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Traces of Ossianic imagery in selected piano works of Robert Schumann

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Research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music (by course work and research) in the Wits School of the Arts, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand.

Johannesburg, October 2006

Abstract

This research report examines the phenomenon of Ossianic poetry and its widespread, if not always palpable, impact on the cultural life of Europe. This 'trace' of Ossian extends to several piano compositions of Robert Schumann.

Divided into three sections, the first of these describes and explains the genesis of the poems, their possible political background and their wide-ranging influence throughout Europe and even North America, despite the scathing exposé of James Macpherson written by Dr. Samuel Johnson. For one-and a-half centuries the poems continued to kindle the imaginations of artists, writers and musicians in works that either directly cite Ossian or Ossianic characters in their titles or texts or are virtual clones of this spurious but popular body of literature.

Section B, 'Interlude', deals specifically with aspects of the life of Robert Schumann and engages in a hermeneutic reading of many of his musical compositions. Referring to the Derridean concept of arche-writing and 'the trace' as well as the Foucauldian theory of polysemia (1969: 123), the report offers a number of alternative interpretations of standard repertoire.

Section C highlights four works; *Exercices (Variationen über einem thema von Beethoven)*, Op. Post, *Phantasie* in C major, Op. 17, *Waldszenen*, Op. 82 and *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133. It also touches on a number of other works that reveal his conscious and unconscious awareness of Ossianic imagery and narrative.

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree Master of Music (course work and research) in the Wits School of the Arts, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other University.

Colin Calderwood Dale 0009509E

This twenty-sixtrh day of October, 2006

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Section A: The disorder of discourse

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Introduction

In 1996 I attended a performance of Professor Mzilikazi Khumalo's *uShaka ka Senzangakhoma* in Johannesburg. A dramatic work for soloists, choir and orchestra, it draws on the rich oral tradition of Africa and the western tradition of notation and orchestration. It came after a period of social and media hysteria and near revolution in South Africa between the 1992 referendum and the 1994 democratic election: a time when many luminaries in the country, such as Aggrey Klaaste of *The Sowetan*, had publicly embarked on a policy of 'nation building'. The response was everything from the unprintable, disparaging remarks of the far right to the 'work of genius' of the far left. It left me with not only a hope for the future, but a need to examine my own cultural heritage. I saw a parallel between one of my favourite composers, Robert Schumann, working in a similar environment of a new political dispensation in mid-nineteenth-century Germany and Mzilikazi Khumalo in turn-of-the-century South Africa. Both composers were adopting a bardic position and drawing on cultural tradition to address the nation in times of change through a musical language that was accessible to everyone, from musical cognoscenti to the man in the street. Khumalo used African oral tradition and history whereas Robert Schumann drew on the traditions of legend and myth in northern Europe. The most popular of these at the time, though not strictly Germanic, was Ossian, a figure in Celtic history, but of Nordic descent.

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In this short research report I will examine the effect of the extremely popular *The Poems of Ossian* on the European cultural scene of the nineteenth-century and show how their influence emerged in some of Schumann's piano works before becoming more easily apparent in the later dramatic ballads of the last three years of his creative life.

Ossian, or as the Irish call him, Oisin, was a figure in early Celtic history together with Cuchullan. He was the son of Fingal and the father of Oscar. We know he lived in a pre-Christian period (which would put him before the early fifth century), that he was the tribal bard (the recorder of history and heroics in verse form), and that his favoured instrument was the harp. He lived in times of great political upheaval and recorded the invasions of tribes from the north who plundered the land and decimated his people. Ossian and Cuchullan were two totally independent people in Irish history and though they came from a similar period, were in no way connected (James 1999: 11).

The Ossian that was presented to the literary world of the 1760s was a very different figure. He was reinvented in the work of James Macpherson, a Scottish 'nationalist', who gathered the ballads of the highlands, translated them from Gaelic or Erse and claimed the discovery of a Nordic epic in fragmentary form to rival the poems of Homer and Virgil. After the initial publication of *Fragments* in 1761, *Fingal* and *Temora* quickly followed between 1763 and 1765. In this narrative, Oscar and Cuchullan assisted Fingal, the tribal elder statesman and army general, against the invaders. The date of this epic was given as third century, although no documents before the fourteenth century existed. A long and public debate followed in the press, with English critics calling the poems forgeries (Gaskill: v-viii).

The poems were tremendously popular in Europe and were translated into twenty-six languages. The final critical blow to Macpherson, delivered by Dr Samuel Johnson in a London newspaper, caused the poems never to be taken seriously in England, but had seemingly no effect on mainland Europe. A veritable Ossianic fever gripped the writers, artists and musicians of Europe and sparked a revolution in creative thinking that has seldom been witnessed since.

The writings of Rousseau, especially *The Noble Savage*, expounded the idea that man, in his original state of being, free of commercial and political fetters, lived a purer life through being closer to nature than his so-called more developed contemporary counterpart (http://www.philosophyclassics.com/philosophers/Rousseau/). The Reformation Movement had not only divided church from state, but had also divided northern Europe from the south. The North was in a process of discovering its own cultural identity independent of the classic epics of the South. The poems of Ossian made the ideas of Rousseau more accessible to the reading public and seemed to supply proof of a primitive culture where music, poetry and the gentler emotions, like love, were valued in a society considered up to then to be totally barbaric. They had heroism, romance and idealism in epic proportions and emphasised the brevity and fragility of earthly life and the importance of living life for a higher ideal (Stafford 1988: xiv).

The ethnicity of the poems served as an argument in Europe for unification through a common history and a brotherhood of man, despite the original aim of Scottish nationalists to sever the political ties of the Highlanders from the English Lowlanders.

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Perhaps nobody felt more strongly about these poems than Napoleon Bonaparte, who carried a copy with him on all his campaigns and saw in the Celtic heroes an ideal of bravery and stoicism (Smart: 15). His visions for a united Europe, without monarchical power, were truly along Ossianic lines. He even later commissioned François Gerard and Anne-Louis Girodet to decorate his summer residence at Malmaisson with extravagant allegorical paintings depicting Napoleon in the presence of the Ossianic characters (Stafford 1988: 2). Another painter who produced work with direct Ossianic ties was J M W Turner: he paid a visit to the Hebrides and the sites in the poems. His atmospheric landscapes captured perfectly misted vistas of the islands. Jean-Auguste Ingres also used new theories on light to capture similar subjects of unreal quality. The Danish painter, Nicolai Albigaard, and two influential Germans, Philipp Otto Runge and Casper David Friederich, were all attracted by similar themes and their work could be said to verge on the surreal (Daverio 1987: 248).

In literature, the influence was, if anything, even stronger. Sir Walter Scott drew on the Ossianic legends for *The Lady of the Lake*, *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*. James F Cooper adapted the scenic elements to Northern America in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Robert Burns drew on the rich legends of the Highlands in his poems, some of which were set to music by Schumann. In Europe Friederich Schlegel described Ossianic poetry as 'the reflex of a destroyed nation' and Chateaubriand claimed it gave 'a new tone' to poetry (Daverio 1987: 248). We can find similar themes in the works of Goethe, Schiller, Pushkin and Lamartine (to name but a few).

Music was perhaps the ideal medium to portray the haunted melancholy of the poems. Works include the operas *Oithona* and *Ossian ou Les bardes* by Francois Hyppolyte Barthelemon and Jean-Francois le Sueur, *Uthal* by Ettienne Méhul, numerous songs of Schubert, *Die Hebriden*, *On Lena's Gloomy Heath* and the *Scottish Symphony* by Mendelssohn, *Malvina* by Donizetti, *Danse Ossianique* by Gottschalk, the overture *Nachklänge von Ossian* and the cantata *Comala* by Gade and Brahms's *Gesang aus Fingal* and *Darthulas Grabgesang* (Daverio 1987: 250). Besides the poem's frequent references to the harp, its affirming of the power of music to link the living with the dead suggests that the latter is a privileged art and the one most likely to be associated with Ossianic themes in an era imbued with romanticism.

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Despite the attractiveness and exoticism of the Highland folk melodies, there had to be a more powerful spark that ignited a new creative spirit in Europe—and this long before the Romantic Movement. In this short report I will endeavour to show that *The Poems of Ossian* embodied concepts that changed the cultural landscape of Europe, concepts that were extremely attractive to Robert Schumann.

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Chapter 1

James Macpherson and *The Poems of Ossian*[1]

James Macpherson was born in 1736 at Badenoch, a Gaelic-speaking village in the Scottish Highlands. His uncle, Ewan Macpherson of Cluny, was the Clan Chief and took part in the Jacobean uprising of 1745. His property was confiscated, his home destroyed and he was forced into exile in France together with many of the other supporters of Prince Charles. It was in France that their revolutionary ideas seemed to take root and fuel the overthrow of the monarchy in the 1780s. Until 1752 the Scottish traditions of wearing tartan and playing the bagpipes were banned, as was any form of nationalist recreation. No Scot was allowed to carry weapons. The English government pursued a policy of divide and rule and Scottish culture was threatened with extinction.

At the age of eighteen Macpherson entered Aberdeen University and came under the influence of Thomas Blackwell, a professor in literature. Blackwell had strong ideas on education and seemed to follow the teachings of Rousseau. In Memoirs *of the Court of Augustus* (1753-1763) he suggested a plan for students:

> . . . along with their Studies at home, to look much abroad: not to plunge into Gayety and Foppery of the idle . . . Student have Address and Agility of Body . . . and essayed to wield the Weapons or handle the Tools of the several Callings he is inspecting. Why for instance, should Letters disqualify a Man to take up a Foile, mount in the great Saddle, or rein in the hunting Horse? (Stafford 1988: 29).
>
> We live within Doors, cover'd, as it were by Nature's Face and passing our Days supinely ignorant of her Beauties, we are apt to think Similes taken from her Low and ancient Manners mean or absurd (Stafford 1988: 33).
>
> It is well known that the Spartans, so long as they adhered to their primitive Institutions and Poverty were the most powerful people of all Greece and never proved unsuccessful in their Wars, till they became possessed of great Riches and Reserves (Stafford 1988: 35).

Macpherson was introduced to the literary society of Aberdeen and became deeply involved with the nationalist movement in literature. Donald MacNicol, the Minister of Lismore and Jerome Stone, a schoolteacher, first made Gaelic poetry accessible by submitting some translations of ballads to *The Scot's*

[1] Fiona Stafford, author of *The Sublime Savage* and the preface to Howard Gaskill's 1996 edition of *The Poems of Ossian*, is my primary source of research for this chapter. Although much has been written on James Macpherson and there are thousands of Internet sites, many focus on the fraudulence of the poems and do not examine the motives, circumstances, influences or literary worth of the poems. Fiona Stafford seems to offer the most recent research and presents a well-balanced interpretation.

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Magazine (January 1756). Had it not been for Stone's premature death, he would have gone on to publish a great deal more as the interest in Celtic poetry was spreading far beyond the Scottish borders.

In 1759, Macpherson, now a private tutor, met John Home, one of the most influential men in Edinburgh's literary circles. He was asked to translate a piece of Gaelic poetry and, after much reluctance on his part, *The Death of Oscur* was published to great acclaim. At the urging of Alexander Carlisle, George Laurie and Hugh Blair, and again many refusals and excuses, Macpherson was sent on a tour of the Highlands and the islands in search of further works of poetry and in particular to investigate the existence of a Gaelic epic poem. Fiona Stafford interprets this reluctance as being a fear of bringing under the spotlight what was perceived as Highland superstition, lack of sophistication and the possible aspersions that might have been cast on Macpherson's own background. The resultant publication of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* in June 1760 was an immediate success. Although only a small volume of poems, most about the loss of military heroes, it whetted the appetite of the literary world and seemed to be only the beginning of a large undiscovered body of work. The author alluded to a much larger work in the preface and the public was awaiting the discovery of a Celtic epic poet on the same scale as Homer and Virgil. In August 1760 Macpherson was sent to the Highlands again and journeyed as far as Skye and the Hebrides collecting poems and stories from the aged storytellers. As a native of the Highlands he was aware of the local distrust of people from the cities and non-Gaelic speakers. For this reason he always had with him people of local repute who could speak the indigenous dialects. One of these was a kinsman, Lachlin Macpherson, who remarked:

> Mr. Macpherson observed that, as the declarant's brother could repeat the whole of the poems contained in the said manuscript he would oblige him if he would give him the said manuscript for which he might expect friendship and reward (Stafford 1988: 118.)

There were also problems finding people suitably familiar with Irish and Gaelic orthography; this fact made obscure poetry doubly obscure. The Rev. Andrew Gallie's description of Macpherson working on the translations throws some light on the difficulties faced: 'I remember Mr. Macpherson reading the MSS, found in Clanronald's, execrating the bard himself who dictated the amanuensis, saying "D—m the scoundrel, it is he himself who now speaks, and not Ossian" . . . It was and still is well known, that the broken poems of Ossian, handed down from one generation to another, got corrupted.' (Stafford 1988: 124.)

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In 1765 *Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books. Together with several Other Poems composed by Ossian the Son of Fingal* and *Temora: An Ancient Epic Poem in Eight Books. Together with several Other Poems composed by Ossian the Son of Fingal* was published. The poems were greeted with great enthusiasm in Scotland, but were the subject of great ridicule in England. Many scholars of the south, including Dr Samuel Johnson, voiced their doubts about the authenticity of the poems and set about proving that they were the work of a fraud and charlatan. It was true that Macpherson altered many of the texts that he felt had become corrupted over time and the whereabouts of some of the manuscripts he received are still a mystery today. It was known that no manuscript dated from before the fifteenth century and the author's editing seems to be highly subjective according to his education at Aberdeen (Stafford: 73). Blackwell's exhortations to draw on one's own experience (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) seem to have been followed in some passages:

> Many have now learned to leave their mountains, and seek their fortunes in a milder climate; and though a certain amor patriae may bring them back, they have, during their absence, imbibed enough of foreign manners to despise the customs of their ancestors (Fingal: xv).

Fiona Stafford also suggests: 'Given the obvious similarities between the Ossianic *Fragments* and the Old Testament, however, it seems more reasonable to suggest that Macpherson was drawing on more than one tradition. Indeed, he appears to have been using the Bible as a model, not only for imitation, but by which to judge the ballads of the Highlands' (Stafford 1988: 90).

The Europeans, fermenting their own particular form of nationalist identity and revolutionary thought, were undaunted by this controversy and the poems were translated into French, Italian, German, Dutch, Russian, Bohemian, Spanish, Polish and Hungarian (Fiona Stafford cites the number of languages as twenty-six, though she only lists fourteen.) The idea of a small Celtic tribe standing heroically in the face of certain defeat and death seemed to appeal to the growing Romantic trends of nationalism and all countries that shared a common heritage with the Celts[2] felt an immediate attraction to this body of work. Despite the obvious lack of authenticity, *The Poems of Ossian* can be seen as the product of a well-meaning nationalist reaching into his cultural heritage in a time of political uncertainty and oppression. It could be said that Macpherson's work

[2] The Keltoi were a tribe first mentioned in Greek writing between 600 and 800BC and originated to the north-west of Greece more or less where Switzerland now is. Through a process of natural migration they spread throughout Europe in all directions as far as Ireland in the west to the Steppes of Russia and the Balkan states in the east (James 1999: 4).

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became even more popular in Europe than it was in Britain, influencing writers, musicians and painters for the next one-and-a-half centuries.

> There is a sense in which the eighteenth-century poets could see themselves as 'ancient' because their age was the oldest: it was an age worn out with nothing new to say. The growing emphasis on originality tended to equate genius with the earliest stages of society, thus increasing the modern sense of inferiority. The classics were admired not only for their antiquity, but because they possessed the energy of an early world, unhampered by literary predecessors. Ossian … remains doomed to an impotent present … symptomatic of the mid- eighteenth century. (Stafford 1988, 148-9.)

The poems are a curious phenomenon. Macpherson wrote in the preface that they were meant to be sung to the accompaniment of the harp and have a metric and mesmeric quality. Ossian, a minor figure in the *Fragments*, is the blind, geriatric sole survivor of his tribe. He has seen the passing of all his clansmen, including his father Fingal and his son Oscar. There are no children in *The Poems of Ossian* and this means there is no future. The following excerpts may give some indication as to the recurring themes that pervade the entire collection:

> Whence is the stream of years? Whither do they role along? Where have they hid, in mist, their many-coloured sides? I look into the times of old, but they seem dim in Ossian's eyes, like the reflected moonbeams, on a distant lake. Here rise the red beams of war!—There, silent, dwells a feeble race! They mark no years with their deeds, and slow they pass along.—Dweller among the shields; thou that awakest the failing soul, descend from thy wall, harp of Crona, with thy voices three! Come with that which kindles the past; rear the forms of old on their own dark-brown years! (Cath-Loda: Duan Third.)

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This excerpt contains several of the main characteristics of the poems that may be isolated as follows:

- A melancholic mood stemming from the poet's knowledge of the temporary nature of all things
- Nocturnal moonlit landscapes or the world seen in a dim diffused light.
- Communion with an unspoiled nature
- Music (harp) as the bridge between the living and the afterworld
- A sense of absence and loss
- Extravagant metaphors and epithets.

> My soul is often brightened with the song; and I remember the companions of my youth;—but sleep descends with the sound of the harp; and pleasant dreams begin to rise. Ye sons of the chace stand far distant, nor disturb my rest. The bard of other times converses now with his fathers, the chiefs of the days of old.—Sons of the chace, stand far distant; disturb not the dreams of Ossian. (Fingal: 110.)

> As flies the unconstant sun, over Larmon's grassy hill; so pass the tales of old along my soul by night. When bards are removed to their place; when harps are hung in Selma's hall; then comes a voice to Ossian; and awakes his soul. It is the voice of the years that are gone. They roll before me, with all their deeds. I seize the tales as they pass; and pour them forth in song. (Temora: 211.)

Another characteristic that cannot be illustrated in as short an extract is the use of the episode or diversion, a story within a story. Most of the poems contain such episodes and draw the reader further and further into the tale, causing an almost mesmeric affect. This is not, however, peculiar to these poems, but was a common tool used by many authors of the time, including Lawrence Sterne and Henry Fielding as well as many European writers.

> Spirits and ghosts of fallen heroes abound: 'His thin ghost appeared, on a rock, like the watry beam of the moon, when it rushes from between two clouds, and the midnight shower is on the field,—She followed the empty form over the heath, for she knew that her hero fell.—I heard her approaching cries on the wind, like the mournful voice of the breeze, when it sighs on the grass of the cave.' (Temora: xix).

The poems date from a pre-Christian era of Scotland and recall the druidic past of pantheism and ancestor worship. In the previous century, after the Reformation and the wars that followed, a growing interest in other (including older) religions and societies took place. This also added proof to the notion that the early Celts, although considered barbarians, had their own form of civilization. Rousseau, who explored this philosophy in *Noble Savage*, was offered sanctuary in England at the invitation of David Hume, before Hume took the post of *Professor of Belle Lettres* at Edinburgh University.

Contrary to other ancient texts which were known, human tenderness abounds and love poems play a strong role in Ossian, creating a three-dimensional personality in the characters. Hugh Blair, in his 'Critical Dissertation' quotes at length from the *Epicendium* by Regner Lodbrog, sometime king in Denmark. This funeral song, translated by Olaus Wormius, is to the glory of war and heroism and is totally devoid of female characters and tender emotions (Gaskill 1996: 293). Blair's study makes the point that this awareness of the beauty in life distinguishes the Ossianic poems from other accounts, raising them to the level of great literature.

The poems are difficult to follow due to the vagueness of location, time and plot. Episodes or 'digressions' help confuse the reader even further, causing Lord Kames to make the suggestion to Macpherson that he include headnotes

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to each poem (Gaskill 1996: xiv). This lack of substance, added to the repetitive language and subject matter, helps draw the reader further into the Ossianic world. Fiona Stafford suggests that it serves as a stimulus for readers to 'fill in the narrative gaps and create their own stories '—just as Macpherson had made his own reconstruction of the ballads (Gaskill 1996: xvii).

The repetitive nature and lilt of the language make many phrases resemble musical motifs. Phrases like 'dark-brown years', 'a tale of time of old', 'the days of other years', 'the voice of past times', 'the voice of years that are gone by', 'tales of other times', 'the joy of grief'abound. A typical description reads, 'The joy of grief belongs to Ossian, amidst his dark-brown years.' The word 'dark' is repeated seventeen times in the first duan of Cath Loda (Sickels 1969: 113).

Scotland welcomed these poems as the proof of an extinct barbarous, but still developed culture, that placed importance on poetry and music and celebrated the love between men and women. Britain, on the other hand, rejected the entire collection as the work of a fraudster and many to this day avoid *The Poems of Ossian* as an unauthentic translation rather than a free adaptation of an oral tradition. The ever-cynical Samuel Johnson immediately expressed his doubts regarding the poems' authenticity and set about proving their fraudulence in an exchange of public letters to the press: ' . . . in vain shall we look for any *lucidus ordo* where there is neither end nor object, design nor moral.' Asked by Sir Joshua Reynolds whether any modern man could have written the poems, he replied: 'Yes, sir, many men, many woman, and many children'—and continued ' . . . a man might write such stuff forever if he abandoned his mind to it' (Smart: 19). After threats of litigation from Macpherson were received, the following letter published in Boswell's book *The Life of Samuel Johnson* brought the matter to an end without legal action taking place:

> February 7, 1775
> Mr. James Macpherson,
>
> I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall not be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.
>
> What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable: and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard, not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove.
>
> You may print this if you will.
>
> SAM.JOHNSON (http://www.ralphmag.org/AC/letters.html)

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Despite this the books continued to sell in translation.

Macpherson went on to become the secretary to the governor of Florida and was in charge of publishing counter-propaganda about lobbyists against the colonial powers (one might call him a eitheenth-century 'spin doctor'). After making a sizeable amount of money, he retired to his native Badenoch, where he bought a property and lived in a baronial castle until his death in 1796.

The popularity of *The Poems of Ossian* continued unabated for nearly one-and-a-half centuries after their first appearance and was the inspiration for many novels, poems, operas, oratorios, paintings and sculptures. Even advertisements as late as 1923 used the well-known figure for selling whisky (Gaskill 1996: xvii).

Apart from being a major point of interest in their own right, *The Poems of Ossian* inspired an interest in other works of the early centuries of European culture such as *Chuchallan*, *Beowolf* and the Icelandic *Edda*. It was seen as a viable alternative to the epic poems of Homer and Virgil and with the growing tide of nationalism in Europe the northerners were seeking their own cultural roots. As late as 1818, the noted literary critic, William Hazlitt, wrote in 'On Poetry in General': 'I shall conclude this general account with some remarks on four of the principal works of poetry in the world, at different periods of history—Homer, the Bible, Dante, and let me add, Ossian' (Stafford 1988: 78). The question surrounding the authenticity of the poems has clearly overshadowed their literary worth and their influence should in no way be underestimated.

