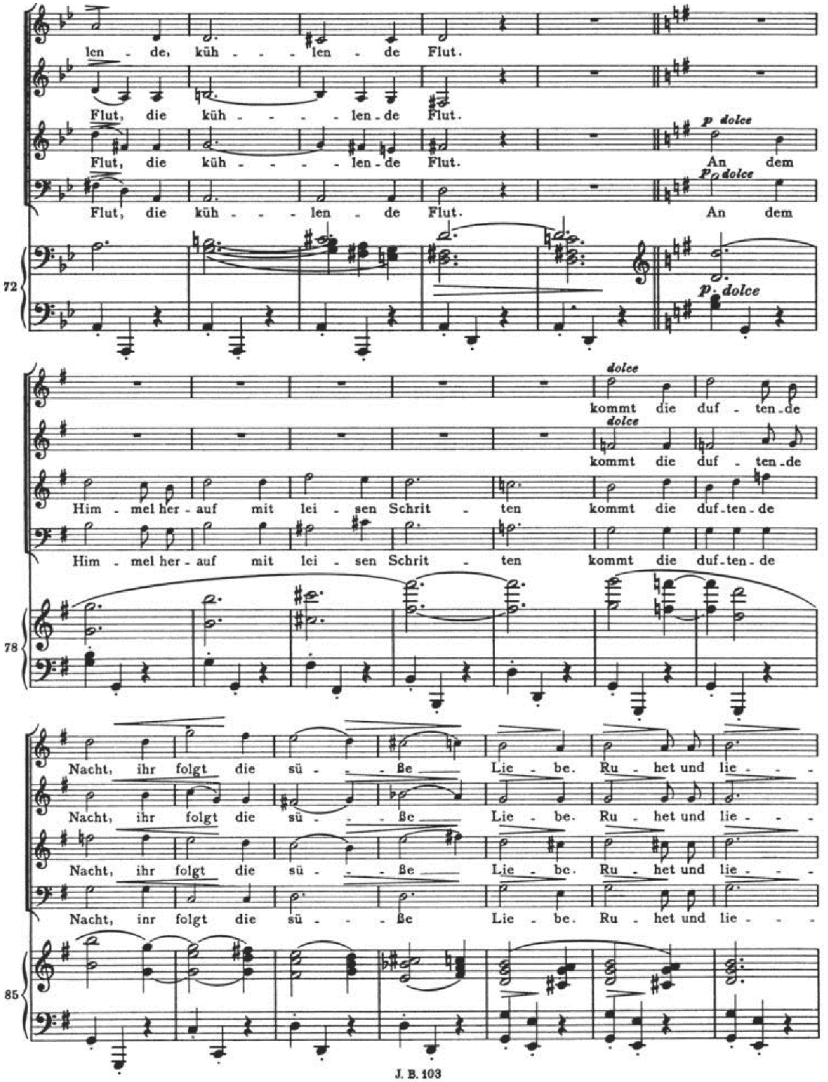
Appendix. Brahms, "Der Abend," Op. 64 no. 2, score