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Chapter 2

The Poems of Ossian in European Art, Music and Literature

The publication of Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* and the subsequent *Fingal* and *Temora* had far-reaching influences, not only in Britain, but also in Europe and America. As stated above, within a short period of time the poems were translated into twenty-six languages, which included French, German, Dutch, Danish, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Russian and Greek (Daverio 1998: 248). The text, rich in Homeric imagery, had an air of authenticity and came after the discovery of the ruins of Pompeii and Herculanium. Interest was high in ancient artifacts and these were the poems from an ancient society thought to be without culture. Literary critics, attempting to codify the historical divisions of literature, saw Ossian as an alternative to the Latin and Greek classical tradition. Friederich Schlegel, in his *Gespräch über Poesie*, which was published in the *Atheneaum* in 1800, said: 'It is an essential quality of all art to follow closely what has already been formed. Therefore history goes back, from generation to generation, from phase to phase, always farther back into antiquity, to its original source' (Todd 1984: 137). He perceived Ossian as the 'reflex of a destroyed nation' (Daverio 1998: 148).

Johann Georg Sulzer, writing for the *Algemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* in the 1770's, judged Fingal above Achilles as his motives were not fame, glory and honour: ' . . . sie waren dabey mehr ruhmräthig und prahlerisch, als ehrbegierig' (Todd 1984: 138).

The poet Voss wrote: 'What is the use of beauty in Nature? The Scotsman Ossian is greater than the Ionian Homer.' The French poet Lamartine declared: 'The harp of Morvan is the emblem of my soul ' (Smart 1905: 16).

Goethe was probably the strongest agent in popularising *The Poems of Ossian* in Europe. *Die Leidenis des Jungen Werthers* has Werther claiming: 'Ossian hat im meinem Herzen den Homer verdrängt'. On the night before his suicide he reads the *Songs of Selma* to Charlotte in a scene of tears and high melodrama. The popularity of this work brought the attention of the European reading public to the Celtic bard: Napoleon Bonaparte was one famous example.

Napoleon read *Werther* seven times and *The Poems of Ossian* at least as many times (Smart 1905: 7). His well-thumbed copy was carried with him on campaigns and its heroes admired for their bravery and courage.

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The 'American Scott' James Fenimore Cooper, a contemporary of Macpherson, drew heavily on the poems for inspiration for many of his novels. In *The Last of the Mohicans* he portrays a primitive society threatened by the expansion of the colonial powers and contact with Western civilization. His criticism of British behaviour in the American colonies was too close to Macpherson's ideas to be merely coincidental. Gottfried Herder, who viewed Ossian as a source of German folk poetry (Todd 1984: 138), wrote:

> Read through *The Poems of Ossian*. In all their themes they resemble those of another people that yet lives, sings, and does deeds upon the earth, in whose history, without prepossession or illusion I have more than once recognised Ossian and his forefathers. It is the Five Nations of North America. Dirge and war song, lay of battle and of burial, the praise of the ancestors—everything is common to the bards of Ossian and the North American savages. I except the songs of torture and revenge peculiar to the latter, in whose stead the mild-mannered Caledonians tinged their songs with the tragedy of love (Smart 1905: 7).

Nikolas Lenau visited America and in his poem *Die drei Indianer* the three survivors of a local tribe sing a *Sterbelied* as they row their boat over the Niagara falls (Todd 1984: 138). Chateaubriand's Rene meets Ossian on the plains of North America and Sir Walter Scott pays tribute to 'the harp of the north' near the beginning of his poem *The Lady of the Lake* (Todd 1984: 139). In Germany a group of poets known as the Göttinger Hain, founded in 1772, was led by Johann Heinrich Voss and together with von Gerstenberg, Kretschmann and Michael Dennis (the German translator of *The Poems of Ossian*), helped promote the 'bardic' movement in German poetry (Encyclopaedia Britannica CD-Rom). In Italy, Ugo Foscolo combined passionate feeling with formal perfection in his *Ultimo Lettere di Jacopo Ortis*—a work highly reminiscent of Goethe's *Werther*.

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There were many imitations of Ossian—the most obvious being Robert Burns' *Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn* and *On the Death of Sir James Hunter Blair*. Byron's *Hours of Idleness* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (Smart 1905: 18); Coleridge's *Gorthmund, A Tale in the Manner of Ossian* (Sickels 1969: 117) may also fall into this category.

In 1866 Matthew Arnold, engaged in a study of Celtic influences in literature, named natural magic and melancholy as the main traits and found evidence for this trend in writers as diverse as Schiller, Pushkin and, in his view, the most Celtic of all, Heinrich Heine (Smart 1905: 19).

Painters also drew inspiration from Ossian. After the publication of the *Fragments* in the early 1760s, many people toured the Highlands and Hebrides to visit the sites mentioned in the poems. Among these was Boswell, who accompanied Samuel Johnson, Turner, Pennant and Mendelssohn (Todd 1984: 140). James Turner, who was commissioned to do illustrations for Sir Walter Scott, did not depict any characters from *The Poems of Ossian*, but, utilising his personal theories on light, perfectly captured the mood of the Highland landscapes and Scottish ruins. (The dismal, moonlit desolation gave vivid power to 'the dark brown years' and being devoid of human habitation added to the sense of holocaust expressed in the poems.) Thomas Pennant also produced a number of engravings of the ruins on both Staffa and Iona for book illustrations.

In France the allegorical painting *Napoleon's Generals Receiving the Spirit of Bravery from Ossian* remains one of Girodet's most admired works (Daverio 1998: 248). The German, Philipp Otto Runge, had a more mystical approach in his pen-and-ink drawings emphasising the pantheist concept of man being one with nature. Ingres' paintings have a dreamlike quality to them, whereas the Danish painter, Nikolai Albigaard, draws from the melodramatic elements in the poems. Casper David Friederich, while not using any direct links to Ossian, also captures the mood of gloomy desolation in paintings pre-dating surrealism (Daverio 1998: 248).

With the many references to music in the poems in the form of the harp, the hunting horns and the ability of music to form a connection with the afterworld, it seems natural that music was the art form most strongly influenced by Ossianic poetry. Macpherson states in the preface to fifth book of Fingal: 'It is more than probable that the whole poem was originally designed to be sung to the harp, as the versification is so various, and so much suited to the different passions of the human mind ' (Gaskill 1996: 432). The poems have a peculiar musical quality using compound adjectives repeated often with hypnotic effect like musical motifs. This repetitive use of motifs was used with great effect by many composers, including Schumann in his *Arabeske* and slow movement of the *Piano Concerto*, Mendelssohn in the *Fingalsholle* and Brahms in the *Edward Ballade*, Op. 10 and *Fourth Symphony*. Although they are written in blank verse, they do have a discernable meter, often containing a regular number of syllables per sentence (Stafford 1988: 72).

In 1768, three years after the publication of *The Poems of Ossian*, the opera *Oithona* by Francois-Hyppolyte Barthélémon premiered in London. Within the

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next 150 years more than 200 compositions with direct links to Ossian would be published (Daverio 1998: 248). These include operas, cantatas, lieder and instrumental compositions. Works with Ossianic, Scottish or Nordic links are listed by Daverio in the following table (I have included it to show the extent of the fashion in France, Germany and Austria):

Table 1: (adapted from Daverio 1998, 250).

1768	Francois-Hyppolyte Barthelemon	*Oithona,* opera in 5 acts
1804	Jean-Francois Le Seur	*Ossian ou Les Bardes*, opera in 5 acts
1806	Etienne Nicolas Méhul	*Uthal*, opera comique in 1 act
1815-17	Franz Schubert	*Bardengesang*; D. 147; *Cronnan*; D. 282; *Kolmas Klage*; D. 217; *Lodas Gespenst*; D. 150; *Lorma*; D. 327 and 376; *Das Mädchen von Inistore*; D. 281; *Die Nacht;* D. 534; *Ossians Lied nach dem Falle Nathos*; D. 278; *Shilric and Vinvela*; D. 293; *Der Tod Oscars*; D. 375 (all but *Bardengesang* published in *Ossians Gesänge für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte,* Hefte 1 - 5, Vienna, 1830)
1828	Ignaz Moscheles	*Anklänge von Schottland*, Op. 75
1829 - 35	Felix Mendelssohn	*Die Hebriden (Fingalsholle),* overture, Op 26
1829 - 42	Felix Mendelssohn	Symphony No 3 *(Scottish)*, Op. 56
1840	Robert Schumann	From *Myrthen*, Op. 25*: Die Hochländer-Wittwe, Hochländers Abschied; Hochländisches Wiegenlied; Weit - weit; Im Westen* (all on poems by Robert Burns)
1840	Niels Gade	*Nachklänge von Ossian*, overture, Op. 1
1842	Niels Gade	*Symphony No 1 in C minor*, Op. 5
1844	Niels Gade	*Im Hochland*, overture, Op. 7
1845	Carl Loewe	*Alpins Klage um Morar*, Op. 94
1845	Donizetti	*Malvina, scene dramatique* for voice and piano
1846	Robert Schumann	From *Fünf Lieder*, Op. 55 (choral part-songs): *Das Hochlandmädchen*; *Mich zieht es nach dem Dörfchen hin*; *Hochlandbursch* (all on texts of Robert Burns)
1846	Niels Gade	*Comala: Dramatisches Gedicht nach Ossian*, Op. 12
1846	Felix Mendelssohn	*On Lena's Gloomy Heath*; for baritone and orchestra
1848	Robert Schumann	*Nordishes Lied* (*Gruss an G.*) from *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68
1849	Robert Schumann	from *Romanzen und Balladen*, Op. 67 (choral part-songs): *Der König von Thule*; *Ungewitter*; *John Anderson* (first setting)
1849	Robert Schumann	From *Romanzen und Balladen*, Op. 75 (choral part-songs): *Der Rekrut*; *Vom verwundeten Knabe*
1849	Robert Schumann	From *Romanzen und Balladen*, Op. 145 (choral part-songs): *John Anderson* (second setting)
1849	Robert Schumann	From *Romanzen und Balladen*, Op. 146 (choral part-songs): *Der Traum*
1850	Louis Moreau Gottschalk	*Danse Ossianique,* Op. 12
1851	Robert Schumann	*Der Königssohn*, Op. 116
1852	Robert Schumann	*Der Sangers Fluch*, Op. 139
1852	Robert Schumann	*Vom Pagen und Königstochter*, Op. 140
1853	Robert Schumann	*Das Glück von Edenhall*, Op. 143
1854	Johannes Brahms	Ballade *Edward* for piano, Op. 10
1858	Johannes Brahms	*Murrays Ermordung*, voice and piano, Op. 14 No 3
1859 -60	Johannes Brahms	*Gesang aus Fingal: Wein an den Felsen*, for women's chorus, 2 horns and harp, Op. 17 No 4

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1855	Camille Saint-Saëns	*La lever de la lune* for voice and piano
1860 -61	George Bizet	*La chasse d'Ossian*, overture: (now lost)
1860	Johannes Brahms	*Darthulas Grabgesang*, for mixed chorus, Op. 42 No 3
1877	Johannes Brahms	*Dein Schwert ist, wie ists*, for alto, tenor and piano, Op. 75 no 1
1880	Max Bruch	*Schottische Fantasie* for violin and orchestra, Op. 46

Terminology constitutes one of the major difficulties in researching this topic. In most cases composers do not refer to an Ossianic style, but a 'Nordic' style which may overlap with 'Scottish' style. Schumann invokes an 'English' style (Daverio 1998: 253). Critics of the time were aware of specific musical traits that were used by composers to convey elements of the poems in their scores. The use of the harp was one of the most common, though not used by Mendelssohn. Quasi-modal progressions obscured the tonal centre and gave an exotic feel, which was enhanced by the use of parallel fifths. The archaic flavour of the music is often conveyed in Gade by a suggestion of the Dorian mode, Phrygian progressions and third-related tonalities, without either tonal centre being established. Plagal progressions abound, creating darker tonal colours—the equivalent of the 'dark-brown' colours suggested in the poems. Horn passages and fanfares signify the war and hunting scenes so prevalent throughout the poems (Todd 1984: 142).

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Section B: Interlude

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Chapter 3

Robert Schumann: The past in the present

In the course of writing this chapter I was forced to revise my views after reading two articles which I discovered on the Internet. These were *The Technologies of Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* by L Martin *et al*, and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* by Michel Foucault. The overview gave me an altered perspective I had not anticipated.

This chapter may appear to take many digressions, but I felt it to be imperative, considering the fact that Robert Schumann was one of the most highly educated and best read composers of the early nineteenth century, to include a brief discussion of classical Greek education of the German *gymnasia* system. I have also looked at the contribution of Hegel, who, as Chancellor and Professor of Philosophy at Berlin University, was considered the official philosopher in Germany and wielded enormous influence in his time (Copleston 1963: 161). I have also taken into account not only the printed music, but also his diaries, letters and *Projektenbuchen*.

> The problems raised by the *œuvre* are even more difficult. Yet, at first sight, what could be more simple? A collection of texts that can be designated by the sign of a proper name. But this designation (even leaving to one side problems of attribution) is not a homogeneous function: does the name of an author designate in the same way a text that he has published under his name, a text that he has presented under a pseudonym, another found after his death in the form of an unfinished draft, and another that is merely a collection of jottings, a notebook? The establishment of a complete *oeuvre* presupposes a number of choices that are difficult to justify or even to formulate: is it enough to add to the texts published by the author those that he intended for publication but which remained unfinished by the fact of his death? Should one also include all his sketches and first drafts, with all their corrections and crossings out? Should one add sketches that he himself abandoned? And what status should be given to letters, notes, reported conversations, transcriptions of what he said made by those present at the time, in short, to that vast mass of verbal traces left by an individual at his death, and which speak in an endless confusion so many different languages (langages)? . . . In fact, if one speaks, so undiscriminately and unreflectingly of an author's *œuvre*, it is because one imagines it to be defined by a certain expressive function. One is admitting that there must be a level (as deep as it is necessary to imagine it) at which the *oeuvre* emerges, in all its fragments, even the smallest, most inessential ones, as the expression of the thought, the experience, the imagination, or the unconscious of the author, or, indeed, of the historical determinations that operated upon him. But it is at once apparent that such a unity, far from being given immediately is the result of an operation; that this operation is interpretative (since it deciphers, in the text, the transcription of something that it both conceals and

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> manifests); and that the operation that determines the opus, in its unity, and consequently the *œuvre* itself, will not be the same in the case of the author of the *Théâtre et son Double* (Artaud) and the author of the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein), and therefore when one speaks of an *œuvre* in each case one is using the word in a different sense. The *œuvre* can be regarded neither as an immediate unity, nor as a certain unity, nor as a homogeneous unity.
>
> One last precaution must be taken to disconnect the unquestioned continuities by which we organise, in advance, the discourse that we are to analyse: we must renounce two linked, but opposite themes. The first involves a wish that it should never be possible to assign, in the order of discourse, the irruption of a real event; that beyond any apparent beginning, there is always a secret origin—so secret and so fundamental that it can never be quite grasped in itself. Thus one is led inevitably, through the naïvety of chronologies, towards an ever-receding point that is never itself present in any history; this point is merely its own void; and from that point all beginnings can never be more than recommencements or occultation (in one and the same gesture, this and that). To this theme is connected another according to which all manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'; and that this 'already said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark. It is supposed therefore that everything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in that semi-silence that precedes it, which continues to run obstinately beneath it, but which it covers and silences. The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said. (Foucault 1969: 26-28.)

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Following Foucault's suggestion I also examined my own motives asking myself if I were not presuming an objective point for Schumann's oeuvre based on my understanding of his early works and those of other composers of the same period, rather than trying to understand the works within their own context. My aim is to establish reasonable doubt in the mind of the reader to bring about a re-assessment of a composer appreciated more for his earlier compositions and so often underestimated as a casualty of his folly or a talented dilettante.

Europe in the nineteenth century was involved in an economy based on colonial power that brought about an interest in foreign and exotic places and a number of different and seemingly barbaric races. This foreign investment resulted in a number of armed conflicts with the indigenous groups and taught the Europeans that regardless of the benefits that they were bringing to these primitive people, freedom from alien domination and freedom to practise one's own cultural rites were as equally prized as they were in Europe (Darnell: 23-43). Another lesson they learned was that sometimes the primitive cultures not only had a better understanding of democracy and human rights than modern Europeans, but also had remarkably similar ideas to the ancient classical cultures of Greece and Italy (Darnell: 27, in Wallace 1986: 17-18). Two important dichotomies were coming into focus: the unity in diversity and the antiquity of modernity.

A new interest in the past cultures was developing in order to discover the origin of tradition and gain an insight into what caused a person's identity. Two new sciences were evolving: archaeology and psychology. These would fundamentally change the way Europeans thought and the way Europe was governed (Daverio 98: 251).

It was into this milieu that Robert Schumann was born on the eighth day of June 1810. His father, Friedrich August Gottlieb Schumann (known as August) was seen as a dreamer prone to depression. He started his adult life as a greengrocer, but displaying some entrepreneurial foresight went into the business of publishing student pocket editions of foreign classics in German translation. These included the complete works of Sir Walter Scott and the collected poems of Lord Byron. He seemed to have an intuitive bent toward examining an artist's *oeuvre* as an added perspective. August also derived a small income writing chivalric romances and gothic horror stories involving themes of the crusades, alchemy, wizardry, clandestine cabals and 'natural' magic (Ostwald 1985: 12). August's wife Johanna Christianna Schumann *née* Schnabel was the daughter of a municipal surgeon and although appreciative of the arts was the more pragmatic of the pair, finding comfort in their financial success.

German education: 'technologies of the self'

Desiring a better future for their children, the Schumanns enrolled Robert at the preparatory school of Archdeacon Dohner. Here he learned Greek, Latin and French in order to be accepted into the Zwickau Gymnasium where he prepared for the abitur examinations, granting him access to a university education and a

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professional career. It was at this early stage that Robert started his musical studies with Gottfried Kuntsch, a well known fact, but it seems more important to me to look at the principles of the education system; a system that was to leave an indelible imprint on the psyche of Robert Schumann.

The German gymnasia took as their prototype the ancient Greek and Roman models[1], not only in curriculum, but also in methodology. Foucault breaks education down to four elements or 'technologies':

> As a context, we must understand that there are four major types of these 'technologies', each a matrix of practical reason: (I) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.
>
> These four types of technologies hardly ever function separately, although each one of them is associated with a certain type of domination. Each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes. I wanted to show both their specific nature and their constant interaction … Usually the first two technologies are used in the study of the sciences and linguistics. It is the last two, the technologies of domination and self, which have most kept my attention (Foucault 1994: 223-251).

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For the ancient Greeks the principle of governance of the city—*epimelesthai sautou* 'take care of yourself', was the basis of an objective philosophy for viewing the individual within a society. This grew in time to the more subjective involvement with the education of the individual that used the well known Delphic principle—*gnothi sauton* 'Know yourself' (Foucault 1994: 223-251).

The first step to self-enlightenment was admission of sin—for the Greeks this meant a realisation that the individual was a mortal and not a god. The techniques for developing this were a rigorous discipline of daily self-examination and work (memorising rules)—reflection and action. In the Pythagorean school (based on Egyptian knowledge) students were taught to listen by following a code of strict silence. The students listened in silence to the master extemporising ('fantasieren'?) on a given subject and simultaneously carried out an internal dialogue with their conscience thereby developing a sense of logic. They were

[1] All information for this section I have obtained from L.H. Martin *et al* (1988) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. London: Tavistock. Pp.16 – 49 (http://www.thefoucauldian.co.uk

expected to make notes and keep diaries to be read and re-read in order to rekindle the memory (Foucault 1994: 223-251). The practice of writing letters of advice to friends or telling them of activities was also encouraged. Actions were considered more important than thoughts, so at this time we see only actions being recorded. The idea was that recalling the action would automatically recall the thoughts and one could measure it against one's present thoughts: thus developing what could be termed 'experience'. Before sleep (a time one encountered the gods) the individual was expected to purify the body by washing and the mind by remembering the dead (Foucault 1994: 223-251). Later, in the early Christian era, where intent was as important as deed, we witness the eastern method of recording thoughts starting to take hold. Mnemonics were used for the development of memory. These could take the form of cyphers or symbols codifying complex interlinked ideas to use either for meditation or memorising. The idea of memory and an oral tradition were highly regarded in a time of inexact written symbolisation. Certain traditions became the accepted norm like the use of parables and fables in Plato's *Dialogues*. For Pliny, Seneca and Markus Aurelius, the country retreat (hermitage or country inn) became the ideal setting to reflect on and learn from nature, engage in peasant activities and remember one's humble origins (Foucault 1994: 223-251). Seneca, the jurist, also advises writing down one's goals in order to measure progress more easily when comparing it to the diaries of actions, treating the exercise in the manner of a stock taking procedure. The role of food became an important tool for learning resulting in banquet discourses. No food was served, but it was imagined. There was also the technique of tempting oneself with all types of delicacies and then changing places with the servants eating the food prepared for them and allowing the servants to eat the more desirable food. This was seen as a way of acknowledging the corruptive nature of power and gaining control over desires. It also required the development of all five senses and suggested by using all the senses an added perspective or 'sixth' sense would result.

The Christian Church adopted many of these ideas in its early stages. The most important thing was now a realisation that one was a 'sinner' by being a pagan[2]. The object was no longer enlightenment, but absolution. The confessional replaced the diary where the monks laid bare their innermost thoughts as well

[2] It seems as though the concept of paganism dealt exclusively with sexuality for both the Church and later for Freud and Jung. Physical violence like torture and death (even cannibalism) were acceptable under certain circumstances and could be discussed or written about. Sexuality was only approached through euphemism or fable.

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as their deeds to the abbot (Martin 1988: 1-3). Silence and strict obedience were observed and the monk used mnemonics not only to remember complex chants, but also the trade secrets of the master artisans. The pursuit of enlightenment underwent a dark metamorphosis: the discipline became synonymous with suffering; the rules (originally a method of efficiency) became cyphers and law; the simply archaic became arcane. Viewed with rosy hindsight from the safety of the nineteenth century, it became a fountainhead of inspiration for the most bizarre and macabre body of literature—the fairytale.

Robert Schumann grew up in the heady world of literature and books. He helped his father in the business, even contributing to an encyclopaedia on the lives of great men (Daverio 1997: 20). He was well acquainted with Burns, Scott and Byron (setting some of their poems to music as a teenager) and their world of chivalry, wizards, legends, magic and bards. He seems to have approached his education with the enthusiasm of a zealot and from the age of thirteen we witness not only regular diary entries, but also *Blätter und Blümchen aus der goldenen Auge* written under the pen name of 'Skülander'.[3] This is a collection of poems, dramas and letters to fictitious characters, which represents his earliest serious attempts at writing.

At the Gymnasium he was a founder member of the *Litterärischer Verein*—a student group formed in 1825 for the study of great German literature. 'It is the duty of every young cultivated individual to know the literature of the fatherland…' (Daverio 1997: 24). This extract from the group's manifesto shows a strongly nationalist element that was to become a character trait of the adult Schumann. The *Verein* was dedicated specifically to the study of German writers of prose and poetry, and also studied the biographies of great men. Minutes of meetings were kept and a library was established so that all members had access to books. Writers that were studied were Schiller, Goethe, Ernst Schulze, Jean Paul, Herder, Kant, Hegel, Wieland and Schlegel. Members were given a chance to read their own essays and a code of conduct was formulated insisting on silence while a member was speaking. Orderly discussions were conducted after the reading was completed. Schumann did not limit himself to German literature, but also studied the Greek and Roman classics in the form of Aristotle, Plato and Horace and the writings of Shakespeare.