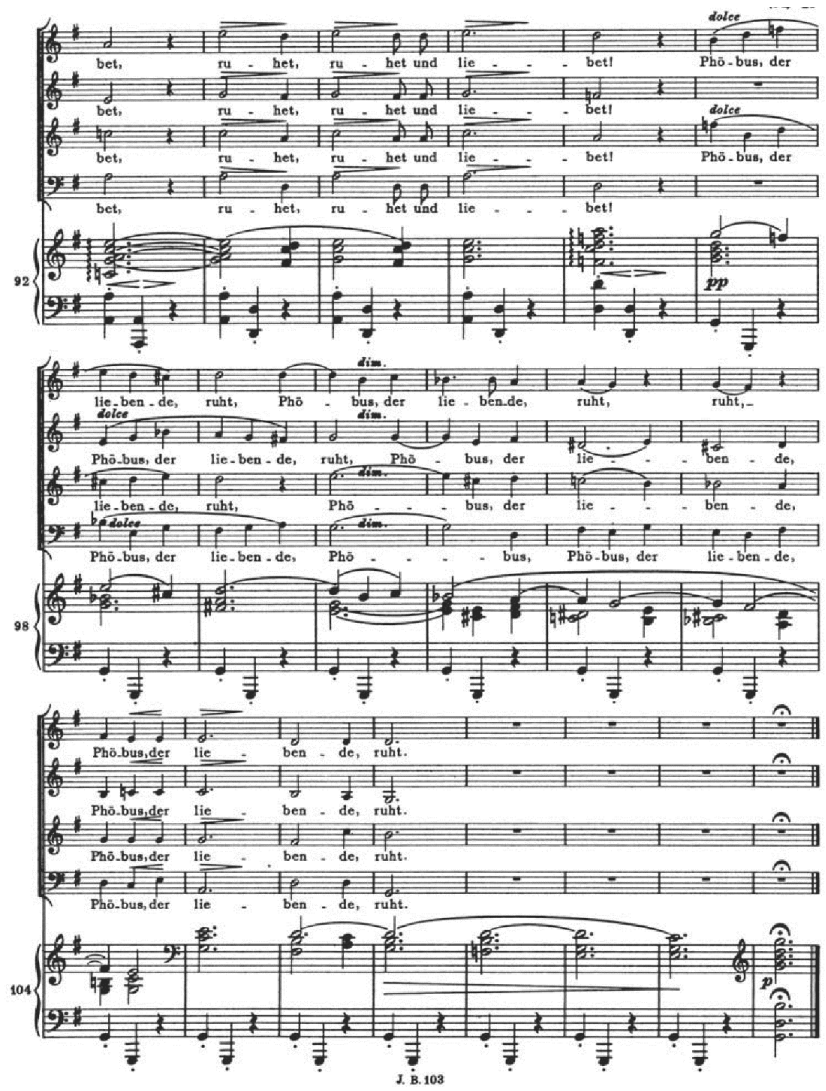



dolce
Sie - he, wer aus des Meers kry - stall - ner Wo - - - -
dolce
Sie - he, wer aus des Meers kry - stall - ner Wo - - - -
dolce
31
ge lieb - lich lä - chelnddir winkt! Er - kennt dein
ge lieb - lich lä - chelnddir winkt! Er - kennt dein
36
f
Ra - - - scher flie - - - gen die
f
Ra - - - scher flie - - - gen die
Herz sie? Ra - - - scher flie - - - gen die
Herz sie? Ra - - - scher flie - gen die
41
f


Ros - - - - - se, The - tys, die gött - li - che,
Ros - - - - - se, The - tys, die gött - li - che,
Ros - - - - - se,
Ros - - - - - se,
45
winkt. Schnell vom Wa - - - gen her -
winkt. Schnell vom Wa - - - gen her -
The - tys, die gött - li - che, winkt.
The - tys, die gött - li - che, winkt.
49
mf
ab in ih - - - re Ar - - - - - me
ab in ih - - - re Ar - - - - - me
53


springt der Füh - - - rer, den Zaum er - greift Cu - -
springt der Füh - - - rer, den Zaum er - greift Cu - -
57
pi - - - - - do, stil - le hal - ten die Ros - - -
pi - - - - - do, stil - le
stil - le hal - ten die Ros - - -
stil - le
61
- - - - - se, trin - - - ken die küh - - -
hal - ten die Ros - - - - - - - se, trin - ken die küh - len - de
- - - - - se, trin - - - ken die küh - len - de
hal - ten die Ros - - - - - - - se, trin - ken die küh - len - de
dolce
dimin.
66