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[3] It is thought that this may have been misread as 'Alexander'. The name 'Alexander' does not appear on his birth, marriage or death certificate. The New Grove Dictionary places the name 'Alexander' in brackets.

Robert graduated with honours in 1828 and before embarking on a law degree at Leipzig University (at his mother's insistence), his academic endeavours were rewarded by being allowed to travel extensively through Italy and Austria keeping detailed diaries and writing copious letters to family and friends. Travel was also a standard practice of classical education and considered a mind broadening experience and a form of active leisure. Italy was seen as the cradle of Western culture, with its many ruins, artworks and artefacts, and was the ideal destination to come into close proximity with the relics of civilisation. The exercise was not entirely of a serious nature and there are many accounts of less sober moments when Robert's education became totally non-academic (Wasielewski 1858: 47).

In 1829 he started his law studies at Leipzig and later transferred to Heidelberg. Although he may never have taken his law studies seriously, they did bring Robert into contact with three men (Friederich Wieck, Heinrich Dorn and Anton Thibaut) who were to play an important role in the formation of Schumann's aesthetic. For much of this period we also have the reminiscences of his friend Emil Flechsig and Gisbert Rosen as well as Robert's copious diaries. Flechsig describes Schumann as 'a smoker', 'chess player', 'fencer', a man with a 'compatible nature' who 'enjoyed a drink', who displayed 'less interest in the usual trivialities of student life' and soon became 'one of Leipzig's best-known muses—because of his talent' and 'grew into a singularly handsome fellow [who] bore his attire well [and] was of a thoroughly noble character, chaste and pure as a vestal virgin' (Eisman 1971: 44).

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From law to music

Secretly hoping to pursue a career as a concert pianist, Robert had lessons with Friederich Wieck, father of Clara Wieck and his future father-in-law. Wieck followed a regime of strict technical discipline, emphasising the importance of committing the notes to memory in order to discover the unscored nuances of the work being studied. His daughter Clara Wieck earned considerable renown by giving the first solo recital without the use of the printed score in front of her. He also encouraged Robert in the art of extemporising, or 'fantasieren', which was an expected part of most performances at that time—an art in which he excelled and continued for many years.

His only formal lessons in composition were with the unfashionable Heinrich Dorn[4], a strict contrapuntalist, whom he seems to have chosen over the more sought after teachers. Dorn drilled Robert in the discipline of species counterpoint, four-part harmony and fugue writing (Münster: III). At the same time Schumann engaged in an independent study of the *Symphonies* of Beethoven, a composer for whom he had great reverence. After the death of Beethoven, many composers, viewing the great composer as their leader, felt that the dominant position of German music was no longer assured and were at a loss for a future path to follow. Schumann believed that through a thorough analysis of these works he would derive an inner realisation of the master's secrets and find his own futures course in music (New Grove XVI: 833).

Beethoven, Hegel, Schumann

The more I probed the compositions and techniques of Robert Schumann the more I found it necessary to investigate in some depth the philosophies of Hegel. I confess it was not an easy task for me and every time I thought I was making progress some writer informed me that I was under a misapprehension. The opening paragraphs of the Preface to the most recent biography on Hegel by Terry Pinkard are a prime example:

> Hegel is one of those thinkers just about all educated people think they know something about. His philosophy was the forerunner to Karl Marx's theory of history, but unlike Marx, who was a materialist, Hegel was an idealist in the sense that he thought that reality was ultimately spiritual, and that it developed according to the process of thesis/antithesis/synthesis. Hegel also glorified the Prussian state, claiming that it was God's work, was perfect, and was the culmination of all human history. All citizens of Prussia owed unconditional allegiance to that state, and it could do with them as it pleased. Hegel played a large role in the growth of German nationalism, authoritarianism, and militarism with his quasi-mystical celebration of what he pretentiously called the Absolute.
>
> Just about everything in the first paragraph is false except for the first sentence.
>
> What is even more striking is that it is clearly and demonstrably wrong, has been known to be wrong in scholarly circles for a long time now, *and* it still appears in almost all short histories of thought or brief encyclopaedia entries about Hegel (2000: ix).

Hegel developed his own system of terminology and philosophical grammar which is specific to his use and is not easy to come to terms with. Besides this he appears to be extremely self-contradictory which only later becomes apparent as an integral part of his technique.

[4] It is interesting to note that Dorn himself brought the lessons to an end in April 1832 deeming it unnecessary to continue with further studies in thoroughbass technique (New Grove XVI: 834).

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Hegel's biography is not particularly important here and is available in many other sources, but a few interesting points should be highlighted. He was born in Stuttgart in 1770, the same year as Hölderlin and Beethoven, and received his education under the same neoplatonic Gymnasium system that was so prevalent at the time concentrating on the Greek and Roman classics. Although not an exceptional student at school, he was intellectually omnivorous, developing a prodigious memory through making précis of everything that he read. He attended Thubingen University where he studied theology and became close friends with Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Schelling. Hölderlin had a profound influence on Hegel and convinced him that the schism between Religion and Reason (State and Church), that had been attributed to Kant could only be healed through classical Greek poetry. Beside the classics his favourite reading matter was Rousseau, Goethe and Schiller. Although both Hegel and Hölderlin were Lutherans, they found certain religious dogma offensive and through their common interest in the pantheist writings of Spinoza tried to formulate a new 'Volksreligion' based more on reason and teleology or natural sciences (Copleston 1963: 162). Hegel and Hölderlin were ardent supporters of the French Revolution and Napoleon, but were opposed to what Hegel later referred to as the 'absolute fear' of Robespierre and the Jacobins.

At various stages of his life Hegel was a private tutor in Berne and Frankfurt, a professor of philosophy at Jena University (where he came into contact with some of the most influential thinkers of the time, including Schiller, the Schlegel brothers, Schleiermacher, Fichte, Novalis and briefly Jean Paul), Heidelberg and Berlin. For a short period he was also the editor of the *Bamberger Zeitung* and rector and teacher of philosophy at the Nuremberg Gymnasium after the closure of Jena University due to the Napoleonic wars.

Hegel, despite his youthful radical ideas, conflicted with the new right-wing movement of the *Burschenschaften*, supported by Jacob Friedrich Fries, that organised the Wartburg demonstrations that was so fanatically nationalist and anti-Semitic. In the preface to *Philosophy of Right* Hegel attacks Fries as 'the commander-in-chief of prevalent shallowness' and a 'pettifogging advocate of arbitrariness'. Likewise in July 1830, the year before his death, Hegel vehemently opposed the student revolution in Paris that quickly spread to Brussels and Poland. He called it a 'carnival' and compared it to a travelling circus that perpetrated ideas that were mere fashion or caprice (Spencer L, and Krauze A, 1997: 101).

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Hegel only published four works (monumental though they may be) in his lifetime. Most of the vast corpus of his writing is posthumously published transcriptions of his lectures (assimilated from the notes of his students), diaries and letters.

Phenomenology of Spirit (Die Phänomenologie des Geistes) 1807 (Pinkard 2000: 203-220) is a strange book indeed and though claiming to be based on logical deduction, has all the signs of being written under inspiration. Hegel sees the world as a system of fragments or ideas that are perceived by humans. It traces the development of human consciousness through means of experience, described as a journey (*Erfahrung*), from observation through logical (scientific) analysis to enlightenment or self-consciousness. This journey to enlightenment takes the form of progressing up a ladder which is circular or spiral. He derives a great deal from Rousseau and interprets philosophy as humanity taking stock of its total past experience perceived through fragmentary fossil remains or fragments and developing a self-conscious national spirit of synthesised unity. There is much use of parable and metaphor such as the 'master and slave' myth, that has later been used by all sorts of groups including Marxists and feminists, and a mystical equating of the evolution of enlightenment to the fourteen stations of the cross.

Science of Logic (Wissenschaft der Logik) 1812-16, published in three volumes, attempts to explain his own form of logic which has become known as the Hegelian dialectic. As opposed to Aristotelian logic, which is seen as static and can be presented as a method and subsequently applied to any set of problems that arises, Hegel's logic can only be seen in practise. It derives from his student years where with Hölderlin he formulated an elusive concept of the 'Totality' or 'one in all'. Every stage or phase is a fragment of a whole and therefore also partially untrue. It is interpreted as elements of a fractal architecture which have to be 'sublated' (*aufhebung*); a process of overcoming while still preserving and is described as an organic as opposed to a mechanical logic. It reveals contradictions in almost every aspect of life which have to be negated (made fluid or malleable) so that one can forge ahead toward the 'Whole'. It also deals in detail with three categories of contradictions (Universality, Particularity and Individuality), as well as the triadic nature of his logic as opposed to Kant's dualistic approach.

Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline (Enzyklopädia der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundriss) 1817 was written very quickly in

comparison to the previous two works. Hegel explains that the work was largely formulated during his years at Nuremberg where he had to teach the rudiments of philosophy at secondary level to the boys at the Gymnasium. It is subdivided into three sections: '1 Logic', '2 The Philosophy of Nature', '3 The Philosophy of Mind'. The last, dealing with human matters, is also divided into three: 'Subjective mind'; 'Objective mind' and 'Absolute mind'. The second section displays Hegel's considerable knowledge of scientific matters and also goes into some of the theosophical problems raised by Franz von Baader and Schelling, based on the mystical writings of Jacob Böhme, the seventeenth-century cobbler of Görlitz. These had become a type of cultic interest.

The Philosophy of Right (1821) was Hegel's last publication due to the academic obligations in Berlin. This book deals with property and ownership; social ethics, which includes morals, family, civil society and ethics; and lastly the state and the individual's role therein.

Of equal importance to these books were Hegel's lectures on almost every conceivable subject. These range from Philosophy of History and Art, to Art in relation to Philosophy and Religion, the End of Art, Irony, Freedom and the Germanic people in History. In this he divided history into three main eras: the Orient, where only the Emperor was free; the classical Greek and Roman era, where most people were free with the exception of slaves; and the modern German era dating from Charlemagne (Russell 1946: 666). This era he saw as being the culmination of a Western European ideal as the northern protestant Germans had thrown off the yoke of the southern Catholic countries where man was enslaved to the strict obedience of an uncompromising faith that did not understand reason.

In many respects Schumann seems to have been a staunch supporter of Hegelian ethics in almost every aspect. He also embarked on an uncompleted *History of Music*, which, viewed separately from Hegel's *History of Philosophy*, seems inordinately biased in favour of German music to the exclusion of almost all other music (Brown 1968: 48). The manner in which he conducted his married life has been criticised for the same 'bourgeois' ethics that are applied to Hegel. His declaration that he was more 'spiritual than religious' rings of Hegel and Hölderlin's 'Volksreligion' and his interest in unifying a work through seemingly unrelated fragments (which will be discussed at length in the following chapter) seem also to have their roots in Hegel, although they are more readily attributed to Jean Paul.

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On this last subject there is one anecdote of a meeting between Hegel and Jean Paul at a punch party[5] in Jena (Pinkard 2000: 377-81). After many drinks a pastor suggested that Hegel write a manual for teaching philosophy to young girls to which the testy professor replied that that was impossible. It was then suggested that Hegel supply the ideas and Jean Paul could make it more comprehensible for the girls. To this Jean Paul had further comments, but it does suggest that it could have been commonly thought that the contradictions in Jean Paul parallel Hegel's ideas on self-contradiction and negation.

Anton Thibaut, Schumann's law professor in Heidelberg, was also a respected amateur musician and echoed Hegel's idea of developing techniques through strict disciplined study of past masters. Hegel had been present at many of his choral evenings and even offered his residence as a venue for some of the meetings (Pinkard 2000: 373). It has been suggested that Thibaut was responsible for many of Hegel's concepts on music. In Thibaut's book, *Über Reinhardt der Tonkunst*, which Schumann often praised, he wrote: 'It has never been recognised so completely as today that an historical study and knowledge of existent classics is and should be the basis for all genuine scholarship. Steady progress can be made only if one is taught through the teaching of others and seeks to promote the worthwhile with zeal' (Brown 1968: 17). He promoted the revival of Renaissance and Baroque masters that were not easily accessed in the early nineteenth century.

There are many accounts by Flechsig of Flechsig and Robert interacting with other students at cafes and engaging in heated discussion of the current cult author—Jean Paul. According to Schlegel, Jean Paul had not mastered the basic art of telling a story (a criticism of his frequent, lengthy and confusing use of diversions), but this seems rather to be a conscious and flagrant refusal to follow the accepted rules of narrative becoming a technique in itself. Schumann's diaries of 1829 contain many accounts of his study of Jean Paul as well as other literary studies he had undertaken: metric translations of Homer, Ovid, Plutarch, Ossian and Shakespeare. There is also mention of a new fetish—substance abuse. Robert revelled in noting the confusing of sensory perception, or synaesthesic effect, not only through the abuse of alcohol, but more often through drinking copious quantities of extremely strong coffee and excessive smoking of cigars (Ostwald 1985: 39).

[5] A type of 'boys' night out' given to drinking, cigar smoking, joke telling and conversation without the presence of women: an idea imported from Britain.

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Phantasie vs. Fantasie

Anyone exploring the work of Robert Schumann will be struck by the recurring word *fantasie* in both musical scores and his writings. The term *Fantasie* in German has a slightly different implication than it does in the English usage of the term. In English it means '1. The imagining of improbable and impossible things. 2. A fanciful product of the imagination reflecting a persons desires.' (Oxford: 322). In German its meaning only becomes clearer with time. Most dictionaries use the word 'creative' and 'imagination'. Some use the term 'discourse'. Martin describes Plato's discourses as 'extemporisations'; Schumann describes his improvisations at the keyboard as *fantasieren*; I gradually arrived at the realisation that in German *fantasie* implies an improvised discourse or flow of consciousness free from the rigorous rules of logic.

We find the term applied to no less than six major works: *Phantasiestücke*, Op. 12 for piano, *Phantasie*, Op. 17 in C major for piano, *Phantasiestücke*, Op. 73 for clarinet and piano, *Phantasiestücke*, Op. 88 for piano trio, *Drei Phantasiestücke*, Op. 111 for piano and *Phantasie*, Op. 131 for violin and orchestra. It was also the original title of the first movement of the later revised *Piano Concerto* and is the subtitle of numerous instrumental works including *Kreisleriana*, Op. 16. I sometimes gain the impression when noting the persistent use of the Greek spelling for the word *Phantasie* as a title that this may be a type of Aristotelian musical discourse using the technique of parable or fable and not simply a musical representation of a narrative.

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In 1812 in Vienna, Friederich Schlegel[6] gave a series of lectures on the history of literature that Schumann read in their published form. In it Schlegel says

> In Germany, owing to the special character of the nation, the spirit of the age was mirrored not in bloody revolution, but in the tangled conflicts of metaphysical philosophy. The rebirth of fantasy has become evident in many countries through the revival of past traditions and through romantic poetry. No nation in Europe, however, can compete with the extent and profundity with which Germans have developed a love of fantasy. These nations have had their moment in history. It is only fitting that we should now have our own (Todd 1994: 23).

In recognising that the term 'musical discourse' becomes a form of philosophising one assumes that music takes on certain semantic or linguistic powers that deserve to be examined. The early Christian Church was certainly aware of music's ability of suggestion when it banned instruments from the liturgy fear-

[6] It may be co-incidental that Schlegel was not only the author of the poetic header to the *Phantasie*, Op. 17, but also served, with his brother Wilhelm, on the committee for raising funds for the monument to Beethoven for which the *Phantasie* was originally composed. *Die Gebüsche* was also printed in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and could be seen as a clever business manoeuvre on Schumann's part.

ing the association with carnal urges. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there had been so many treatises written on the origin of language linking it to music that it resulted in Berlin University declaring the topic closed for future study (Rosen 1995: 59). Hegel had written:

> Music must possess in its realm of tone, expedients which are capable of portraying the world of opposites. It is given such means in the dissonant chords. The more profound music should not only, in its course, approach the borders of absolute consonance, . . . but on the contrary, the first simple combination must be torn apart into dissonance. Only in these contrasts are the deeper relationships and secrets of harmony established, and thus the deeply penetrating movements of melody can find their foundation only in the deeper relationships and secrets of harmony (Brown 1968: 21).

Schopenhauer divides the world into the 'Will' (Id) as the thing itself and the 'Ideas' (Ego), as objectifications, i.e. the phenomena, copies or images of the 'Will'. The other arts cling to the phenomena, and 'Ideas' seek to be represented in it, while music is a direct objectification of the 'Will':

> For music is such an objectification and image of the entire Will, as in the world itself, and as are the Ideas, whose manifold appearances constitute the world of things. Music therefore is by no means like the other arts, an image of the Ideas, but rather an image of the Will, whose objectifications are the Ideas. Therefore the efficacy of music is more powerful and penetrating than that of the other arts: for they speak only about shadows, but music about the essence (Brown 1968: 22-23).

This path of thinking may be of assistance in understanding Schumann's cryptic comments regarding melody and his preference for German counterpoint over Italian homophony:

> . . . significant progress only begins with the decisive rejection of all dilettantish pleasure, all Italian influences… The highest peaks of Italian art do not even reach the first beginnings of German art . . . and . . . Whoever has melody, will have melodies; who, however, has melodies will not always have the former . . . In the first two chords of the *Eroica* there is more melody than in ten Bellini melodies. This, of course, cannot be explained to musical ultramontanists (Brown 1968: 58).

In the *Neue Zeitschrift für Muzik* he wrote:

> There are two languages of art, the common earthly one, which the majority of the disciples learn to speak in school with diligence and good will, and the higher one, the celestial one, which mocks the most persistent studies and to which men must be born. The lower language is a canal which, in a straight line follows a regulated but only forced path; the higher language is a forest current which roaringly breaks out of the neighbourhood of the clouds. One does not know from whence it comes or where it goes; it flows as Klopstock says: 'strong and full of thoughts'. The prophets spoke this language, and it is also the language of artists; for artists are also prophets' (Brown 1968: 32).

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For me these passages indicate that Schumann's self image was that of the philosopher/poet or prophet addressing the socio-political problems of his society.

Schumann's dilemma over music or poetry was an internal one, but he never abandoned his writing—his literary output, contained in many volumes, is as abundant as his musical offerings. During the 1830s we witness a choice concentrating more on the literary in his business venture *Neue Zeitschrift für Muzik*.

Cyphers and Mnemonics

The *Neue Zeitschrift für Muzik* was seen as a platform for Robert Schumann, the crusader, to educate the public in matters of musical taste and enlighten them on the shallowness of their disturbing penchant for the vulgar and bravura. This was writing of an extremely high calibre and displayed wit and invention, which soon assured its popularity. Robert wrote critiques on concerts, introduced new composers and performers as well as promoting worthy causes. Some articles were in the form of imaginary letters; others were in the form of imaginary meetings or interviews. Even the relatively orthodox articles displayed a sense of fantasy and creativeness that provoked a reaction from the reader. Schumann was strongly committed to his cause and demanded equal involvement from his readership.

It is during this period that we witness the emergence of two personae closely linked to Schumann's character: his alter egos 'Florestan' and 'Eusebius', and the imaginary 'Davidsbund'.

Eusebius is the easiest to explain and probably stems from St Eusebius, the third-century chronicler and historian of the early Church and pope from 309-310. St Eusebius' feast day (14 August) is immediately preceding Clara's saint's day and is referred to in a letter to Clara dated 27 May 1831: 'Don't forget to check the calendar now and again where Aurora links your name with mine' (Daverio 1997: 74-75). Ostwald suggests his knowledge of this character came through a projected work portraying the drama of Abelard and Heloise (Ostwald 1985: 76).

Florestan has led to a lot more conjecture. It is most definitely the name of the hero of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* and is an ancient Spanish name, which could have been a crusader emblem. There may well be other associations in that 'Florestan', linked to Beethoven, could represent the rigorous discipline of mastering the rules of logic. Eusebius, the recorder of history, is the more reflective and creative character of vast experience. The two characteristics assimilated could be seen as Schumann's essential ingredients for genius.

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The ‘Davidsbund’ is another difficult concept to come to terms with, as it was entirely a figment of Robert’s imagination, never defined and only hinted at. The idea could have stemmed from his own projected work *Die Wunderkinder* and inspired by E T A Hoffmann’s *Serapionsbrüder* about medieval merchants who ‘unite in a hansa to defend themselves’ (Daverio 1997: 113-115). This in turn gave rise to a similar band of artists created by the Schlegel brothers, their wives, Novalis and Schleiermacher in Jena. It is also reminiscent of Robert’s own *Litterärischer Verein* of his school days. Named after the Biblical King David, the architect of the Jewish nation, who as a poet/harpist/shepherd had defeated the Philistine’s Goliath with a slingshot, its aim was to liberate music from tawdry shallowness and conservatism of the ‘Philistine’ music public.

Inspired by chivalric stories of the Knights Templar and similar clandestine groups of medieval crusade history, its unwitting members were those who Schumann deemed to have the necessary artistry and discipline to purge the world by means of the highest integrity and promote poetry and truth (Daverio 1997: 113-115). As always Schumann started with self-examination and the fabulous dialogues between ‘Florestan’ and ‘Eusebius’ and the conversations with ‘Raro’, the composite of the two, could well represent an inner discourse to drive the ‘Philistine’ from Robert Schumann’s own mind.

I have looked at the term ‘Phantasie’ used as a title in Schumann’s works, but would now like to look at the German ‘fantasieren’ which he uses so often in his writing. Robert refers to his improvisational approach to composition in a number of letters concerning the publication of *Papillons*, Op. 2. Aware of his synaesthesic ability and heavily influenced by Jean Paul’s *Flegeljahre* (where the heroes themselves improvise at the piano), Schumann relates in a letter to his mother: ‘Tell everyone to read the final scene from Jean Paul’s *Flegeljahre*, as soon as possible, [and tell them] that *Papillons* actually transforms the masked ball into tones’ (Daverio 1997: 79-93). He tells Ludwig Rellstab, editor of the journal *Iris*: ‘How often I turned over the last pages [of *Flegeljahre*], since the ending seems like a new beginning,—almost unconsciously I was at the piano, and thus one Papillon after another came into being’ (Jugend Briefe: 167 quoted in Daverio 1997: 83). Later, in a letter to Henriette Voigt, he writes: ‘When you have a free minute I suggest you read the final chapter of *Flegeljahre*, where everything appears as black on white right up to the giant boot in F♯ minor’ (*Briefe: Neue Folge:* 54 quoted in Daverio 1997: 83).

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Papillons, depicting a carnival ball in *Flegeljahre*, uses the symbol of the ball to explore alliances and liaisons. It also probes the concept of metamorphosis and the idea that we are in a constant state of evolution. The deferential reference to the grandfather figure at the end may be a wry acknowledgement of respect for age and experience. The German word *larve* that Jean Paul uses, not only means masks, but can also mean larvae or grubs (http://dict.tu-chemnitz.de/). The Oxford Dictionary also adds the meaning 'ghosts' to the word larva. Schumann may well have seen the act of improvising as a form of meditation.

In *Carnaval*, Op. 9 (started in 1834 and published the following year) the setting of the ballroom, according to Schumann's own letters, is once again used. This time the scope is broadened to examine the shifting relationships between colleagues such as 'Chopin' and 'Paganini'; lovers[7] in the form of Clara and Ernestine von Fricken ('Chiarina' and 'Estrella'); the relationship between the German and Italian school of composition; and their concordat against conservatism ('March des Davidsbündler contra les Philistins'). The mask adds excitement and mystery to the idea of 'dancing with the enemy' and that any character has within them the potential for being a 'Philistine'. In 1830, the year before Hegel's death, a massive attempted *coup d'état* took place in Paris which on a number of occasions the ailing sage referred to as a 'carnival'. Using Derrida's theory of 'trace' and 'difference' it is easy to see how Schumann's spelling of Carnaval may be broken down to its Latin roots of *carno* (flesh) and *ævum* (age or period) to mean a period of carnage. This knowledge for me placed a new light on the meaning of 'Reconnaissance' and the last movement ('March des Davidsbündler contra les Philistins'[8]) and I realised there are a number of other titles used in this set which could also be used as symbols for turbulent political times. 'Pantalon' could also refer to the long trousers made fashionable during the French Revolution as opposed to the breeches worn by the aristocracy. 'Colombine', meaning 'dove', was a symbol of peace and 'Arlequin', an ageing fool of the Italian *Comedie del Arte*, is associated with black and white colours, symbolising duality and opposing sides. The enigmatic 'Sphynxes', a symbol of ancient Egypt, the cradle of civilisation, was under the domination of France. 'Egypt is the land of the symbol which sets itself the spiritual task of the self-interpretation of Spirit without really being able to fulfil it. And Hegel finds in the Sphynx the symbol of the symbolic itself. It is the objective riddle'. (Copleston 1963: 232).

[7] Schumann had been associated with a number of different women at the time, which seemed to trouble him.

[8] David, being Jewish, may also be a jibe at anti-Semitic sentiments in the right-wing movement.

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What are these ancient ruins doing at a Viennese masked ball and what do they represent? (Unless it was a theme of décor, in which case it may have been understood at the time). It is generally accepted as an invitation for the performer to improvise and contribute to the musical dialogue—a way of generating involvement from both pianist and audience in solving a riddle. (This may well be seen as an early attempt at aleatoric music). Charles Rosen makes reference to Ludwig Tieck's *Puss-in-Boots* (*Der gestiefelte Kater*) of 1797, that includes members of the audience when the remark is made, 'The play itself seems to be a play within a play, ' making it a play within a play within a play and compares it to a set of Chinese boxes. Later the King says to Prince Nathaenael of Malinski, 'How do you speak our language so fluently, since you live so far away?' The Prince replies, 'Be quiet, or the audience will notice there is something unnatural' (1995: 78).

Schumann was well acquainted with the work of Tieck and adapted his text in combination with that of Friederich Hebbel for his opera *Genoveva*. Taking into account that Tieck used bizarre cross references to music in *The Upside-down World* (*Die Verkehrte Welt*) which opens with a 'Symphony' in prose starting with an 'Andante in D Major' and including verbal 'Pizzicato with Violin Accompaniment', one cannot help but compare it to E T A Hoffmann's 'Murr' the cat and Kappelmeister Kreisler (Rosen 1995: 76). The word 'dance' was often used as a metaphor for battle manoeuvres or duelling and the work as a whole could be examining shallow ideas that pass in and out of fashion as well as inconstant love interests. It is not the last time that we shall witness Schumann using external events to express his own inner turmoil. I am aware that I may have taken the concept of metaphor too far in this instance, but I cannot deny a certain revelling in the idea of Schumann's use of cyphers and *double entendres*.

The idea of conflicting emotions and mood swings is explored in *Humoreske*, Op. 20 and also in *Noveletten*, Op. 21. The strange association of ideas and notion that what brings joy to one person may result in the opposite emotion for a related character is the stuff that Jean Paul's novels are made of. The scene in *Flegeljahre* where Walt is making 'hoppelpoppel' (scrambled egg) and Wult is looking on while making seemingly unrelated comments may well have given rise to the extreme contrasts in ideas and seeming incongruity of the episodes which have produced endless criticism and confusion (Wasielewski 1858: 281).

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Claude Debussy recognised Schumann as a composer with some radical ideas and expressed the wish to be remembered 'to the right of Schumann, but to the left of Chopin'. He declared that in his view 'Schumann understood nothing about Heinrich Heine, or at least, that's my impression. He might be a great genius, but he could never capture that fine spirit of irony that Heine embodies. Look at *Dichterliebe*, for example, he misses all the irony' (Daverio 1997: 210). In *Die beiden Grenadiere*, Op. 49, two soldiers returning from Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign agree on a suicide pact on discovery of the Emperor's capture. Deciding to abandon their spouses and children to fend for themselves as beggars on the street so that the soldiers may die in solidarity with their Emperor, the *Marsellaise* is used to lampoon patriotic fervour. No serious musician, or anyone else for that matter, could interpret this song at face value. *Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen*, from *Dichterliebe*, Op. 48/11, a song about a young man's rejection by the woman he loves, is bittersweet and is described by Rosen as:

> . . . positively ugly. Even if one puts a higher value on this song as an independent piece of music than I think justified, it is clear that for Schumann it could not exist outside the cycle. It is, in its angular and banal insistence, a deliberately bad song, but magnificent in its place. Its coarseness makes Heine's facetiousness more profound as well as more dramatic. Taken by itself it might be a comic parody: in the cycle, its not humorous but deeply moving, above all because it makes no concessions to grace or charm (1995: 58).

Graham Johnson (a much younger person than Charles Rosen) agrees on the brilliant positioning of the song and its witty but cavalier callousness. It is interesting to note the comments he makes about the same song in his copious notes for the Hyperion complete recorded cycle of *The Songs of Robert Schumann*:

> This is a type of German square dance which seems ideally apt for a song about the changing of partners. Indeed one might almost expect that the words of the song were meant to be shouted over the top of the music by a dance-master instructing couples in their intertwining movements. This is also the nearest thing in lieder to the modern phenomenon of 'rap' (Johnson 5: 101-2).

Robert Schumann was committed to the pursuit of an ideal of truth from the time of his youth. As early as 1827 he wrote in his diary: 'Political freedom is perhaps the actual wet nurse of poetry; it is necessary above all for the unfolding of poetic blossoms; genuine poetry (that is poetry that enters into public life enthusiastically and passionately) can never thrive in a land where serfdom and slavery prevail' (Daverio 1997: 421) may also be making references to Hegel's 'master-slave' myth. His role as editor of *Neue Zeitschrift* was patently concerned with current musical events and his concern for poor public taste in music. His

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self-coined phrase *Faschingswanck aus Wien*, Op. 26 shows a use of street slang not often seen in music titles which refers to an invoking of an understood official leniency toward misdemeanours allowed since biblical times. He not only mocks his own idealistic quest for the highest standards in art by revelling in a string of popular melodies of questionable taste, but also the Austrian government of Metternich for curbing freedom of expression and uses unabashedly the banned *Marsellaise*. This was the first time he used this melody and as in *Die Beiden Grenadiere*, it was in a mocking, satirical way. Schumann was an ardent supporter of the French Revolution, as was Heine, but when Napoleon declared himself Emperor he became the subject of ridicule.

Schumann's bardic manner

Most psychologists, including Freud and Jung, agree that a person may experience an event in their life that is such a powerful stimulus that it can change dramatically the subject's personality (Satinover: 3). Robert Schumann's music had always reflected his life experience, but it had been more by way of abstract reflection. The events of 5 May 1849 may well have caused a more proactive stance in his career. Living in Dresden and appointed as professor at the university, the political unrest came to a climax in a violent but brief outbreak of revolution that was quickly defeated. Clara records lawlessness and mayhem all over the city. Barricades were everywhere and they had witnessed fourteen corpses (Litzman 1902: 78). The rebels visited their house twice, but when they insisted on searching the rooms, Clara fended them off and she, Robert and their eldest daughter, Maria, escaped through the garden gate[9]. They took refuge in an outlying suburb, leaving the other children in the care of the maid until Clara made her way back on the 7 May, after the rebellion had been quashed.

This seemingly reprehensible and unconscionable behaviour on the part of Robert and Clara is indefensible and on the surface seems like sheer cowardice. However, it raises a number of questions. What were the Schumann's political affiliations? What literature or possessions did they have in their house? What meetings had they attended and what had the neighbours witnessed? The reaction of the Schumann's seems to have gone beyond fear and become a reflection of the hysteria taking place. We will never know the self-recrimination that took place in the predictable self-examination that followed. In Robert's quest for truth and freedom he could not have expected such an outcome and his most prized weapons, his intellect, logic and refinement, were of no help.

[9] Diary entries imply that the maid and other children were not at home and that Robert and Clara intended to be back by nightfall.

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In reaction to these external disturbances, the Schumanns sought sanctuary at a nearby spa Bad Kreischa, where they lived until 12 June 1849. 'I find it remarkable that the terrible events from without awaken Robert's inner poetic feelings in such a diametrically opposite manner. A breath of the highest tranquillity hovers over all these songs; laughing like blossoms, they seem to me like harbingers of spring' (Daverio 1997: 423). The idea of restoring inner calm through means of a country retreat seems indicative of Robert Schumann's approach to life. A new focus on the youth begins to emerge in his creative output.

The *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 63 had been started just before the outbreak of the revolution. These were didactical pieces for children as opposed to the *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15 which were adult reflections on childhood. Robert now started work on the *Lieder album für die Jugend*, Op. 79. There is also the tragic figure of Mignon in *Kennst du das Land* and *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt* and the harp playing figure of Wilhelm Meister, Goethe's bard. The extremes of diatonicism and chromaticism that are explored in the *Lieder und Gesänge aus Wilhelm Meister*, Op. 98a (which Sams finds so eccentric) could maybe be explained by the quote from Hegel on page 32.

The role of social commentary is easily visible in the major works of this period, *Das Paradies und die Peri*, *Manfred* and his only opera *Genoveva*. *Peri*, an unqualified success from its first performance, was the first work to enjoy international recognition for Robert, receiving performances throughout Europe and America. Schumann avoids the title of opera or oratorio and uses instead *Dichtung*, as he did for *Manfred* as well. In keeping with his philosophy that the only meaningful change demands personal change from within, the final act deals with the rehabilitation of a hardened criminal, thereby ensuring the Peri's place in heaven. Based on an epic poem by Byron, *Manfred* was composed at incredible speed, typical of Robert's style of working at this time. Clara wrote that she doubted it would be as successful as *Peri* as it demanded greater understanding from the audience.

The libretto for *Genoveva* was adapted by Schumann from the plays of Ludwig Tieck and Friederich Hebbel and was another success. A minor aristocrat, Siegfried, slow-witted and dull, is sent on a crusade to the Middle East at the behest of the Church on the day of his wedding to Genoveva. His wife is left in the care of Drago, a trusted friend and servant. Golo, a younger friend of Siegfried, described by Schumann as an excellent poet, musician and bard, is excluded from the crusade ostensibly due to his illegitimacy. Golo makes romantic overtures to Genoveva, which are rejected. With the help of Margaretha (a

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composite of two sisters in the original plays, one good and the other a witch) Golo accuses Genoveva of infidelity with Drago, who is summarily executed. Siegfried returns and Genoveva is banished. The truth is discovered with the help of Margaretha's magic mirror and Siegfried and Genoveva are eventually reunited. Golo commits suicide.

It is quite possible that by using a name like Siegfried, which was of immense importance in German tradition, Schumann was equating the character to officialdom, or the government, backed by the Catholic Church. Golo, portrayed as a great poet, musician and bard, could easily have been a self-portrait. Genoveva, the gullible innocent woman, referred to as the 'German wife' when she asks why she is being deserted so soon after their marriage, portrays the plight of the average German woman. Margaretha shows the dual nature of good and evil present in everyone and her magic mirror that gives self-knowledge through its reflection, is the growing science of psychology (Mertl 1997: 23-28).

Schumann used the leitmotif technique in this opera, but unlike the later operas of Richard Wagner, these were adapted to the different characters rather than using different leitmotifs for each person or object. The entire opera is based on the opening chorale and displays the unity in compositional technique that became the hallmark of Robert's later works.

The number five seems to have symbolic significance for a large body of the later works, many with folk or archaic references. There are *Fünf Stücke: Im Volkston für Cello und Klavier*, Op. 102, *Fünf Romanzen für Cello und Klavier* (burned by Clara), *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133, *Gedichte der Königen Maria Stuart*, Op. 135, *Fünf heitre Gesänge*, Op. 125, *Fünf Lieder und Gesänge*, Op. 127 and *Fünf Gesänge aus H Laubes Jagdbrevier*, Op. 137, *Tema mit Variationen* (5), WoO. 20. It seems to raise suspicions of numerology and the mystical sign of the pentagram. Bearing in mind Alan Walker's admonition in the introduction to *Schumann: The Man and his Music* that the occult has no place in an academic study I am wracked by a guilty twinge broaching this subject. The many reports of table tilting as a parlour game cannot be ignored. There is reference to a study Schumann made of the paranormal in his diary entries, but the document has been lost. Graham Johnson draws attention to Robert's involvement with the writings of Justinus Kerner[10], which include a great deal of 'natural' magic, as do the poems of Heine and Eichendorff, and in the case of one of the Chamisso

[10] Justinus Kerner and Adelbert von Chamisso were both trained in science (Kerner being a doctor/homeopath and Chamisso a botanist) and displayed what Johnson terms an amazingly 'green' approach to life (Johnson 2: 48).

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songs, Tarot cards (*Die Kartenlegerin*, Op 31/2). Could he possibly have been looking for an equally important symbol of Christianity that emphasised the importance of living in harmony with the world, rather than the violent symbol of the cross? Could it have been stimulated by the writings of Schelling under the influence of von Baader and Boehme? Or was it simply another manifestation of his interest in Hegel and Hölderlin's 'Volksreligion' made even more interesting through contact with Bettina von Arnim who had been a recent houseguest.

The *Sechs Gedichte von N Lenau und Requiem*, Op. 90, were originally planned as a set of five. Dealing with the unusual subject of falling out of love, Sams had seen it as possible reason to suspect discord in the Schumann marriage, which I now strongly doubt. Although Robert normally used his life experience as part of his compositional technique, it was normally used as a point of departure to reflect on deeper issues. Lenau had not only embarked on a clandestine love affair, he had been coerced to make a public retraction of sentiments expressed in his epic poem *Savonarola* which had angered the Catholic Church. Schumann's professed first love had always been truth and after the Dresden revolution had perhaps realised the liability that any true love carries within. Lenau had been committed to an asylum where Schumann mistakenly thought he had died. The added 'Requiem' may have been a symbolic gesture for a passing compromise of the 'Truth'.

The Schumann marriage seems to have been remarkably solid. They were both extremely strong individuals with a shared common goal. Their methods of achieving this goal often differed causing some heated exchanges typical of any dynamic relationship. They always presented a united front to the public regardless of any differences of opinion (Neuhaus 1993: 71). Often Clara, the more diplomatic and politically astute of the pair, was left to soothe the ruffled egos that Robert left in his wake.

Perhaps viewing the city of Dresden as a nemesis, Schumann welcomed the chance to work as Municipal Director of Music in Düsseldorf, succeeding his friend Ferdinand Hiller. His duties for this public office included the rehearsing of the orchestra and choir of the *Algemeine Musikverein* for the subscription concerts, conducting the actual concerts and planning the programmes and supervising the music for major feast days at two Catholic churches, *Saint Lambertus* and the *Maximilliankirche*. He also organised additional chamber music concerts given as benefits (for which he received an additional fee) and was director of the *Niederrheinisches Musikfest* (Daverio 1997: 443). His initial enthusiasm

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dampened as he found the same attitudes in Düsseldorf as in Dresden. It seemed there was no escape from the fashionable Republican zeitgeist. Hiller's comment that 'at last the Düsseldorfers are happy' proved to be premature and the initial guarded mutual respect between the city authorities and Robert soon disintegrated with familiarity into contempt.

Schumann, always disdainful of the outmoded oratorio, resorted to the use of fairytale to educate the public through a popular medium that all could understand. This was the dramatic ballad for soloist, chorus and orchestra. Using the figure of a narrator, sometimes a bard-type figure as in *Der Königssohn*, Op. 116, *Des Sängers Fluch*, Op. 139, *Vom Pagen und Königstochter*, Op. 140, and *Das Glück von Edenshall*, Op. 143, the story is always highly allegorical and loosely resembles the ancient dytheram. The lighthearted banter of the naïve bachelor of the 1830s gave way to an acerbic polemic of the battle-wisened veteran. Both Michael Struck and Reinhardt Kapp see strong political motives in these last works, but it is doubtful that they were party-political motives. *Der Rose Pilgerfahrt*, Op. 112 was accepted as a masterpiece and Liszt described it in *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Muzik* as 'a new poetic terrain . . . .[that] is not so exclusively religious, but which in no less exalted form than the oratorio, offers the interest and the variety of the opera, without setting its sights on the exploitation of its dramatic potential, but on the contrary, offers greater latitude to lyricism and the specifically musical element' (Hinke 1999: 8). It is a gentle story of selfless, sacrificial love that was not overtly offensive to anyone.

The other four Ballades are set predominantly in the king's banquet hall[11], where the followers are entertained and the bard performs his duties. It is also a literary symbol for moral decay. Food has been linked to the taboo subject of sex and morals since the story in Genesis of 'Adam and Eve'. We find it again in Balshazar's feast and in more recent times in 'Hansel and Gretel', Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and perhaps the most grotesque of all in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. At times the imagery takes on a similarity to the *Black Paintings* of Francisco Goya, an artist living in similar times of social unrest after Napoleon's Iberian campaign. The making of a harp from the slain page's jawbone and stringing it with his hair (*Vom Pagen und Königstochter*) is marginally more palatable than 'Saturn eating his son'. All four Ballades concern institutions of power and the kings and their elders always represent knowledge, experience and the abuse of

[11] The setting of the Heine ballad, *Belsatzar*, Op. 57 could be seen as a miniature forerunner of these four *Ballades* and takes place in Nebuchadnezzar's banquet hall. It also deals with divine retribution on moral turpitude.

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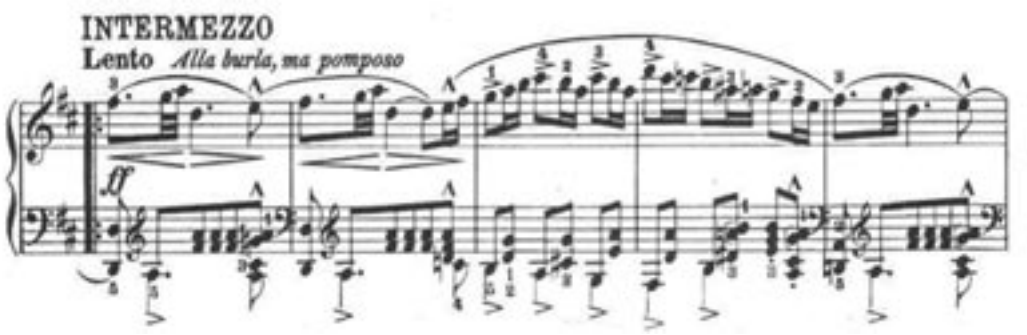
power. In Goya's painting 'Old Men' there is an atmosphere of lecherous senility. Kapp gives the date Schumann started *Das Glück von Edenhall* as two days after Prince Wilhelm 1 of Prussia paid a visit to Düsseldorf. Clara performed as part of the celebrations. Told through the medium of the king's crystal chalice bearer, the story tells of the supplanting of one tyrannical regime by another equally tyrannical regime. The final scene, where the chalice bearer sifts through the rubble of the destroyed palace for remains of his master or shards from the chalice, is surely indicative of Schumann preferring the 'devil' he knew. It also implies that the king's memory will live on through the chalice bearer's efforts.

The use of the figure of the bard can be detected in Schumann from as early as *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15. 'Der Dichter Spricht' shows intentional use of the harp-like chordal accompaniment, improvisatory cadenza figures and an obvious clouding of a tonal centre. Elsewhere I quote from Schumann's diary where he likens artists to prophets and in *Waldszenen*, Op. 83 we encounter *Vogel als Prophet* and the reminder that nature is filled with signs and symbols to educate us if only we took the trouble to heed them. The bard also plays the role of prophet. With his knowledge of history and a recorder of the king's or chief's achievements, he is in a position to warn and remind the audience of past dangers. He plays a role not dissimilar to a psychotherapist.

In *Des Sängers Fluch* we witness this as the central theme as the bard, refusing to fulfil his primary function, condemns the king to an eternal death of being erased from history and forgotten ('Vesunken und vergessen, das ist des Sängers Fluch'). Kapp suggests that rulers may be more dependent on artist's favours than they realise (Kapp: 395-96). Dietrich Fischer-Diskau finds the main weakness in the work lying in the pompous shallow melodies (Fischer-Diskau: 197, 207). If we look at the *Piano Sonata in F♯ minor*, Op. 11 Schumann marks the 'Intermezzo' of the third movement 'Alla burla, ma pomposa' clearly indicating the satirical value of pomposity. (An added observation of the key of D major that was so commonly linked to trumpets and fanfares is also quite amusing.) I detect a few well-aimed barbs for some inflated egos that try to control the freedom of thought. The musical imagery is bold to the point of being experimental. The bard, refusing to perform his role and sing, resorts to what Schumann would call 'rezitativischer Gesang'. At the phrase: 'Nie töne süsser Klanf durch eure Räume wieder, nie Saite noch Gesang' (May sweet sounds never more resound through your chambers, neither harpstrings nor song', the harp, that has been silent since the minstrels murder, is replaced by eerie chords in the woodwinds, tremolos and pizzicati.

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Example 3.1. Schumann 3rd movement from *Sonata No 1 in F# minor*, Op. 11 (Schirmer).



The typical musical symbolism used in other compositions to denote north European legend are present in these works too: the use of the harp and horn to conjure up the 'other world', the pentatonic melodies, the declamatory style and the veiled tonal centres. There are also the normal mythical characters of mermen, elves, water nymphs and fairies. The signs that Schumann is sending a message through the medium of parable and past collective experience has been generally acknowledged. The realisation that he is doing so through satire would change the musical gesture and remove the superficial, saccharine sentimentality, making the ballads possibly as pertinent today as they were in the mid-1800s.

Sams complains of a preoccupation with death in all the later works, but on deeper examination there is as much concern for life. In *Vom Pagen und Königstochter* the princess and page are re-united in the afterlife and the jubilant D major central key of *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133 is a clear message for an optimistic future. The cornerstone of Greek education was an awareness of one's mortality and death is the very essence of that. The *Fünf Gedichte der Maria Stuart*, Op. 135 there is one song on her love for her native France and another on the birth of her son. All of these lieder alternate between *rezitativischer Gesang* and melody. Each phrase becomes a microcosm and is sometimes not reliant on the phrase before or after (an idea explored further by Schoenberg) as a stream of hopes and fears are explored. Gesture becomes pivotal if one decides to perform these as a victim or as a heroine.