len - de, küh - - - len - de Flut.
Flut, die küh - - - - len - de Flut.
Flut, die küh - - - - len - de Flut. An dem
Flut, die küh - - - len - de Flut. An dem
72
kommt die duf - ten - de
kommt die duf - ten - de
Him - mel her - auf mit lei - sen Schrit - ten kommt die duf - ten - de
Him - mel her - auf mit lei - sen Schrit - ten kommt die duf - ten - de
78
Nacht, ihr folgt die sü - - - ße Lie - be. Ru - het und lie - - -
Nacht, ihr folgt die sü - - - ße Lie - be. Ru - het und lie - - -
Nacht, ihr folgt die sü - - - ße Lie - be. Ru - het und lie - - -
Nacht, ihr folgt die sü - - - ße Lie - be. Ru - het und lie - - -
85


bet, ru - het, ru - het und lie - - - bet! Phö - bus, der
dolce
92
pp
lie - ben - de, ruht, Phö - bus, der lie - ben - de, ruht, ruht,
dim.
Phö - bus, der lie - ben - de, ruht, Phö - bus, der lie - - - ben - de,
Phö - bus, der lie - ben - de, Phö - - - - bus, Phö - bus, der lie - ben - de,
98
Phö - bus, der lie - ben - de, ruht.
104
p

J. B. 103

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor. “Brahms Aktuell.” In *Gesammelte Schriften Band 18: Musikalische Schriften V*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984.

Agawu, Kofi. “Structural ‘Highpoints’ in Schumann’s ‘Dichterliebe.’” *Music Analysis* 3, no. 2 (July 1984): 159–180.

Allert, Beate. “Romanticism and the Visual Arts.” In *The Literature of German Romanticism*, edited by Dennis F. Mahoney, 273–306. Rochester: Camden House, 2004.

Beller-McKenna, Daniel. *Brahms and the German Spirit*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

———. “Reminiscence in Brahms's Late Intermezzi.” *American Brahms Society Newsletter* (Fall 2004): 6–9.

———. “Distance and Disembodiment: Harps, Horns, and the Requiem Idea in Schumann and Brahms.” *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 47–89.

Botstein, Leon, ed. *The Compleat Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Brahms, Johannes. *Fantasien für Klavier, Opus 116: Faksimile nach dem Autograph, im Besitz der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg*. Munich: G Henle, 1997.

Brendel, Franz. "Robert Schumann mit Rücksicht auf Mendelssohn-Bartholdy und die Entwicklung der modernen Tonkunst überhaupt." *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 22 (1845): 89–92; "Robert Schumann with Reference to Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and the Development of Modern Music in General." Translated by Jürgen Thym. In *Schumann and His World*, edited by R. Larry Todd, 317–337. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Brentano, Clemens. *Die Gründung Prags. Ein historisch-romantisches Drama*. Peth: C. A. Hartleben, 1815.

Brinkmann, Reinhold. *Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms*. Translated by Peter Palmer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Burkhart, Charles. "Schenker's "Motivic Parallelisms"." *Journal of Music Theory* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1978): 145–175.

Burnham, Scott G. *Beethoven Hero*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Cadwallader, Allen. “Motivic Unity and Integration of Structural Levels in Brahms's B Minor Intermezzo, Op. 119, No. 1.” *Theory and Practice* 8, no. 2 (December 1983): 5–24.

———. "Foreground Motivic Ambiguity: Its Clarification at Middleground Levels in Selected Late Piano Pieces of Johannes Brahms." *Music Analysis* 7, no. 1 (1988): 59–91.

Caplin, William. *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Daverio, John. *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology*. New York: Macmillan, 1993.

Dienstag, Joshua Foa. *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Dudeque, Norton. *Music Theory and Analysis in the Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*. Aldershot & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005.

Dunsby, Jonathan. "The Multi-Piece in Brahms: Fantasien Op. 116." In *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies*, edited by Robert Pascall, 147–166. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Einstein, Alfred. *Music in the Romantic Era*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1947.

Forte, Allen. "Motivic Design and Structural Levels in the First Movement of Brahms's String Quartet in C Minor." *The Musical Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (Autumn 1983): 471–502.