In the lengthy quote from Foucault at the beginning of this chapter it would be pertinent to refer back to his ideas of the 'already said' as a synonym for Derrida's 'Trace' (*Of Grammatology*, 1967). It also bares out the Derridean idea that there is an undetectable link between all thoughts and that one refers or defers to the other. Another term that Foucault uses at this point is 'occultation'. Such a word invites trouble, but the links between the 'Larve' (*Oxford Paperback Dictionary*

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gives the meaning as grub or ghost) of Schumann's *fantasieren* (*phantasieren*?) in *Papillons* and the motivic connections with many works of the final years give an interesting insight into his notions of metamorphosis and cyclical development.

If one looks at the *Projektenbuch* one becomes aware that there were future plans for an oratorio on the life of Martin Luther, based entirely on the chorale genre, and also a 'Deutsche Requiem' (Daverio 1997: 476). If Schumann intended these to convey a similar message to his current work, he was pursuing a potentially dangerous course in the conservative predominantly Catholic City of Düsseldorf. Wasielewski, Ostwald and Daverio have commented on Schumann's sartorial black, giving him the appearance of a priest. It may have been a vain attempt to present himself as a sage, but was more likely a conscious or subconscious attempt to ignore the foppery of fashion and divorce himself from the prevailing hubristic republicanism. Whichever it was it did not endear him to the management committee of the orchestra and his attitude started to cause problems.

In November 1853 Schumann faced a disciplinary committee for incompetence,[12] which he defeated through overwhelming support from the musicians themselves. Which brings into question the validity of the committee's motives. After sending a delegation to the Schumann residence to engage Clara in persuading her husband to limit his conducting responsibilities to his own works, they were thoroughly rebuked and turned away (Eisman 1: 181). Early the following year, after returning from a tour to Holland, he did neglect his duties when he absented himself from a concert which he was not conducting, but had administrative responsibility. This time the committee dismissed him, but he never again reported for work, being continually unwell (Daverio 1997: 456). They continued to pay his salary until March 1855, well beyond the expiry of his contract at the beginning of October.

When considering Robert Schumann as an artist on a quest for truth, one is forced to examine the possibility that his unwavering stance may have forced an irreconcilable dilemma between his responsibility to his art and his responsibility to his family: he may well have perceived himself as a liability to them. It was doubtless a highly stressful situation. Foucault has suggested certain manifestations that should be considered when for diagnosing clinical insanity—among

[13] Schumann did face some opposition due to his autocratic style of leadership and his penchant for slow tempi. Most references to lack of control refer to the rehearsals for Joachim's *Manfred*, a new work, where Robert's severe myopia caused him to conduct with his head buried in the score (Kapp: 348, 352).

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these are included criminal behaviour and social and sexual aberrations. There was never any danger to society or Robert's family and friends, neither was there any indication of self-mutilation. There was no sign of unsuitable social behaviour like public indecency or inappropriate defecation. He never once displayed any sexual danger to his wife, children or anyone else. All the symptoms he displayed could also be attributed to acute stress.

In the early hours of 27 February 1854 Robert Schumann left the house in his night-shirt, went to the Rhine, bribed the guards with a silk handkerchief on discovery of having left the toll-fee at home and threw himself into the river. He was first observed shaking his fist at the sky and throwing an object into the water and was quickly saved by the bargemen.

It was thought that the object was his wedding ring and Clara later explained this by remembering a note left on his desk that he was going to return his gold ring to the Rhine Maidens and suggested she do the same (Litzmann 1902: 2/301). Two years seems excessively long to remember something of such a bizarre nature and seems to suggest an extreme crisis in his marriage. The fact that Clara was barred from seeing him until the day before his death, two-and-a-half years later, strengthens my suspicions.

It becomes an interesting point to notice the number of influential people in the life of Robert Schumann that were forced into silence either self-imposed or by society. These include Rousseau, Heine, Hölderlin and Lenau. I am not for one moment suggesting any conspiracy theory or political activism, but the freedom of thought that all promoted, criticising through irony the bigotry in all of the political parties, may well have been unappreciated in a society intent on the democratic principle of compromise.

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Sention C: The Sound of Absence

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Chapter 4

Ossianic metaphor in selected works of Robert Schumann

The Poems of Ossian in nineteenth-century Europe became like a much loved, but illegitimate child. Today, when speaking of erstwhile perennial favourites such as Leopold Mozart's *Toy* Symphony and Jeremiah Clarke's *Trumpet Voluntary* in D major, people of the older generation cannot but think subconsciously of Haydn and Purcell to whom for centuries these works were mistakenly attributed. They very carefully, if silently, correct an ingrained misconception that is nearly impossible to eradicate. Since exposing the authentic creators of these works they have hardly been afforded any attention worth discussing notwithstanding their previous popularity.

Despite the challenge of the authenticity of the translation of *The Poems of Ossian,* their literary worth had been praised by some of the greatest thinkers of the time, including Grey[1] and Hazlitt. The poem's symbolism had helped shape the thinking of a whole generation. To deny the impact of Ossian would be to emasculate too many icons of the era—including Napoleon, Goethe and Schiller. The revival of neoplatonism encouraged the exploration of one's cultural roots as an essential step toward self-enlightenment and later formed the very basis of Freud and Jung's theories on 'depth psychology' (Satinover: 3).

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European writers, identifying with *The Poems of Ossian* as an accurate reflection of the *Zeitgeist*, cleverly recreated, or at times merely cloned, the poems to ensure the continuance of the heritage. Hegel and Hölderlin supported the idea of a 'Volksreligion' similar to the classical Greek belief in gnosis or reason. It also drew heavily on the pantheist ideas of Spinoza and the mysticism of Maimonides. Most religions subscribe to the idea of martyrs. For the Greeks Socrates was the martyr for Reason; for the Christians Jesus was the martyr for Faith; for the northern Europeans the genocide of the Celts became the martyrs for Freedom. No matter how sullied the reputation or how compromised the integrity, in the subconscious of the nineteenth-century European, *The Poems of Ossian* were the archetype of the north European poetic canon.

It could be stated almost certainly that Robert Schumann did not set a single word of Ossian's poems to music, or use any direct reference to them in his music (Daverio 1987: 253). However, the influence they had on nineteenth-century culture was not lost on him. He did, though, set a large number of poems by

[1] It seems Grey did not recognise his own description of a bard in the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*.

Burns, Byron, Goethe, Heine, Lenau and Uhland to music; all poets who make explicit reference to Ossian and who make Ossianic concepts and moods part of their Romantic battery of means.

Applying his normal maxim that 'the poem must be crushed like an orange, and its essence extracted'—not a single hint of a Scottish folksong can be found in the eight 'Burns' Lieder of *Myrthen*, Op. 25 (Sams: 37). The *Lieder* do not concentrate on the external Scottish setting of the poems, but the inner emotions expressed by the main character. This may have been due to the fact that Schumann set the poems in German translation, hence losing the rhythmic character of the original text. Possibly the exotic character of foreign musical elements did not interest him as much as the common emotions experienced by the whole of humanity (Daverio 1998: 254). From the evidence that I have seen it seems more likely that Schumann was more interested in characteristics of unity rather than points of division.

Nevertheless, Schumann did make use of ballads and there is a palpable folk element in his music; both folk melodies and stylised folk dances and songs occur often as commentaries on his personal situation or on the state of music in a changing political climate (Sams: 179).[2] Schumann had known of the chivalric style in literature as a child as his father had published a complete edition of Sir Walter Scott and from the time he first read Goethe's *Werther,* he would have been aware of Ossian. The poems are also mentioned in Jean Paul's *Vorschule der Ästhetik*: Ossian's poems are described as: '. . . evening- and night-pieces in which the heavenly nebulae of the past hover and sparkle over the thick nocturnal mist of the present; only in the past does Ossian find future and eternity' (Daverio 1998: 254).[3] In the late 1830s Schumann wrote on both Mendelssohn's *Hebriden* Overture and the *Scottish* Symphony in the *Neue Zeitschrif für Musik*. Later he also reviewed Niels Gade's overture, *Nachklänge von Ossian,* Op. 1 (discussed in Chapter 2). Daverio, in his article 'Schumann's Ossianic Manner', observes that: '…the modal or pentatonic touches in Gade's evocations of folk song are cyphers for pastness, for an archaic realm that is no more…' and continues: ' Only martial topics in these pieces occupy a place in the immediate present, but after all the present is a necessary foil against which the memory of past events unfolds' (Daverio 1987: 259).

[2] The *Rhenish* Symphony, *Wilhelm Meister* Lieder and children's music are laden with folk melodies of both types, but it was a style that is evident as early as *Davidsbündlertänze*, Op. 6 and *Carnaval*, Op. 9, both of which contain German dances.

[3] Schumann admitted that Jean Paul was his most powerful literary inspiration, though there were many others that may have played an equally important role.

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Friedrich Silcher, a collector of German folk songs, wrote in a letter to Schumann dated 1 October 1837: 'I have long entertained the idea of making comparisons between Beethoven's music and Ossian's poetry . . . I would like to know if Beethoven really took Ossian to heart, because all his music sounds Ossianic' (Boettischer: 178).

Beethoven had collaborated with the Scot George Thomson (1757-1851), Secretary to the Board for the Encouragement of Arts and Manufacture, from 1803. Thomson collected Scottish folk melodies for which he commissioned writers such as Burns and Scott to furnish texts. Leading composers of the day, including Haydn, Pleyel and Hummel were invited to make arrangements of these melodies for a small fee. Haydn often passed these on to his pupil and after the old master's death in 1809, Beethoven inherited this favour (Meridian: CDE 84253).

He obviously enjoyed this task, writing to Thomson in 1810: 'Here dear Sir, are the Scottish melodies, most of which I have written "con amore" . . .' and continues requesting him to send a copy of the texts in order to understand the character of the melody more accurately. Many of these melodies (or derivatives of them) found their way into Beethoven's later instrumental compositions. The correspondence continued until 1823. It does seem likely, considering the lengthy involvement with Highland melodies, the composer's knowledge of Schiller and Goethe and his great admiration for Napoleon, that he would have made acquaintance with *The Poems of Ossian*. Many of Beethoven's themes are triadic or pentatonic in character as found in works like the Symphony No 3 in E♭ *major*, Op. 55 (*Eroica*) and the Piano Concerto No 5 in E♭ major, Op. 73 (*Emperor*). The *Eroica* Symphony last movement theme, based mainly on the tonic and dominant, is also the subject of the *15 Variations and Fugue in E♭ major*, Op. 35 (*Eroica Variations*) strongly associating antiquated contrapuntal techniques with this type of melody. A similar motif can be found in the Piano Sonata in E♭ major, Op. 81a (*Les Adieux*), which has a last movement in the style of hunting music and, like the *Eroica* Symphony, a dirge-like middle movement.

Classical education emphasised the need to 'confess one's "sins"' as a path to self-enlightenment and self-knowledge. It involved a constant and disciplined effort to recall the past in detail and may well have been the reason why Schumann chose the outmoded Heinrich Dorn as his first and only tutor in com-
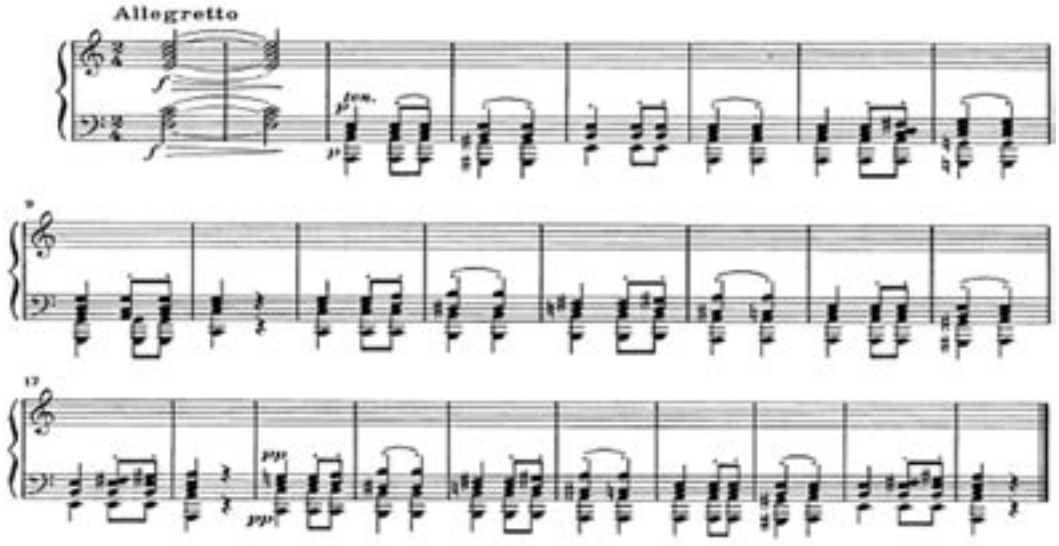
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position.[4] With a deep and reverential respect for Beethoven as his most immediate musical past, he set about dissecting the master's symphonies hoping to gain an insight into the inner logic of perceived genius. He also started work on a proposed set of variations using the 'Allegretto' from Beethoven's Symphony No 7 in A major, Op. 93 which he called at various times *Etüden in Form freier Variationen über ein Thema von Beethoven* and later merely *Exercices*. He must have laid great store by the project as he worked on it intermittently for nearly five years, but later abandoned it as an 'ungrateful idea' in favour of the *Etudes Symphonique*, Op. 13.

Both Hector Berlioz and Richard Wagner find elements of primordial beauty in Beethoven's Symphony No 7 in A major. Wagner, referring to the primitive dance rhythms of the outer movements declared the work the "Apotheosis of the Dance'; Berlioz admired the simple dactylic rhythmic structure of the 'Allegretto' and its elemental heroic and funereal character (Taraki: 152). Both composers also recognise and admired the primitive, pre-Christian character of the work. More recently Derryck Cooke discussed the theme at length, comparing it to the funeral march of the Piano Sonata in A♭ major, Op. 26 (Cooke: 22). He also points out similarities to the slow movement of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden String Quartet*. Originally a source of variations in the Seventh Symphony, Schumann may have chosen the theme for its suitability for variation treatment, its popularity or its romantic associations with a pagan past.

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Example 4.4. 'Allegretto' from Beethoven's Symphony No 7 in A major, Op. 93 (Diabelli reduction for piano printed in *Exercices*: G Henle Verlag).



[4] It is interesting to note that Dorn himself brought the lessons to an end, as he saw no reason to study thorough bass even further. This gives an added insight into the zeal that Schumann placed on techniques from a distant past era (Sadie XXIII: 876)

Of Fragments, Ruins and Monuments

Before embarking on a detailed study of the selected piano works, it may be advisable o lay some foundations by exploring the terms used by Schumann and his contemporaries and place them in an historical perspective.

Charles Rosen credits Friederich Schlegel as being the creator of the Romantic Fragment in his *Athenaeum*, but acknowledges that they could have derived from the French maxims of writers like of the seventeenth century, perfected by La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyere, and the late eighteenth century Chamfort (Rosen: 48).

> When our merit declines our taste declines as well. (No 379)
>
> The only thing that should surprise us is that we are still able to be surprised. (No 384)
>
> Magnanimity despises everything in order to have everything. (No 248)
>
> La Rochefoucauld (Rosen: 49)

The words display a centripetal force like a vortex that focus in on themselves intensifying the meaning of the words beyond their ordinary usage. Friederich Schlegel wrote in his *Athenaeum* published between 1798-1800: 'A fragment should be a little work of art, complete in itself and separated from the rest of the universe like a hedgehog.' (Rosen: 48). Rosen continues to expound on this idea of the hedgehog: [5]

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

Although the form of the fragment was closed it inspired further weighing by the reader, exploding the meaning of the words beyond its beginning and end. The quote from Michel Foucault at the beginning of Chapter 3 lends added significance that the origins precede the initial word and likewise a destiny beyond the final full stop, both to an undetectable point. (It also makes a delightful mockery of academic's claims to a scientific study of influences and outcomes).

[5] The hedgehog was also a symbol of Johannes Brahms as well as the name of the bar he frequented.

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The reader is coerced into giving much deeper thought to the stated ideas and becomes part of the creative process. They act much like a radio being tuned to a station after the commencement of broadcast. The theories of Lavater were first published as *Fragments of Physiognomy* (1775-78) and Goethe's *Faust* made its initial appearance in fragment form (Rosen: 50-51). Schlegel perceived the fragment as modern integrity: 'Many works of the ancients have become fragments: many works of the moderns are already conceived as fragments'. It were as though the writers of the day saw a self-destructive chromosome in every work of art.

During the Renaissance the Ruin was appreciated for its moral significance as well as being a witness to a sacred law. Charles Rosen writes:

> The fashion for the picturesque ruin in the eighteenth century, however, brings a different note: the fragment is no longer the introduction of Nature into Art but the return of Art, of the artificial, to a natural state. In the ruins of Piranesi and of Hubert Robert, architecture begins to recede into the landscape, to merge with the process of growth. Piranesi exaggerates the heroic proportions of the ruins: they induce a tragic sense of resignation, of melancholy. They dwarf the little human figures that wander about on them, and they often sink under the weight of the vegetation that begins to cover them (Rosen: 92).

For Schumann the fragment, ruin and monument were interlinked. Ruins and fragments were interchangeable and a ruin was seen as a monument pointing to the future. It is interesting to note that the titles for so many collections of fragments were metaphors for plant life or fertility: for Novalis it was Pollen *Dust* and one of Schumann's first song cycles was entitled Myrthen (Heather), whereas two others were called *Liederkreis* (song garlands). One set of Schlegel's fragments was called merely 'Ideas'. The source seems to be biblical and comes from the extract: 'All flesh is grass/and all the glory of man/as the flower of grass'. This passage was one of the quotations used by Johannes Brahms as the second movement of his *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45.

The *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* by James Macpherson published in 1760 may well have been conceived in a similar frame of mind as so many of the Scottish Nationalists and Jacobin rebels of the time, including Prince Charles, had such close ties with France, the country from whence so many fragments originated and also with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. If one carries the hypothesis of a fragment to its conclusion that it is a seminal seed of inspiration for a creative work, one can forgive Macpherson for his desire to fill in the gaps left by the missing passages.
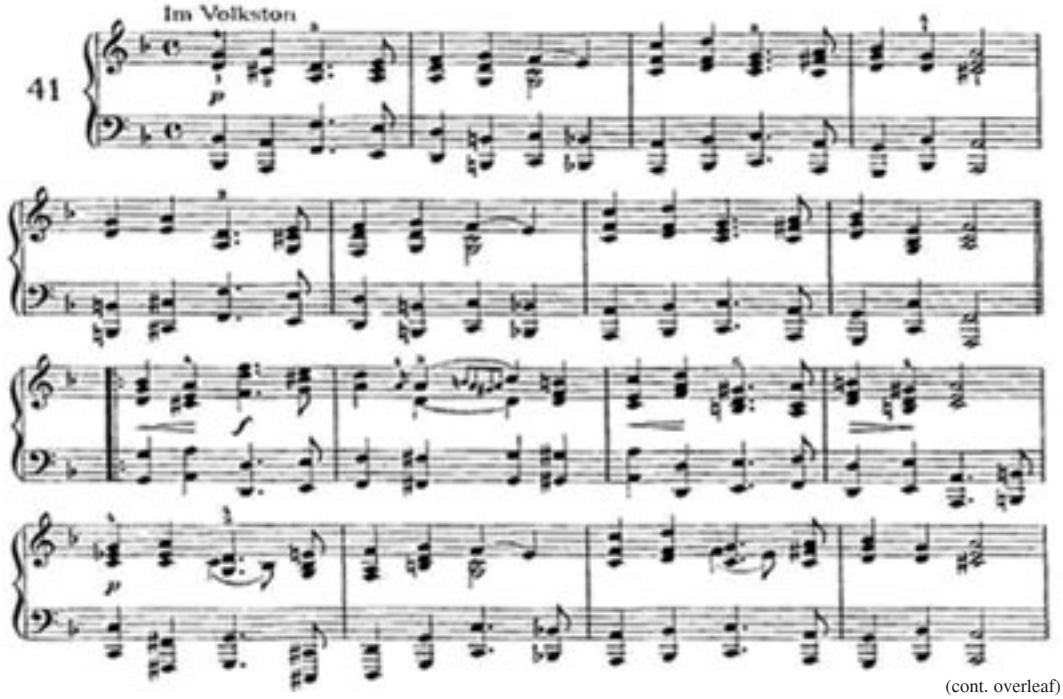
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The origin of the English term 'miniature' is from the Latin word 'minium' and refers to the 'red lead' used to highlight keywords in old manuscripts (*Oxford Dictionary:* 567), linking it in turn to the Greek idea of mnemonics or cyphers for memorisation. It denotes a small-scale work of great detail and focus. Fragments can also denote the motifs or kernel ideas on which a work is based. In Schumann's case these were often cyphers.

As previously stated at the end of Chapter 2, there is considerable confusion around the term 'Ossianic'. Most composers and writers of the time, including Schumann, refer to art forms based on legends and mythology of Northern Europe as 'Nordic' style, which can overlap with 'Scottish' style. To further add to confusion, Schumann, when writing on Gade's Overture Op 1 in *Neue Zeitschrift für Muzik*, also uses the term 'English' style—probably referring to the language of Macpherson's translations (Daverio 1998: 253).

At this point it may be pertinent to look at the one work that Schumann acknowledged as being in a 'Nordic style'; the 'Gruss an G . . .' or 'Nordisches Lied' from *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68/41. It was conceived as a tribute to the Danish composer, Niels Gade, who garnered considerable acclaim throughout Europe for his award-winning *Nachklänge von Ossian* Overture, Op. 1 and his cantata *Comala*. In both works Gade cleverly exploits not only his own Nordic heritage, but also the popularity of *The Poems of Ossian*. He became a personal friend of Schumann and this short piece is a musical play on Gade's surname.

Example 4.26. Schumann *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68 /41: 'Gruss an G . . .' (Peters Edition)



(cont. overleaf)

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Evoking the ancient past by using old compositional techniques, this style displays copious examples of modal writing and pentatonic melodies. Phrygian cadences create an aura of antiquity with their modal flavour, obscuring the tonal centre and acting as a metaphor for the diffused gloomy light of the poems as well as the 'mists of time'. Harp-like accompaniment figures and horn passages are frequently used together with a contrapuntal texture, which act as a conduit for the collective musical heritage.

'Gruss an G . . .' has a key signature of one flat, but hovers between D minor and F major. It is in a clear chorale style and in binary form with both sections ending in F major. The clever use of double counterpoint involves inverting the bass and treble at the beginning of the second section and Schumann's hallmark embellishment appears in bar 10. (This ornament that occurs repeatedly in *Der Dichter spricht* from *Kinderszenen* could be the musical equivalent of an oratory gesture and, in conjunction with the harp figuration of the accompaniment and the improvisational style, could be regarded as a cypher for the bardic stance. (It also occurs frequently in the coda of the first movement of the *Phantasie*.) Phrygian cadences are used in bars 4 and 16, another 'Nordic' element, with almost continual modulations to neighbouring keys being achieved by inter-dominant chords in the other phrases.

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Another miniature that displays Schumann's idea of a bardic approach to composition is 'Der Dichter Spricht' the thirteenth piece from *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15. Although without the same severity of style as the 'Grüss an G . . .' or the use of phrygian cadences, it displays a typical Schumannesque ornament that becomes a hallmark of the coda of the first movement of the C major *Phantasie* and also a free improvisatory cadenza type passage reminiscent of the bardic style.