Frisch, Walter. *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*. Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

Frisch, Walter and Kevin C. Karnes, ed. *Brahms and His World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Geiringer, Karl. *Brahms: His Life and Works*. 3rd edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1949.

Hanslick, Edward. "Discovering Brahms." In *Brahms and His World*, edited by Walter Frisch and Kevin C. Karnes, 217–232. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Hatten, Robert S. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

———. *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert Musical Meaning and Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Hepokoski, James, and Warren Darcy. *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Hepokoski, James. "Monumentality and Formal Processes in the First Movement of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 15." In *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, edited by Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith, 217–251. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Hoeckner, Berthold. *Programing the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Hopkins, Antony. “Brahms: Where Less is More.” In *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essays in Performance and Analysis*, edited by David Witten, 233–274. New York: Garland Publishing, 1997.

Kallberg, Jeffrey. *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Klein, Michael. “Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative.” *Music Theory Spectrum* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 23–56.

Kleist, Heinrich von. “Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelanschaft,” in Sämtliche Werk und Briefe, vol. 2 (Munich: Hanser, 1977), 327. Kleist also notes that the painting has an Ossian-like effect.

Komar, Arthur. *Theory of Suspensions: A Study of Metrical and Pitch Relations in Tonal Music.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

Kramer, Lawrence. *Why Classical Music Still Matters*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Kuzniar, Alice. “The Vanishing Canvas: Notes on German Romantic Landscape Aesthetics.” *German Studies Review* 11, no. 3 (Oct. 1988): 359–76.

———. “The Temporality of Landscape: Romantic Allegory and C. D. Friedrich,” *Studies in Romanticism* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 69–93.

Littlejohns, Richard. “Early Romanticism.” In *The Literature of German Romanticism*, edited by Dennis F. Mahoney, 61–78. Rochester: Camden House, 2004.

Littlewood, Julian. *The Variations of Johannes Brahms*. London: Plumbago Press, 2004.

Louis, Rudolph. *Die Deutsche Musik der Gegenwart*. Munich and Leipzig: Bei Georg Müller, 1909.

Mahrt, William. “Brahms and Reminiscence: A Special Use of Classic Conventions” In *Convention n Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honor of Leonard G. Ratner*, edited by Wye Allanbrook, Janet M. Levy, and William P. Mahrt, 75–112. Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1992.

Malinowski, Bernadette. "German Romantic Poetry in Theory and Practice: The Schlegel Borthers, Schellig, Tieck, Novalis, Eichendorff, Brentano, and Heine." In *The Literature of German Romanticism*, edited by Dennis F. Mahoney, 147–70. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004.

McClelland, Ryan. "Brahms and the Principle of Destabilized Beginnings." *Music Analysis* 28, no. 1 (March 2009): 3–61.

———. "Sequence as Culmination in the Chamber Music of Brahms." In *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, edited by Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith, 147–185. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Meyer, Leonard. *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

Monelle, Raymond. *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Morgan, Robert P. "6 Piano Pieces, Opus 118." In *The Compleat Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*, edited by Leon Botstein, 193–195. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Müller, Adam. "Etwas über Landschaftsmalerei." *Phoebus: Ein Journal fur die Kunst* 4–5 (1808): 71–73.

Niemann, Walter. *Brahms*. Translated by Catherine Alison Phillips. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy, and the Case of Wagner*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

Notley, Margaret. "Plagal Harmony as Other: Asymmetrical Dualism and Instrumental Music by Brahms." *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 90–130.

———. *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Novalis. "Hymns to the Night." In *Anthology of the German Literature of the Romantic Era and Age of Goethe*. Translated by Klaus-Peter Hinze and Leonard M. Trawick. San Francisco: Edwin Mellen Press: 1993.

———. *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*. Translated and edited by Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.

Patty, Austin. "Pacing Scenarios: How Harmonic Rhythm and Melodic Pacing Influence Our Experience of Musical Climax." *Music Theory Spectrum* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 325–367.

Paul, Jean. *Flegeljahre*. In Sämtliche Werke, ser. 1, vol. 10 (1934), 85.

———. *Kleine Nachschule zur ästhetischen Vorschule*. In *Sämtliche Werke*, ser. 1, vol. 16. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1938.

———. *Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter's School for Aesthetics*. Translated by Margaret R. Hale. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973.

Platt, Heather. "Unrequited Love and Unrealized Dominants." *Integral* 7 (1993): 119–148.

Platt, Heather, and Peter H. Smith, ed. *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Ratner, Leonard. *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1992.

Rings, Steven. “The Learned Self: Artifice in Brahms’s Late Intermezzi.” In *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, edited by Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith, 19–51. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Rosen, Charles. *The Romantic Generation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Rothstein, William. “Rhythm and the Theory of Structural Levels.” PhD diss. Yale University, 1981.

———. *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music.* New York: Schirmer Books, 1989.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Translated by Russell Goulbourne. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Rzewski, Frederic. “Inner Voices.” *Perspectives of New Music* 33, no. 1–2 (1995): 404–417.

Samarotto, Frank. “A Theory of Temporal Plasticity in Tonal Music: An Extension of the Schenkerian Approach to Rhythm with Special Reference to Beethoven’s Late Music.” PhD diss., City University of New York, 1999.

———. “Sublimating Sharp ^4: An Exercise in Schenkerian Energetics.” *Music Theory Online* 10, no. 3 (September 2004).

———. “Determinism, Prediction, and Inevitability in Brahms's Rhapsody in E♭ Major, Op. 119, No 4.” *Theory and Practice* 32, no. 69–99 (2007).

———. ““Plays of Opposing Motion”: Contra-Structural Melodic Impulses in Voice-Leading Analysis.” *Music Theory Online* 15, no. 2 (June 2009).

Saul, Nicholas. "Love, Death and Liebestod in German Romanticism." In *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, edited by Nicholas Saul, 163–74. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Schachter, Carl. "Either/Or." In *Schenker Studies*, edited by Hedi Siegel, 165–180. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Schenker, Heinrich. *Free Composition*. Translated and edited by Ernst Oster. New York: Longman, 1979.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. Translated by Richard Crouter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Schmalfeldt, Janet. *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Schoenberg, Arnold. *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. London: Faber and Faber, 1970.

———. *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*. Edited by Severine Neff. Translated by Charlotte M. Cross and Severine Neff. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.

———. *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique and Art of Its Presentation*. Edited and translated by Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

———. *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*. Edited by Leonard Stein. Translated by Leo Black. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 1. Translated and edited by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

———. *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 2. Translated by E. F. J. Payne. New York, Dover Publications, 1966.

———. *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays*. Vol. 2. Translated by E. F. J. Payne. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Singh, R. Raj. *Death, Contemplation and Schopenhauer*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Smith, Peter H. "Liquidation, Augmentation, and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps." *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 3 (1994): 237–261.

———. "Outer Voice Conflicts: Their Analytical Challenges and Artistic Consequences." *Journal of Music Theory* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 1–43.

———. *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in His Werther Quartet*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.

———. "You Reap What You Sow: Some Instances of Rhythmic and Harmonic Ambiguity in Brahms." *Music Theory Spectrum* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 57–97.

———. "New Perspectives on Brahms's Linkage Technique." *Intégral* 21 (2007): 109–154.

———. "Brahms's Motivic Harmonies and Contemporary Tonal Theory: Three Case Studies from the Chamber Music." *Music Analysis* 28, no. 1 (2009): 63–110.

Snarrenberg, Robert. "The Play of *Différance*: Brahms's Intermezzo Op. 118, No. 2." *In Theory Only* 10, no. 3 (1987): 1–25.

Specht, Richard. *Johannes Brahms: Leben und Werk eines deutschen Meisters*. Hellerau: Avalum-Verlag, 1928.

Spitzer, Michael. *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven's Late Style*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Steward, Susan. "Agon Garden," Representations 62 (Spring 1998): 111–143.