Exercices

Originally called *Etüden in Form freier Variationon über ein Thema von Beethoven*, the *Exercices* underwent at least three different workings. The original theme, taken from the Diabelli reduction for piano, is not stated in any of these versions and it seems reasonable to assume that it was not intended to be. Only the A minor six-four chord stands like a ruin at the beginning allowing the variations to emerge as memories of the theme.

The variations that follow all have a dreamlike quality to them that bring to mind the writings of Ludwig Tieck and Novalis. The latter wrote of a new form of literature comparing it not only to a dream state of mind, but also to abstract instrumental music.

> Tales, without logic nevertheless with association, like dreams. Poems-*simply sounding* well and filled with beautiful words-but also without any sense or logic-at most single stanzas, intelligible-they must be like mere broken pieces of the most varied things. At best, true poetry can have *allegorical* sense on the whole, and an indirect effect like music, etc. (Rosen: 76)

In a letter to Clara Schumann, Robert describes these variations as being for the 'discerning pianist' and therefore not virtuosic (Münster: iv). In this sense they are the diametric opposite to the other compositions he was working on at the time: the *Abegg Variations*, Op. 1, *Papillons*, Op. 2, the *Paganini Etudes*, Op. 3, and the *Toccata*, Op. 7. All the other works are to some extent virtuosic, but never approach the bravura style of Liszt and Von Thalberg. Still hoping to become a performer himself, Robert spent long hours improvising at the piano, exploring the new tonal possibilities available on the rapidly developing instrument. This same improvisational quality is a key element in the Ossianic poetry which embodies the oral tradition. Orchestral colours were achieved by imitating the characteristic figuration of the particular instruments.

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An analysis of the *Exercices* with reference to Ossianic imagery
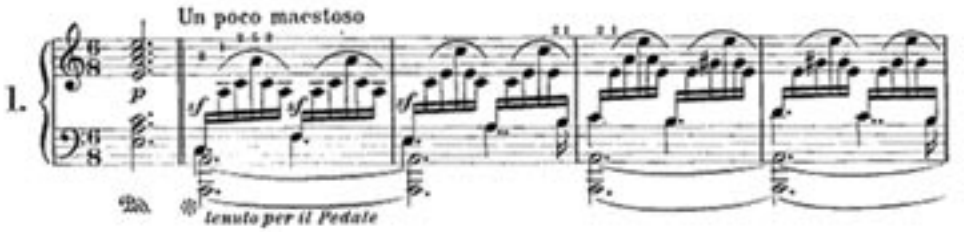
The first working of the *Exercices* is a set of eleven variations and bears the title *Etüden in Form freier Variationen über ein Tema von Beethoven* dating from 1831. A second set of nine variations was worked on in 1834 according to a date entered by Clara in the sketchbooks. In 1837, after the publication of the *Etudes Symphonique*, Op. 13, Schumann refers to a 'fair copy' of the *Etüden in Form freier Variationen* which he made in 1835(?).[6] This comprises seven variations in a different order from the previous sets with four variations in various states of completion. They were now called *Exercices* (Münster: III-V).

Each variation explores a single technical problem and so establishes its own character. This approach, also used by Chopin in his etudes, could be seen as technical expediency or it could be interpreted as paying homage to the *Fortspinnung* technique of the Baroque period, where one motivic pattern formed the basis for

[6] This date, with question mark, was given by Clara Schumann after Robert's death when she, together with Brahms, was working on the first complete edition of Schumann's piano music for Breitkopf & Härtel (Münster: v).

the entire movement. The first variation (Ex 4.5) shows a marked deviation from the original model. Whereas Beethoven's theme is a 24-bar piece divided into six phrases of four bars, each comprising a uniform two-bar rhythm. Schumann elongates the phrasing to three clear eight-bar sentences with a strong Phrygian feel in the middle—Beethoven used a sequential Phrygian cadence. The tenor melody, using the ideal range for the horn, has a harp-like accompaniment and moves over the sustained pedal notes in the bass.

Example 4.5. Schumann *Exercices* Var. 1 (G Henle Verlag).

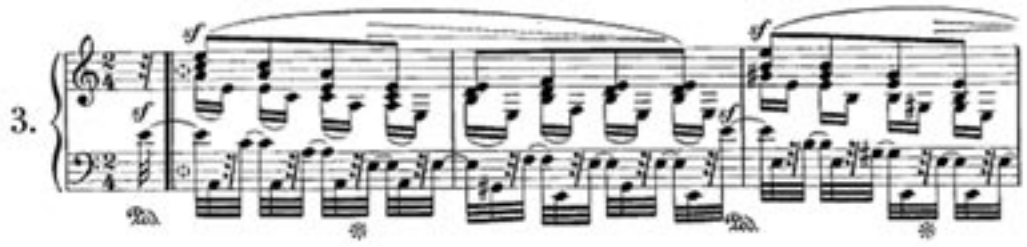


Each sentence consists of four bars that are mainly triadic, followed by four bars of step-wise progression. The theme not only bears a strong resemblance to the Gade *Ossianic Overture*, Op. 1, that came quite a while later, but also to Brahms' Cello Sonata in E minor, Op. 15. As this variation stands in place of a theme it sets a general mood of melancholia and longing. There is a definite feeling of seeking something that is unattainable: the long phrases give a sense of hovering in mid air. The original theme, with its uniform phrasing, was extremely grounded, but Schumann changes the character entirely. The falling semitone 6-5 in the opening two bars creates a feeling of anguished despair (also used to similar effect in 'Hochländische Witwe' from *Myrthen*, Op. 40, based on a poem by Robert Burns) and the final melodic progression 5-4-3-2-1 has associations with death and defeat (Cooke 1959: 89-90).

The second variation is 16 bars in length and has a triadic nature throughout. The source of this could be a harp figuration, or else it could have been inspired by the Paganini capriccios for violin that Schumann was busy transcribing for piano. The same sequential cadences are retained in the middle and the mirror effects in the writing make for extreme discomfort in performance. Variation 3 (Ex. 4.6) was to provide the model for one of the variations used in the *Etudes Symphonique*, Op. 13/6.

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Example 4.6. Schumann *Exercices* Var. 3 (G Henle Verlag).
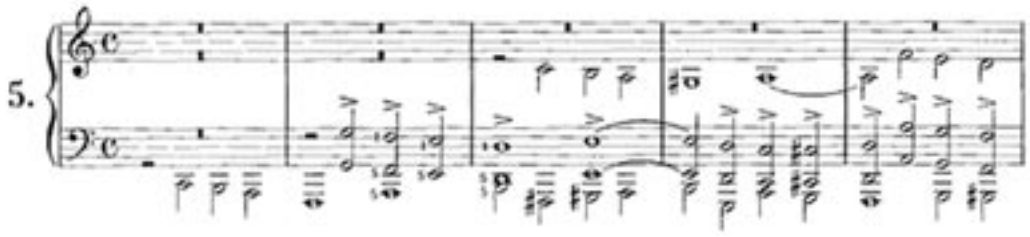


The descending triadic motif that opens the piece is typical of music for hunting horns, and uses the full resonance of the piano to convey the orchestral accompaniment. The writing for the piano is highly effective and impresses the listener with a flourish of sound that is not as difficult to perform as it sounds.

The essence of the Beethoven theme is retained in Variation 4 with an inner harp accompaniment doubled at the octave. The phrasing structure of the theme is kept and the bass line is merely hinted at with staccato notes imitating a pizzicato or possibly a drum beat. The repeated melodic notes recur like a knell and the mood throughout is funereal. The effect, though not comfortable to play, and not for small hands, shows the piano as a highly expressive instrument that can delineate texture on different planes.

The love that Schumann had for contrapuntal technique is shown in Variation 5, as is his love of tonal analogues. The letters C-H-A, contained in his own name, are treated contrapuntally in the style of a chorale prelude.

Example 4.7. Schumann *Exercices* Var. 5 (G Henle Verlag).
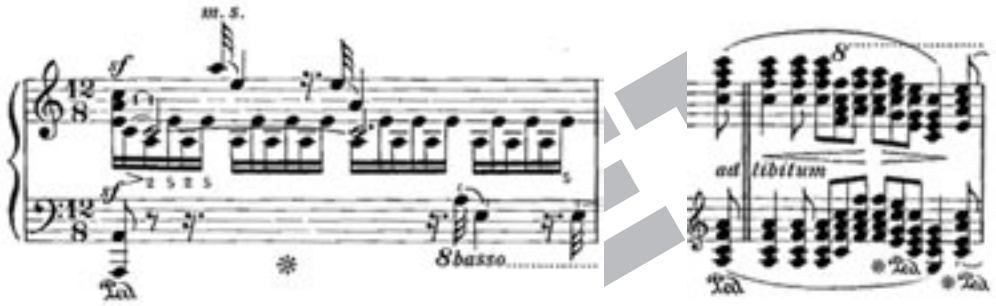


The idea of treating the piano like an organ could have come from Schumann's experiments at the time in writing for the pedal piano, an instrument in which he showed a lot of faith. The academic dryness of the variation is counterbalanced by the romantic pursuit of antiquated styles and an appeal to past techniques of strict contrapuntal *cantus firmus* technique. The writing is highly chromatic and the whole variation has an exoticism, not only of compositional but notational style. These archaisms clearly reflect Schumann's reverence for the past, possibly encouraged by Ossianic notions. The future transcriptions of Busoni could have derived a lot from this type of writing.

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Variation 6 uses the harp figuration once again and although very similar to a variation in Mendelssohn's *Variations Serieuse*, it most probably stems from Paganini. The writing for the piano is highly effective and at times a little awkward.

Schumann's study of Beethoven is shown in Variation 7, where he not only uses the theme from the first movement of the Ninth Symphony (Ex. 4.8a) with its falling tonic dominant intervals reminiscent of horns, but also a secondary theme from the first movement from the Seventh Symphony (Ex. 4.8b). This is not only a memory of an earlier movement of the Seventh Symphony from which the theme is taken, but is one of the forebears of the Ninth Symphony—a work that contains many musical references that may be seen as Ossianic.

Example 4.8a & b. Schumann *Exercices* Var. 7 (G Henle Verlag).



The structure is only 14 bars long and is broken into three 4 bar phrases plus an aside of two bars that represent the latter idea. The sforzandi on the first beat of each bar give an effect of the brass choir accompanied by the string tremolo. The two bar interjection is a typical hunting horn motif, which, as used here in rising sequence and echoing the pattern, suspends the progression of the main idea in a moment of pure creative brilliance. This variation and the later reference to the Sixth Symphony seem to give weight to the observation made in the earlier extract from Silcher's letter asking Schumann whether he thought Beethoven was influenced by Ossian as all the composer's works sounded Ossianic to him.

These first seven variations are the ones that Schumann referred to as a 'fair copy' and must be seen as the most complete. In most cases dynamic markings, articulation and phrasing are carefully stipulated and only where required are the tempo markings added. The following variations were left in varying states of completion and represent two earlier workings. The first four, which Robert Münster prefixes as 'A' in the G Henle Verlag edition, date from the year 1831 and were not included in the revision of 1834.

Variation A6, labelled 'Passionato', points towards the mature Schumann piano style, characterised by chords arranged in syncopated groups across the accepted compound dispensation. The overall impression is one of inner restlessness, although the composer's request for pianissimo precludes any danger of bombast in the sforzandi.

Variation A7 labelled 'Idee aus Beethoven' is taken directly from the second violin accompaniment figure of the slow movement of the *Sixth Symphony* (*Pastoral*). The changing semiquaver figure is placed over long-held pedal notes. Var. A10 is once again a harp-like figure over the triadic notes of the horn bass. Schumann has indicated that the inner motifs should be brought out—although it is difficult given the dense texture of the writing. The 'Legato teneramente' (A11) forms the last of the second revision and was not completed: but the last six bars are sketched in and it is obvious that the figuration should follow the harmonic mould strictly.

The variations that form the B group come from Schumann's earliest work on this project. B4 is a lilting musette type variation of a kind that is often found in Bach and Beethoven. B5 was the only piece in this set of variations that Schumann published under the title 'Leides Anhung' from *Albumblätter*, Op. 124. It has the typical naiveté of the *Album for the Young* and could easily have been part of that set. B7 follows the Beethoven melody closely in the alto range with a calm triplet accompaniment surrounding it. Var. B3 returns to the form of the first variation of three eight bar phrases, but now the melody is tripled in the form of harp harmonics with a Baroque style broken chord accompaniment.

Example 4.9. Schumann *Exercices* Var. B3 (G Henle Verlag).



The rising octave motif had connotations of flight for Schumann and was used in lieder like *Flügel, flügel*, Op. 37 (Sams: 14). The rising motif over three octaves could denote elements of flight of a spiritual nature.

The Beethoven variations have not received much critical attention and were only published in 1976 (Münster; G Henle Verlag), but they do give an idea of how Schumann improvised at the piano, the depth of his studies of Beethoven

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and musical associations made with particular themes. The harmonic progression is very distinctive and in its repetition can be tiresome; however, the ideas were used in the *Etudes Symphonique* which show a far greater degree of personal freedom and a leaning toward making the variation closer to the character piece (Walker: 112). The title could be a transliteration of the Greek word for exercises, but one wonders whether the term *Exercices* applied to the instrumental form of study or were personal exercises in compositional technique.

The interest in the same theme is witnessed again in the final movement of the *Phantasie* in C major, Op. 17, where the Ossianic associations become clearer. The pedal notes used in the opening of the variations become more pronounced in the *Phantasie*, where they assume the character of a drone bass which is a strong characteristic of Scottish folk music. These posthumous variations remain an enigmatic work that shows the beginning of a life-long obsession with the Seventh Symphony.

Phantasie in C major, Op. 17

Background

Robert Schumann's *Phantasie in C major*, Op. 17 for piano is a huge narrative work of epic proportions and may represent the first definite example of Schumann adopting a bardic stance in that he was singing the praises of Beethoven. The history of the *Phantasie* is a long one and seems clouded in a number of uncertainties, as there are some conflicting views in certain editions of the work and in the research of diary entries and letters. In 1828, the year after Beethoven's death, it was decided to raise money for a monument to be built in Bonn honouring the great pioneer of the romantic period. Work, however, did not begin in earnest until December 1835, when a committee issued a notice to several newspapers calling for public donations (Marston: 4). Schumann immediately aligned himself with this idea and published a 4-part article in the *Neue Zeitschrift* für Musik in June 1836. In a diary entry on 9 September 1836 he makes mention of a Sonata for Beethoven as an idea for fundraising. However, according to the Schirmer edition of the *Phantasie*, he had been invited by Franz Liszt to contribute a movement to what would be a multi-movement work (with each movement being written by a different composer), which was to be sold to raise funds for the monument. Liszt's project seems to have foundered and sometime in late 1836 Schumann added two movements to the one he had already written. The title page of the autograph reads *Ruines. Fantasie pour le Pianoforte dedieé a* [name obliterated] *par Robert Schumann.* Op 16a (Marston:

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6). The copy that he sent to the publishers had the title scratched out in crayon and the new title *Ruinen, Trophæen, Palmen. Grosse Sonata für das Pianoforte für Beethovens Monument von Florestan u. Eusebius,* Op. 12 was inserted. From this it seems clear that the original was conceived as a one-movement fantasy for piano entitled *Ruines*. Daverio draws attention to the fact that for Schumann and his contemporaries a ruin was a "…. remnant of a bygone classical era and hence an object of veneration. Its complement was the 'monument' (another term closely associated with the *Phantasie*), defined by Schumann himself as a 'ruin pointing forward' (*NZfM* 4: 1836: 212). Hence the 'ruins' encoded in the first movement of the *Phantasie*, and perhaps the work as a whole, hold out a strong measure of hope for the future (Daverio 1997: 152). The Romantic predilection for ruins is palpably Ossianic, as it signifies the dead living on through memory among the living, and Schumann's transference of it into music is one of the clearest markers of his own assimilation of nineteenth-century Ossianic culture.

Origin of terms and quotations

The *Phantasie* was submitted in December 1836 to Friederich Kistner for publication, together with elaborate details pertaining to the cover and title page, but was declined. In January the following year he submitted the work to Tobias Haslinger and it was again refused. In May 1837 Breitkopf & Hartel accepted it together with several other compositions. A number of letters were exchanged and the titles of the last two movements were changed to *Siegesbogen* and *Sternbild* (*Triumphal Arch* and *Constellation*). Leon Botstein, in his article 'History, Rhetoric, and the Self: Robert Schumann and Music Making in German-Speaking Europe 1800-1860', gives the contemporary meaning of the symbolism as: Ruin-a surviving remnant of greatness as realised in architecture, as in Rome; Trophy-the symbol of a great deed in the past, a symbol that partook of a classical as well as a pagan or mythological character; Palms-nature's expression of warmth and the sun—the 'other place' evocative for Germans of both historical Italy and the fantastic, utopian and natural New World (Todd 1994: 34). The overall title of the work also changed several times. In various letters it is referred to as *Sonata für Beethoven*, *Dichtungen für Pianoforte*, *Phantasien für Pianoforte* and most revealingly *Fata Morgana* (Daverio 1997: 153). The latter makes reference to Morgan le Fee, the half-sister of King Arthur, a sorceress who conjured up fantastic visions that dissolved on closer inspection, in order to delay the invading armies (Marston: 46-7). Daverio states that Morgana has her origins in Sicilian legend and Marston quotes the usage of the

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figure in German literature linking her to a mirage. The association of ideas and origin of this title are inevitably open to interpretation, but its consideration as a title is interesting. The opus number also went through a number of changes and Breitkopf finally published the work in 1839 as *Phantasie*, Op. 17, with the accompanying Friederich Schlegel motto:

Durch alle Töne tönet	Through all the notes
Im bunten Erdentraum	In earth's many-coloured dream
Ein leiser Ton gezogen	There sounds one soft long-drawn note
Für den, der heimlich lauschet,	For one who listens in secret
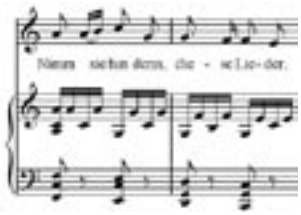
Die Gebüsche
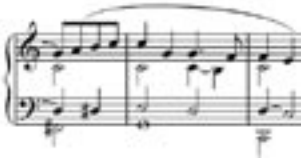
Schumann makes reference to the summer of 1836, when he and Clara endured an enforced separation, as being the primary inspiration for this passionate, anguished work (Marston: 5). The poetry, the final quatrain from a Friederich Schlegel poem, Die Gebüsche, refers to the belief in subliminal communication between two kindred spirits through the medium of music-a fundamental idea in the poems of Ossian and also an idea that had further been explored by the Jena poets and Jean Paul: '. . . music is the echo from a transcendent harmonious world; it is the sigh of the angel within us. When the world is silent . . . and when our mute hearts lie lonely behind the ribcage of our chest, then it is only through music that men call to each other in their dungeons, and unite their distant sighs in their wilderness' (Brown: 13).

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There are two musical quotations in the work, from Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* and Schubert's *An die Musik*, that also infer the use of music as a medium for rising above one's earthly constraints. The phrase in Ecample 4.10a from Beethoven's song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* has been altered harmonically and rhythmically to become Example 4.10b.

Example 4.10. (a) Beethoven: *An die ferne Geliebte;* (b) Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17 (Marston: 29).
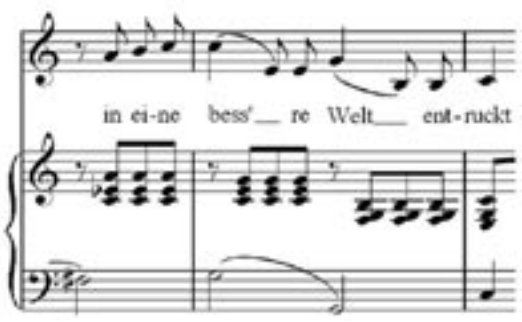




The text of the Beethoven example invokes the distant beloved and suggests that the singing of the songs they used to sing brought the lovers spiritually closer.

Nicholas Marston points out the similarity between this Schumann phrase and the final bars of Schubert's *An die Musik*.

Example 4.11. Schubert *An die Musik* (Marston: 30).



The text of Schober's poem:

Du holde Kunst,	O blessed art,
In wieviel grauen Stunden,	how often in dark hours
Hast du mein Herz,	You have kindled warm love
zu warmer Lieb entzünden	in my heart
Wo mich des Lebens	When I am trapped
Wilder kreis umstrickt	in life's frenzied round
Hat mich in eine	You have transported me
bess're Welt entrückt	to a better world

Both texts deal with music's transcendental powers, in the case of the Beethoven setting, music has the power to lessen the distance between two lovers and in Schubert's *An die Musik*, music enables one to transcend the temporal life. There are many parallel passages in Ossian, such as the song of the separated lovers, *Shilric and Vinvela*, and the *Song of Selma*, so frequently used by Goethe.

Narrative and intertextual elements of the *Phantasie*, Op. 17

The accompaniment figuration of the opening of the C major *Phantasie* suggests the harp, the preferred instrument of accompaniment of classic epic poetry, and uses a declamatory style melody above. The tonality is obscured until the recapitulation where one finally becomes aware of the major mode. The beginning has long periods of dominant harmony, which modulate to related keys, but never establishes the tonic of C major. The use of an ambiguous tonal centre occurs frequently around this time and suggests connotations of the misty, diffused light qualities of Ossian's poems. The relative minor is not viewed as a different key, but merely an alternative mode with an alternative tonic. It may easily represent the Ossianic idea of the 'other' world being part of this world. This diffused light is also depicted by many painters of the time.

The form of the movement has been the subject of much conflicting debate with musicologists unable to reach consensus. Most agree that its structure is determined by the sonata principal. However they do not concur on the struc-

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tural positioning of 'Im Legendenton'. Yonty Solomon (Walker: 53) and Joan Chissell (Chissell: 87) both see this as part of the development. John Daverio places it as an episode in the middle of the recapitulation, with the development being only 18 bars (Daverio 1987: 158). Anthony Newcomb disagrees, but does not offer any concrete counter-argument except to say that the scale of the work demands a larger development section (Newcomb: 170). I am of a similar persuasion to Nicholas Marston that the movement does not fall into any accepted form and that while there are elements of sonata form, the idea of generating new hybrid forms is in keeping with the spirit of 'Fantasie'. It could also be in keeping with the literary style of Jean Paul who consciously broke the expectations of sequence in order to create specific effects. (This has been a literary technique used from Lawrence Sterne in *Tristram Shandy* to John Fowles in *The Magus.*) The proairetic code of the listener is constantly being challenged and thereby establishes itself through default rather than by blindly following an expected paradigm. There is a clear intention of an exposition (with a highly chromatic transition), a development (which sounds like an episode), a recapitulation and a coda with some startling revelations. Each of these sections offers its own surprises that give the impression of extemporisation to this well constructed sonata form movement. In the Ossianic poems the episodes occasionally offer a deeper understanding of the text, but can just as easily confuse the reader as it did Lord Kames (see page 10). Many earlier musicologists like Donald Francis Tovey and Stewart Macpherson have seen this same technique as a weakness in Schumann's *Humoreske,* Op. 20 and the *Noveletten*, Op. 21 (Hutcheson: 195).