Trigg, Dylan. *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason*. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.

Vaughan, William. *German Romantic Painting*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

Wackenroder, Wilhelm Heinrich. *Confessions and Fantasies*. Translated by Mary Hurst Schubert. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971.

———. *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar*. Translated by Edward Mornin. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1975.

Wanning Harries, Elizabeth. ""Unfinish'd Sentences": The Romantic Fragment." In *A Companion to European Romanticism*, edited Michael Ferber, 360–75. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Watkins, Holly. *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E. T. A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Wintle, Christopher. "Was ist Steigerung (What Intensification Means)." Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie 8, no. 2 (2003): 102–111.

Zbikowski, Lawrence M. *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

Diego Cubero Hernández

dcubero1@gmail.com

Education

Ph.D., Music Theory
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 2014
Dissertation Title: "Brahms the Autumnal and the Romantic Aesthetic of Dissolution"
Adviser: Prof. Frank Samarotto

M.M., Music Theory
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 2010

B.M., *Summa cum laude*, Music Composition
Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, 2008

Conference Presentations

"Voice-Leading Bifurcations and the Trope of Separation in Selected Songs by Brahms"
18th Biennial International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music, Toronto, 2014

"Sounding Within: Structural Inner Voices in Brahms's Piano Works"
Texas Society for Music Theory, San Antonio, 2014

"In the Process of Dissolving: Examining the Interaction between Syntactic and Statistical Form in Brahms"
Seventh International Conference on Music Theory, Tallinn, 2014

"The Fifth-Third-Root Paradigm and Its Prolongational Implications"
Society for Music Theory Annual Meeting, New Orleans, 2012
Music Theory Society of New York State Annual Meeting, New York City, 2012

"Voice-Leading and Temporal Multiplicity in Brahms's Intermezzo in A Major, Op. 118 No. 2"
Music Theory Southeast Annual Meeting, Atlanta, 2012
Mannes College's Second Graduate Student Theory Conference, New York City, 2012

"Motivic Temporality and Temporal Coherence in Haydn's Piano Sonata in C Major, XVI: 50, I"
Society for Music Theory Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, 2011
Music Theory Midwest Annual Conference, Lincoln, 2011
Rocky Mountain Society for Music Theory Annual Meeting, Colorado Springs, 2011
West Coast Conference of Music Theory and Analysis, Santa Barbara, 2011

"Rhythm and Meter as Agents of Form in the First Movement of Ginastera's First String Quartet"
University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory, Cincinnati, 2010

Teaching Experience
Lecturer in Music Theory, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, 2014–present
Courses taught:
Theory 1 (diatonic harmony)
Theory 4 (post-tonal theory)
18th-Century Counterpoint (graduate and undergraduate)

Adjunct Professor of Music Theory, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2013–14
Courses taught:
Graduate Theory Review
Form and Analysis
Theory 4 (post-tonal theory)

Associate Instructor of Music Theory, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 2008–13
Courses taught:
Freshman Written Theory (diatonic and chromatic harmony)
Sophomore Written Theory (theory and literature survey: 16th–19th century)
Junior Written Theory (theory and literature survey of the 20th century)
Freshman Aural skills (diatonic harmony)
Honors Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior Written Theory
Honors Sophomore Theory—taught independently

Awards
Jacobs School of Music Doctoral Fellowship, Indiana University, 2010–14
Wennerstrom Music Theory Associate Instructor Fellowship for Outstanding Teaching, 2013
Best Graduate Student Paper, Rocky Mountain Society for Music Theory, 2011
Dean's Scholarship, Indiana University, 2008–10
Minority Travel Grant, Society for Music Theory, 2009
Robert Swiatek Memorial Scholarship, Georgia State University, 2007–08

Service
Member, Professional Development Committee, Society for Music Theory, 2012–present
Circulation Manager, Indiana Theory Review, 2009–10
Vice President, Student Chapter of the Society of Composers, Georgia State University, 2008