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The most important point is to delineate between the three main sections of this movement. The exposition (bar 1-128) consists of three subject groups: the first (bars 1-33) never establishes the tonic of C major and is characterised by long pedal notes and a tonal shift to E♭ major in bar 29. A short transition in C minor (bar 33-41) leads into the second subject group of a far more introspective nature D minor (41-81). The third subject group in D major (bar 82-128) consists of two themes of a more active nature, both highly chromatic and both referring back to the first subject at the end of each theme, giving the effect of a rondo element.

The most famous section of the C major *Phantasie*, is the middle section of the first movement, *Im Legendenton* (in the style of a legend). John Daverio has argued this section according to Friederich Schlegel's theories on the 'Arabesque' (Daverio 1987) in literature and does not see this as part of the development. Although clearly based on the tenor melody of bars 33-41, the transition, it sounds like a totally new section. This analysis is suggestive of the

diversions or episodes that occur in the Ossianic poems. This section was originally labelled 'Romanze'[7] that encourages the theory of Marston, Daverio and others that it is like a miniature placed in the middle of a sonata movement. It is unknown whether the term 'Legend' was Schumann's or not, but it obviously had his approval. The use of the this term also invokes connotations of some ancient text and quite possibly *The Poems of Ossian*. The melodic structure of the 'legend' frequently conjures up horns, the instrument associated with battles and hunting scenes in the poems and always associated with military heroes. The mood of the entire section is one of stoical acceptance of fate, very much the 'bardic' position. Although the section begins in G minor, it quickly jumps to C minor, giving the feel of a sub-dominant modulation creating a darker, richer colour than a dominant modulation. Mendelssohn and Niels Gade created similar effects in the *Fingal's Cave* Overture and *Ossianic* Overture.
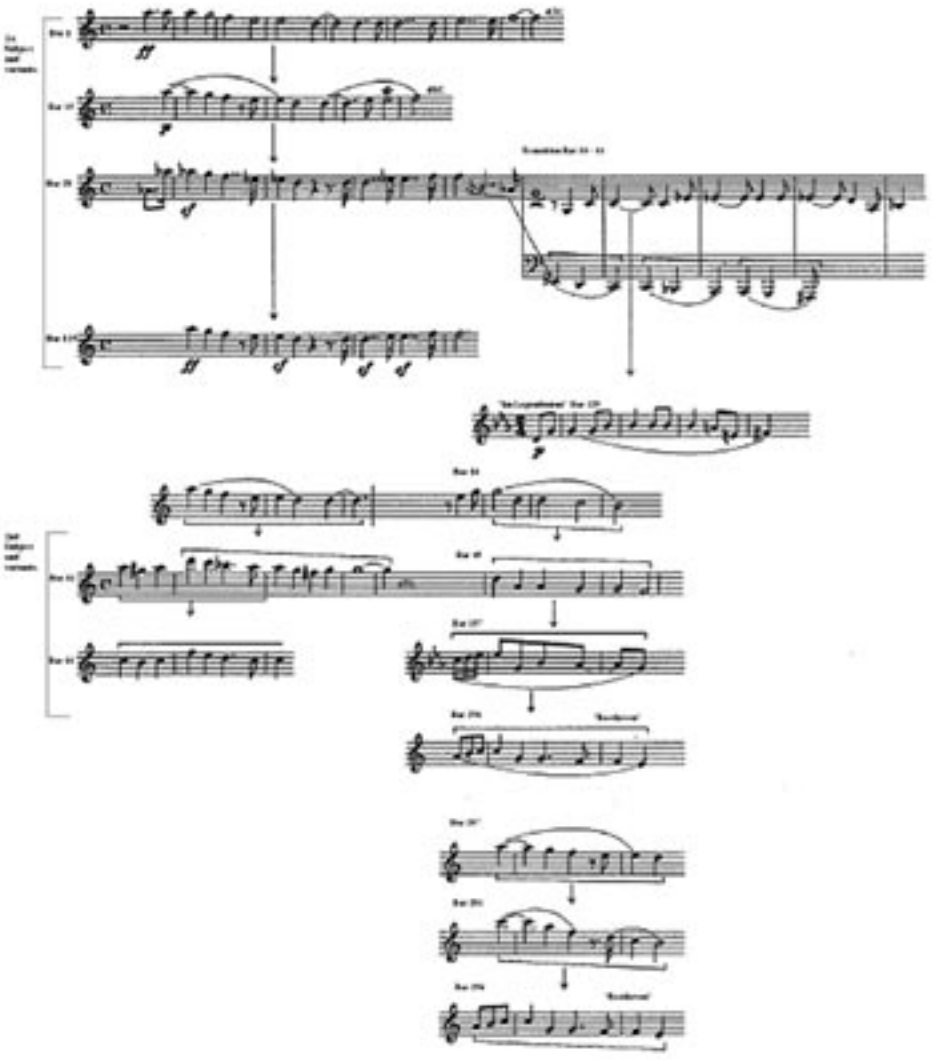
Exposition			
Bar 1 - 33	1st Subject	C major	
Bar 33 - 41	Transition		
Bar 41 - 81	2nd Subject	D minor	
Bar 82 - 128	3rd Subject	D major	Starts in D major modulating immediately to G minor and then upwards in fourths.
Development			
Bar 129 - 156			Theme and variations taken from the transition (bars 33 - 41).
Bar 156 - 164			
Bar 165 - 173			Variant of 2nd subject (bars 53 – 60).
Bar 173 - 181			Variant of transition theme (bars 33 - 41).
Bar 181 - 194			Theme taken from 2nd Subject group (bars 41 - 47).
Bar 195 - 204			Uses main rhythmic idea from 3rd subject (bar 85 – 86).
Bar 204 - 224			Variant of transition theme (bars 33 - 41).
Recapitulation			
Bar 224 - 229	1st Subject	F minor	Truncated to a mere four bars.
Bar 229 - 233	Transition		
Bar 233 - 273	2nd Subject	C major	
Bar 274 - 294	3rd Subject	C major	Truncated to 20 bars omitting the second section.
Coda			
Bar 295 - 309		C major	Clearly reveals the source as being the Beethoven theme from *An die ferne Geliebte*.

[7] A term applied to long lyric poems associated with historical or legendary topics and characterised by short uniform 4-line stanzas (Harvard Dictionary: 736).

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Charles Rosen draws attention to how the introspective second subject themes are derived from the Beethoven quote from An die ferne Geliebte that only reveal their source in the closing bars of the coda. He also demonstrates the closeness of these themes to the very opening of the movement showing a binding unity within the diverse ideas of the work that were becoming a hallmark of his compositional technique. Schumann's admission to Clara that the *Phantasie* was 'one long lament' for her may have inspired Sams and Yonty Solomon to label many of these themes 'Clara' themes. But as seen in the previous chapter in the case of *Carnaval, Op. 9*, there is often a personal as well as a general connotation to Schumann's works. It may also have been on behalf of the German nation one long lament for Beethoven. I have included a table on the following page showing the origin and development of the themes relating to the Beethoven quote from *An die ferne Geliebte* used in the coda

Example 4.12. Derivation and evolution of the theme from Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* in the first movement of Schumann's *Phantasie* in C major, Op. 17 (Adapted from Daverio 1987: 157).



It is of interest that only the third subject group is not directly derived from Beethoven, which brings into question exactly what section is the 'episode' if there is really an episode in this movement. The second movement of the *Phantasie* is a march and is entitled 'Siegesbogen' (Triumphal Arch) and given the directions 'Massig: Durchaus energisch'. The key is the traditionally triumphant E♭ major of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 *(Emperor)* and the Symphony No. 3 (*Eroica*). Of the entire work, this was Clara's favourite movement. She wrote to Schumann from Paris on receiving her copy in 1839:

> 'The march is enchanting, and bars 8-16 on page 15 make me quite beside myself; just tell me what you were thinking of in them? I have never had such a feeling, I heard a full orchestra, I can't tell you how I felt.' (Marston: 84).

She does go on to tell Schumann what her imagined programme for the movement was however:

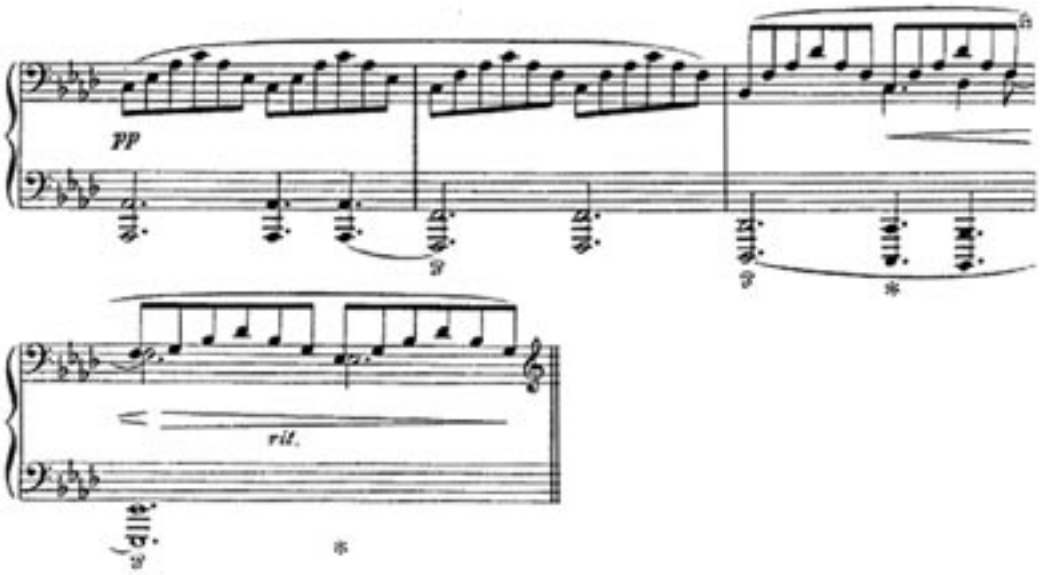
> 'The march strikes me as a victory march for the warriors returning from battle, and in the A flat section I think of the young girls from the village, all dressed in white, each with a garland of flowers in her hand crowning the warriors kneeling before them'.

This is a typically nineteenth-century visualisation of a bygone era of romanticised chivalry and glorification of battle for a just cause and may give an indication of narrative concept for the movement and his communication with Clara on the subject.

The form, once again, cannot be forced into any given mould. Joan Chissell analyses *Siegesbogen* as sonata-rondo form, Wasielewski as a rondo and Marston as a ternary form. There are elements of all three schemata to be found, but the traditional key structure associated with each leaves all open to debate. Schumann seems determined to create his own paths on his fantastic journey, or 'fantasieren'.
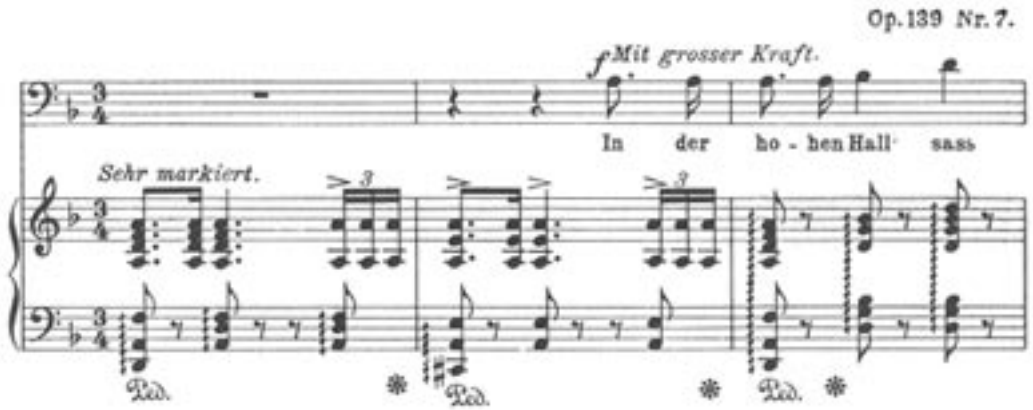
The third and final movement of the work breaks the mould again and it finishes with a quiet and forlorn reverie in place of the usual triumphant allegro. The overall structure is a bipartite one with arpeggiated introduction and coda. Most see this movement as a song form and it may well be a lament, given its elegiac mood and the descending bass pattern of the opening. By Schumann's own admission there is a conscious reference to the 'Allegretto' from the Seventh Symphony in the left-hand octaves of the opening bars. The passage resonates with bass brass allusions of horns and trombones, and coupled with the harp-like arpeggios in the right-hand, suggest a strong Ossianic link.

Example 4.13. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17 (Peters Edition).



This can also be evidence of association of Ossianic ideas with this particular movement of Beethoven when compared to his 'Ballade', *Op. 139/7* from the Düsseldorf period. Once again in the Ballade we see the repeated melody notes in the harp introduction that appeared in both the Beethoven 'Allegretto' and the Schubert *Death and the Maiden* 'String Quartet'. What were 12 notes are now extended to 13 (could this be co-incidental on Schumann's part considering the subject matter?). The plagal harmonic progression, pentatonic melodic line and harp accompaniment compels the listener to make associations with the Beethoven theme and bardic poetry. When one examines Schumann's references to Beethoven's Seventh Symphony coupled with Berlioz's ideas on the pagan background of the work and Wagner's celebration of its Dionysian essence it certainly seems clear that, at least in its reception history, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony has acquired a sphere of meaning associating it to pre-Christian bacchanalian aesthetics.

Example 4.14. Schumann *Ballade* (Peters Edition).



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The symmetry of the rhythmic structure of the phrases in 'Siegesbogen' does seem to suggest a dignified and heroic death march and serves as an apt preamble to a deeply felt lament that, despite two defiant outbursts that hark back to the second movement, maintain a hushed, veiled quality throughout. The indicated pedalling, parallel writing and intentional blurring of harmonies is a precursor of impressionism and the work ends with an arpeggiated figuration that was similar to the one used in the introduction.

An Alternative Interpretation

The above information is gleaned from existing sources and accepted discussions surrounding the *Phantasie*. At this point I would like to propose my own interpretation, that drawing on Ossianic 'traces' in Schumann's music, and also and also his compositional method of 'fantasieren'—as already mentioned in connection with *Flegeljahre*—I would like to suggest this as my own 'fantasieren' on the Schumann/Ossian that this research report postulates.

If Clara's description of the second movement as the triumphal return of the heroes from battle is a response to something Robert had already verbalised, then the first movement could be the actual battle. Battles, in Ossian, normally result in ruins, the obsession of the bard, and could have given rise to the title of the movement. If we look at the first book of Fingal, which Schumann translated, we find a similar narrative.

The first book of Fingal describes a battle on Lena's Heath between the armies of Fingal and the invading army of Swaran. The poem begins with Cuchullin, one of Fingal's generals, sitting under a tree near a river. He is informed by his scout Moran of the impending landing of the warlord Swaran, king of Lochlin. Cuchullin swiftly convenes a meeting of the tribal generals by beating his spear on the large war shield hanging from the tree—the description of the sound reverberating through the rocks and mountains gives an almost cinematic beginning to the saga.

> He went and struck the bossy shield. The hills and their rocks replied: The sound spread along the wood: deer start by the lake of roes. Curach leapt from the surrounding rock and Connal of the bloody spear. Crugal's breast of snow beats high. The son of Favi leaves the dark-brown hind. It is the shield of war said Ronnar, the spear of Cuchullin, said Lugar.—Son of the Sea, put on thy arms! Calmar lift thy sounding steel! Puno! horrid hero, rise: Cairbar from thy red tree of Cromla. Bend thy white knee, O Eth; and descend from the streams of Lena.—Ca-olt stretch thy white side as thou movest along the whistling heath of Mora: thy side that is white as the foam of the troubled sea, when the dark winds pour it on the murmuring rocks of Cuthon.

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The army is assembled and the battle begins. By nightfall there is no decisive outcome and Cuchullin holds a feast to which he invites Swaran, but Swaran declines. This could perhaps indicate a different attitude to war that is closer to today's sport matches. The narrative is interrupted by two episodes of which the first is by far the more substantial. This tells the story of Morna and Duchomar. Morna is approached in her cave dwelling by Duchomar, a man she loathes. He informs her that he has killed her husband, Cathbat, while on a hunting expedition and has come to claim her as his own. He gives her the bloody sword, which Morna plunges into his chest. With his dying breaths he asks her to remove the cold steel and stabs her in the side as she complies. The two die side by side.

> Morna, fairest among women, lovely daughter of Cormac-Cairbar. Why in the circle of stones; in the cave of the rock alone? The stream murmurs hoarsely. The old trees groan as in the wind. The lake is troubled before thee, and dark are the clouds of the sky. But thou art like snow on the heath, and thy hair like the mist of Cromla; when it curls on the rocks, and shines to the beam from the west. —Thy breasts are like two smooth rocks seen from Branno of the streams. Thy arms like two white pillars of the hall of mighty Fingal.
>
> From whence, the white-armed maid replied, from whence, Duchomar the most gloomy of men? Dark are thy brows and terrible. Red are thy rolling eyes. Does Swaran appear on the rolling sea? What of the foe Duchomar?
>
> From the hill I return, O Morna, from the hill of the dark-brown hinds. Three have I slain with my bended yew. Three with my long bounding dogs of the chace.—Lovely daughter of Cormac, I love thee as my soul. —I have slain one stately deer for thee; —High was his branchy head; and fleet his feet of the wind.
>
> Duchomar, calm the maid replied, I love thee not, thou gloomy man. —Hard is thy heart of rock, and dark thy terrible brow. But Cathbat, thou son of Torman, thou art the love of Morna. Thou art like a sunbeam on the hill in the day of the gloomy storm. Sawsest thou the son of Torman, lovely on the hill of his hinds? Here the daughter of Cormac waits for the coming of Cathbat.
>
> And long shall Morna wait, Duchomar said, his blood is on my sword. Cromla I shall raise his tomb, daughter of Cormac-cairbar; but fix your love on Duchomar, his arm is strong as the storm.—
>
> And is the son of Torman fallen? Said the maid of the tearful eye. Is he fallen on his echoing heath, the youth with the breast of snow? He that was first in the chace of the hill, the foe of the strangers of the ocean.—Duchomar, thou art dark indeed and cruel is thy arm to Morna. But give me that sword, my foe; I love the blood of Cathbat.
>
> He gave the sword to her tears; but she pierced his manly breast. He fell like the bank of a mountain stream; stretched out his arm and said;
>
> Daughter of Cormac-cairbar, thou hast slain Duchomar. The sword is cold in my breast; Morna I feel cold. Give me Moina the maid; Duchomar was the dream of her night. She will raise my tomb; and the hunter shall see it and praise me. But draw the steel from my breast; Morna, the steel is cold.
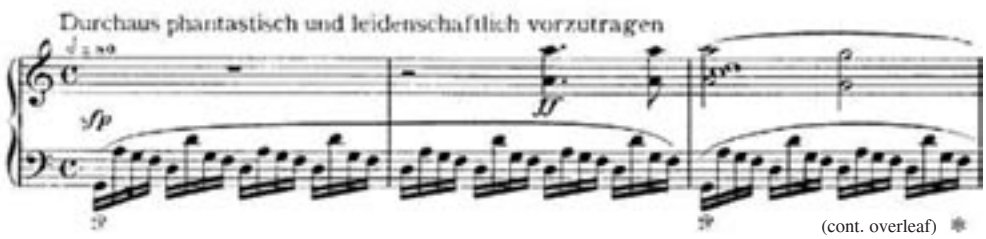
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> She cam in all her tears, she came, and drew it from his breast. He pierced her white side with steel; and spread her fair locks on the ground. Her bursting blood sounds from her side; and her white arm is stained with red. Rolling in death she lay, and Tura's cave answered to her groans.

The poem is in a question-and-answer style, with a ponderous, plodding rhythm that seems governed by fate. Both the questions and the answers can be anticipated and the outcome seems predestined by fate.
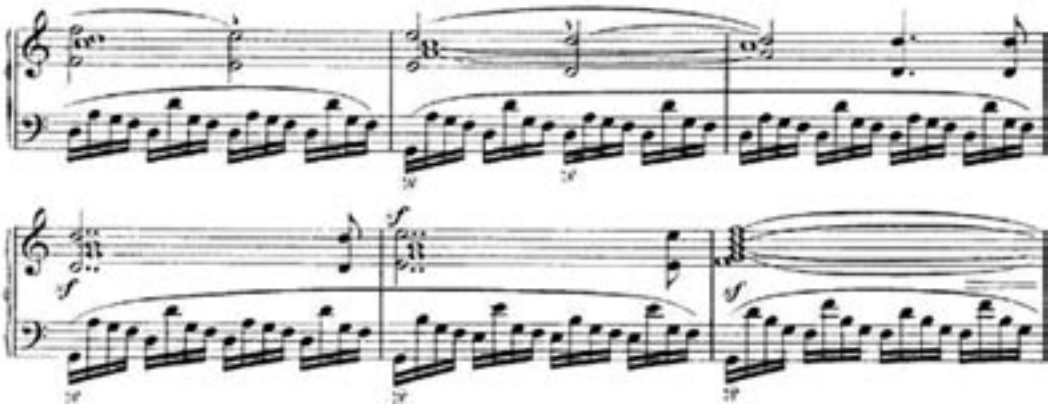
The opening of the C major *Phantasie* is unique in the piano repertoire. The 12-bar pedal point in the bass starts on the dominant and does not have the same grounded effect as that on the tonic, used at the opening of the *Exercices*. It gives the feeling of hovering above the earth letting the listener know that this is perhaps a vision. The declamatory melody in octaves, which descends step-wise from the sixth degree of the key to the second, has elements of pain, anguish and tragedy, especially starting on the sixth note (Cooke: 212). It is certainly worthy of one of Ossian's more grandiloquent epithets ('Dweller among the shields; thou that awakest the failing soul, descend from thy wall, harp of Crona, with thy voices three!' Cath-Loda: Duan Three) and informs the listener that the musical narrative to follow will be on an epic scale and of a tragic nature. In the bardic tradition of the praise-singer, the passage may be interpreted as an invocation to the power of music to recall the achievements of a great hero.The writing in bars 77-79, the 'Adagio', strongly suggests the harp, especially where the chords become arpeggiated. Visually, written on a single stave, it suggests a separation of ideas from the ensuing section, like an improvised instrumental link, giving purpose not only to the fermatae, but also the repeated 'adagio' tempo indications. The following 'Adagio' comes as another grand epithet or exclamation and ends on the diminished seventh chord on the tritone, the diabolus in musica, which as we will see in a later work, seems to create the impression that supernatural powers are afoot. Used by Weber in the 'Wolf's Glen' scene in *Der Freischütz* and also in many scenes in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* cycle, the tritone has been used in music to invoke the spirit world, in this case possibly the ancestors.

Example 4.15 Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: bar 1-9 (Peters Edition).
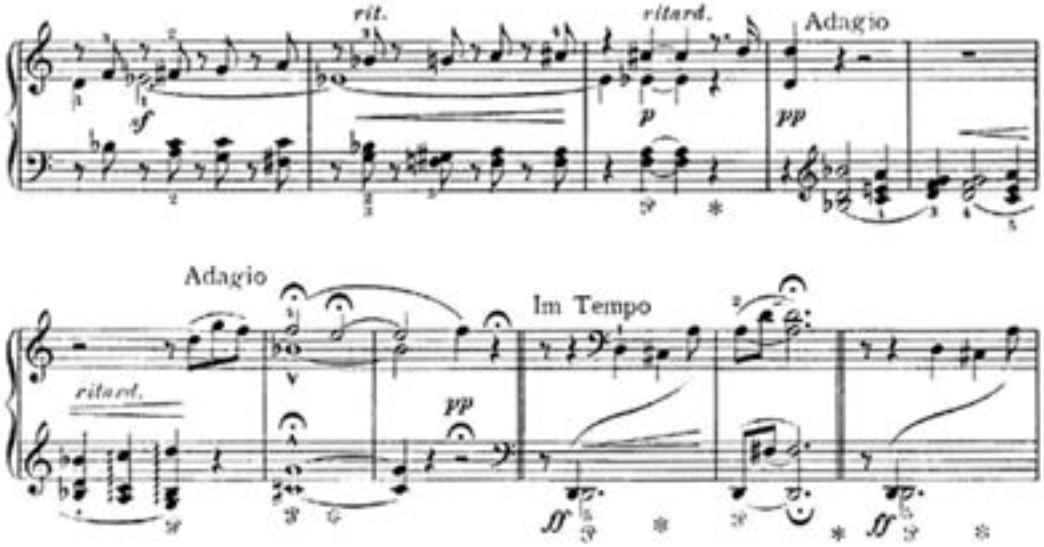


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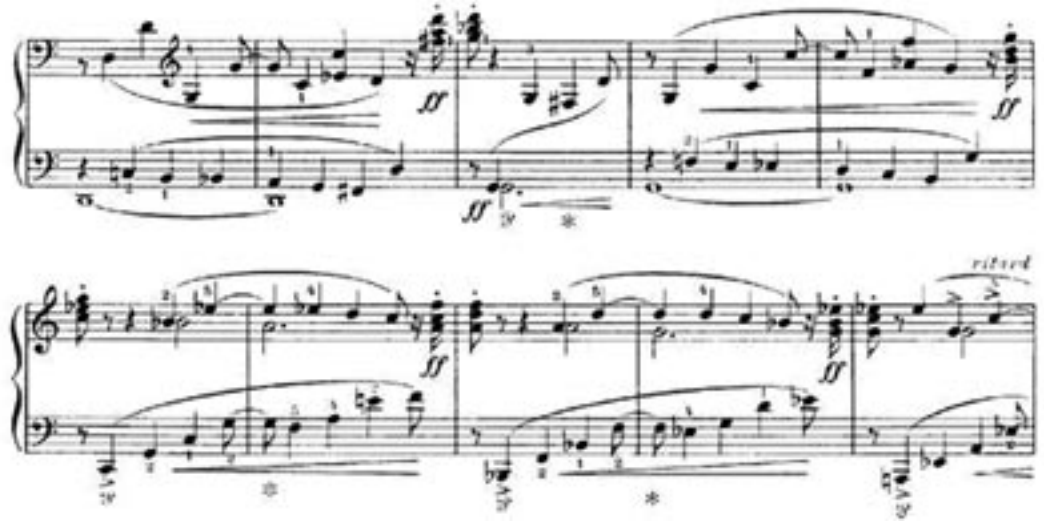
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Example 4.16. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 1st movement bars 79-84 (Peters Edition).



Example 4.17. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 1st movement bars 85-94.
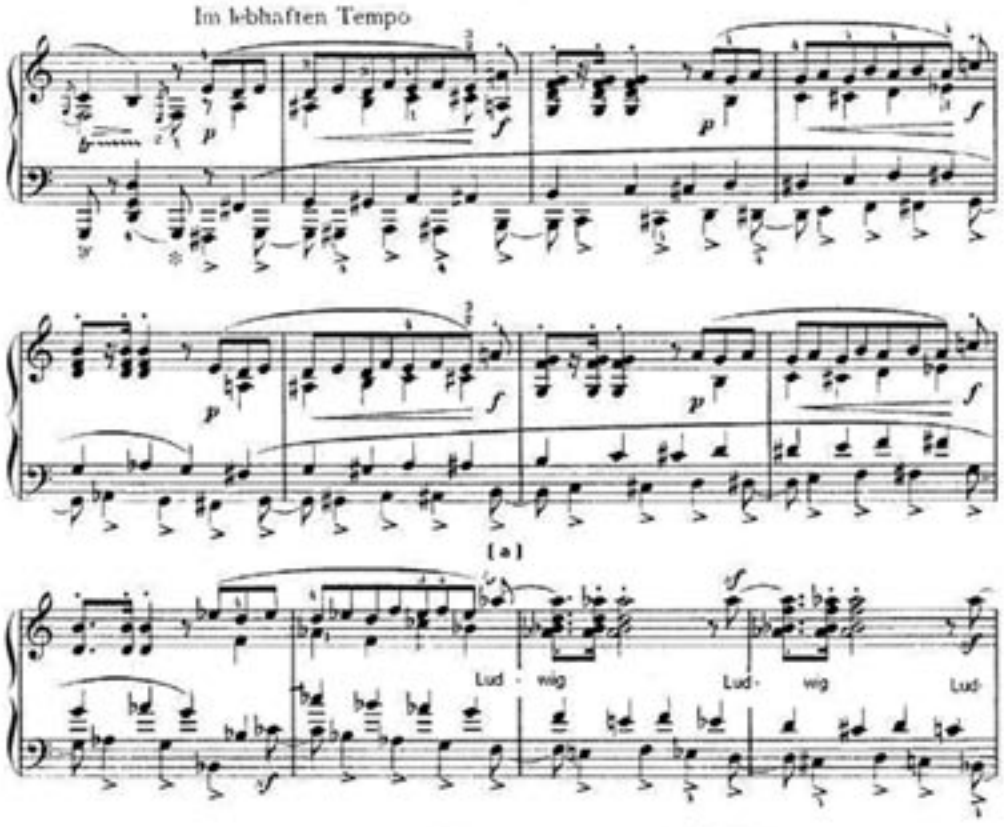


The 'Im Tempo' section, starting in the brassy key of D major, is clearly a fanfare or a call to arms and can possibly be a representation of the mighty sound of the war shield that reverberates through the mountains and woods calling the
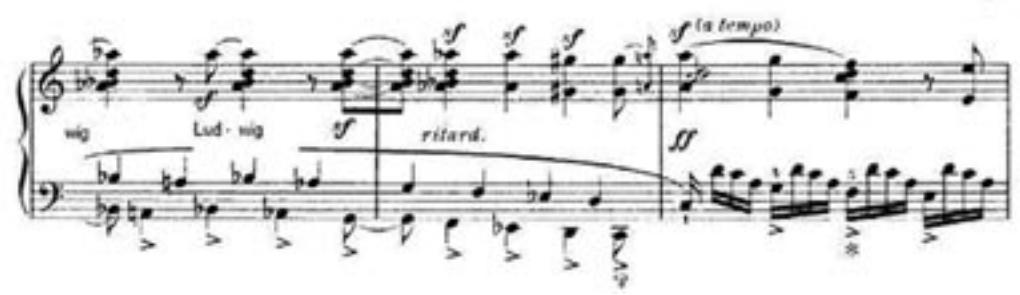
warriors to arms. The ensuing section with its descending semitonal left hand progression starting at the interval of the seventh, coupled with the highly syncopated writing convey a frenetic energy that is difficult not to associate with some form of conflict.

The 'Im Lebhaften Tempo' (Ex. 4.18) shows again the rising semitones in the syncopated, striding bass octaves interrupted by sharp, dotted-rhythm, staccato chords. Cooke's interpretation that the descending chromatic scale is similar to the descending diatonic scale, with the semitones 'increasing the element of pain with every possible chromatic tension', can be inverted for the ascending chromatic scale (Cooke: 165). The rising semitones can be seen as a desperate and determined effort against an inevitable end. I can think of little else to visualise in this section but the stabbing and thrusting of a battle scene. As each parry is counteracted, a new attack follows resulting in the long succession of sequences. Marston discusses two attempts to textualise the *Phantasie* (Marston: 114). The most recent of these was in the 1950s with a text by Menotti. In the section shown above he inserts the words 'Lud-wig' as shown, but the word 'Fin-gal' would not only work as well, but is easier to execute.

Example 4.18. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 1st movement bars 105-122 (Peters Edition).
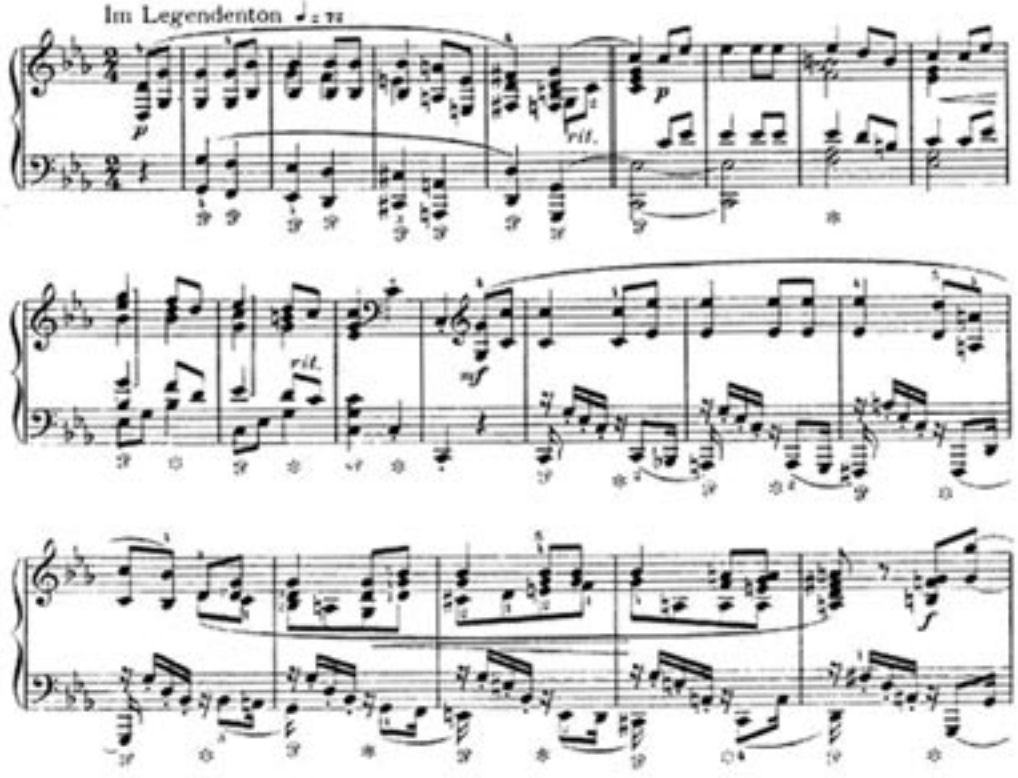


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The 'Im Legendenton' changes from quadruple time to duple time; the same time signature used by Beethoven in the slow movement of the Seventh Symphony. The effect immediately becomes more pedantic rather than the flowing fluency of expression that was displayed up to this point. There are other features that are also similar. The rhythmic structure is also based on an inversion of the ostinato pattern of the 'Allegretto' from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and the simple theme is treated to continual, figural variations (as is also the case in the same example).
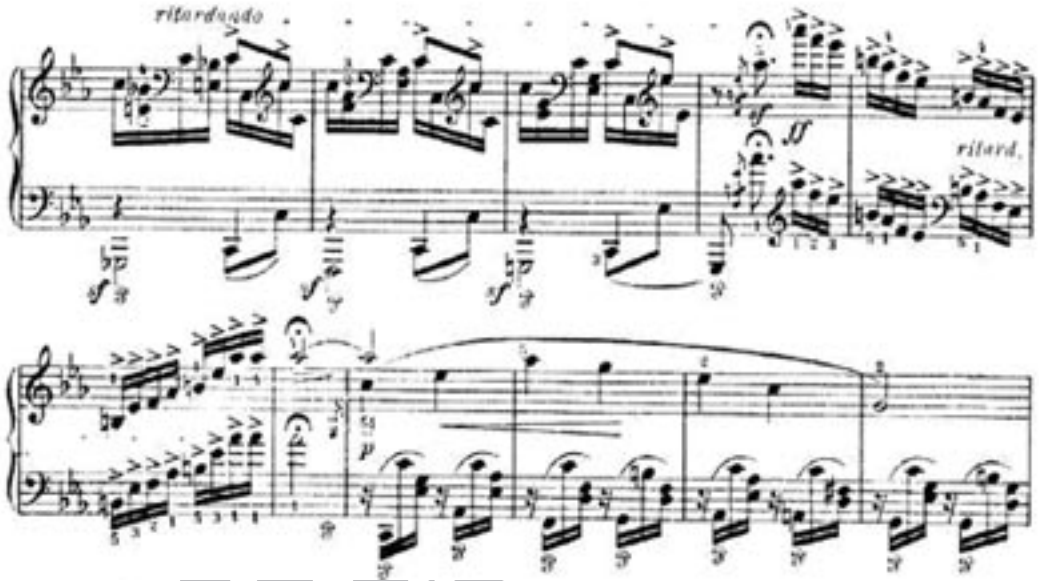
Example 4.19. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 1st movement bars 129-148.



'Im Legendenton' begins in G minor with a four-bar phrase in a low register suggesting a male voice and is answered in C minor with an eight-bar phrase at a much higher register, implying a female voice. When the following phrase reverts again to the lower register it becomes self-evident that Schumann is depicting two different characters, as Brahms did later in his *Edward* Ballade Op. 10/1.
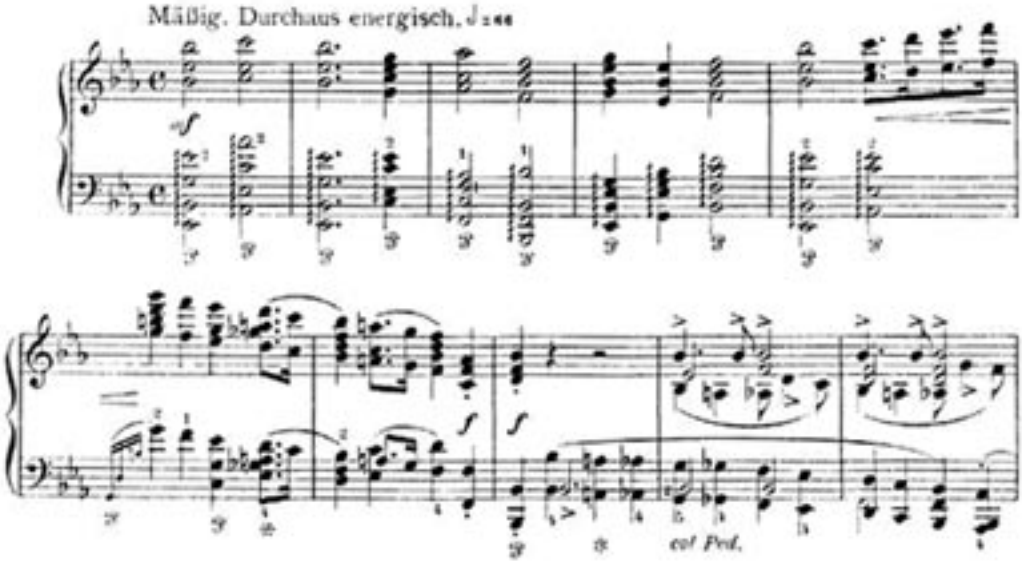
The structural plan of the section corresponds with the Morna/Duchumar episode quoted on page 48. The section ends with an arpeggio based on the diminished seventh starting and ending on the painful minor sixth degree, which is reiterated like an anguished cry at the end. This is followed by a short repeated phrase that serves as an epitaph, using notes of the pentatonic scale (that will be highlighted again later in this chapter) which, being the basis of much folk music and implying a sense of the past, is seminal to music related with Ossian.

Example 4.20. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 1st movement bars 209-219.



I will not add much to what Clara has to say about the second movement; 'Siegesbogen'. Nevertheless I would like to draw attention to the chorale-like melody of the opening and also the profuse use of contrapuntal writing.

Example 4.21. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 2nd movement bars 1-10.



In Chapter 3 I discussed Schumann's criticism of the Italian style, also his equation of counterpoint with German heritage, and also his belief that the use of the former lent depth and quality to a work. Given the solemnity and magnitude of the movement, together with the hymn-like opening, I would be inclined to think that this music could depict a thanksgiving ceremony to the gods or ancestors for a victory, given the purpose of building triumphal arches.[8]
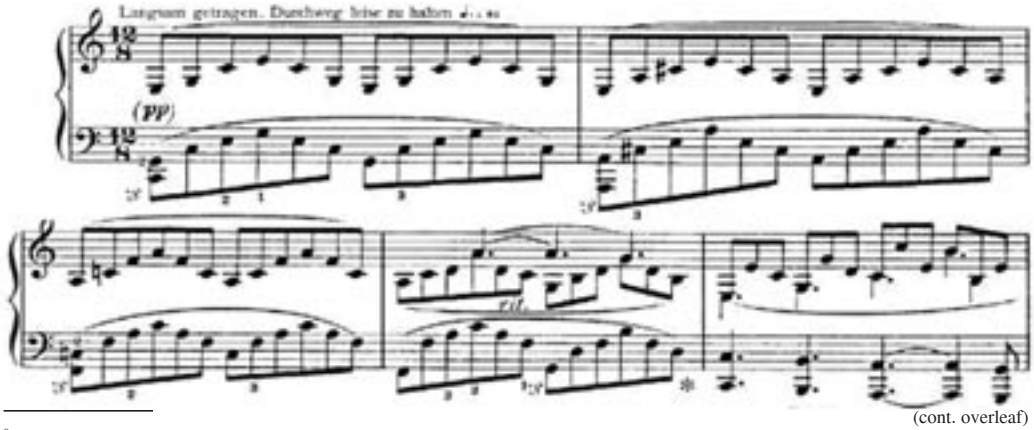
The last movement, *Sternbild*, sets up a resonance with the *Songs of Selma*:

> Star of the descending night! Fair is thy light in the west! Thou liftest thy unshorn head from the cloud; … Farewell thou silent beam!—let the light of Ossian's soul arise.
>
> And it does arise in its strength! I behold my departed friends. Their gathering is on Lora, as in the days that are past,—Fingal comes like a watery column of mist; his heroes are around.

These extracts, from different sections of 'Songs of Selma', confirm the classical Greek and Roman idea that heroes live on as stars and are in constant contact with what is happening on earth. Another extract from the end of 'The War of Inis-thona', which inspired Ingres's painting *Le songe d'Ossian* may also have been a source of inspiration. 'But sleep descends with the sound of the harp, and pleasant dreams begin to rise … The bard of other times converses now with his fathers, the chiefs of the days of old' (Gaskill: 117-118). The painting depicts Ossian asleep (or perhaps dead) over his harp. Fingal and his generals hover over him like protecting angels.[9]

The introductory four bars give way to the first subject that contains two Phrygian cadences within six bars (b.6 and b.10). There is little doubt that the arpeggiated figuration depicts the harp and the abundance of Phrygian cadences suggests the old modes and was used by Schubert in his 'Ossian' Lieder and also by Gade.

Example 4.22. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 3rd movement bars 1-11 (Peters Edition).
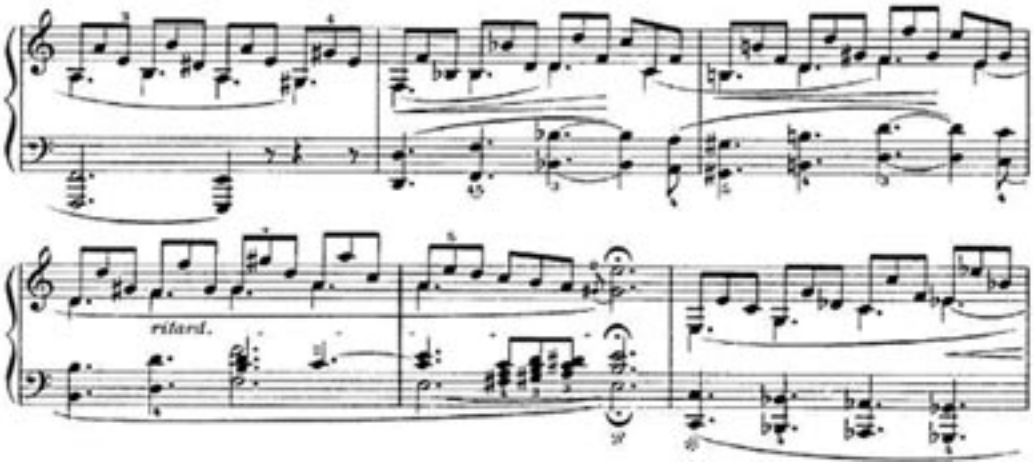


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[8] Triumphal arches, although associated with the Romans, had their origin in ancient time when the victorious army formed an arch from three spears under which the vanquished soldiers would have to bend in subjugation. (http: //www.ancientcoinmarket.com/mt/mtarticle2/1.html)
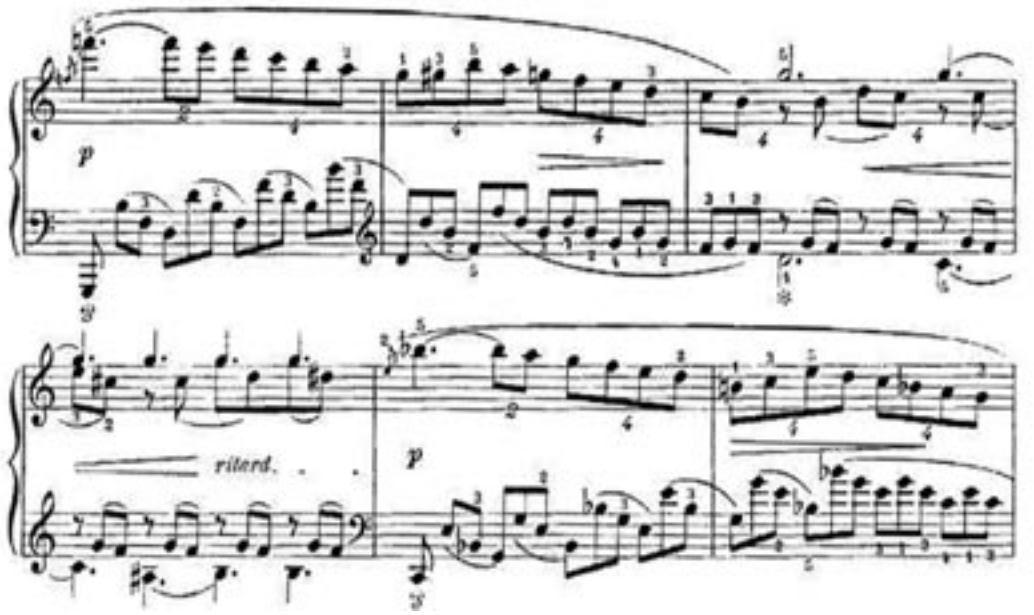
[9] This painting is the cover illustration of the Gaskill edition of *The Poems of Ossian*.

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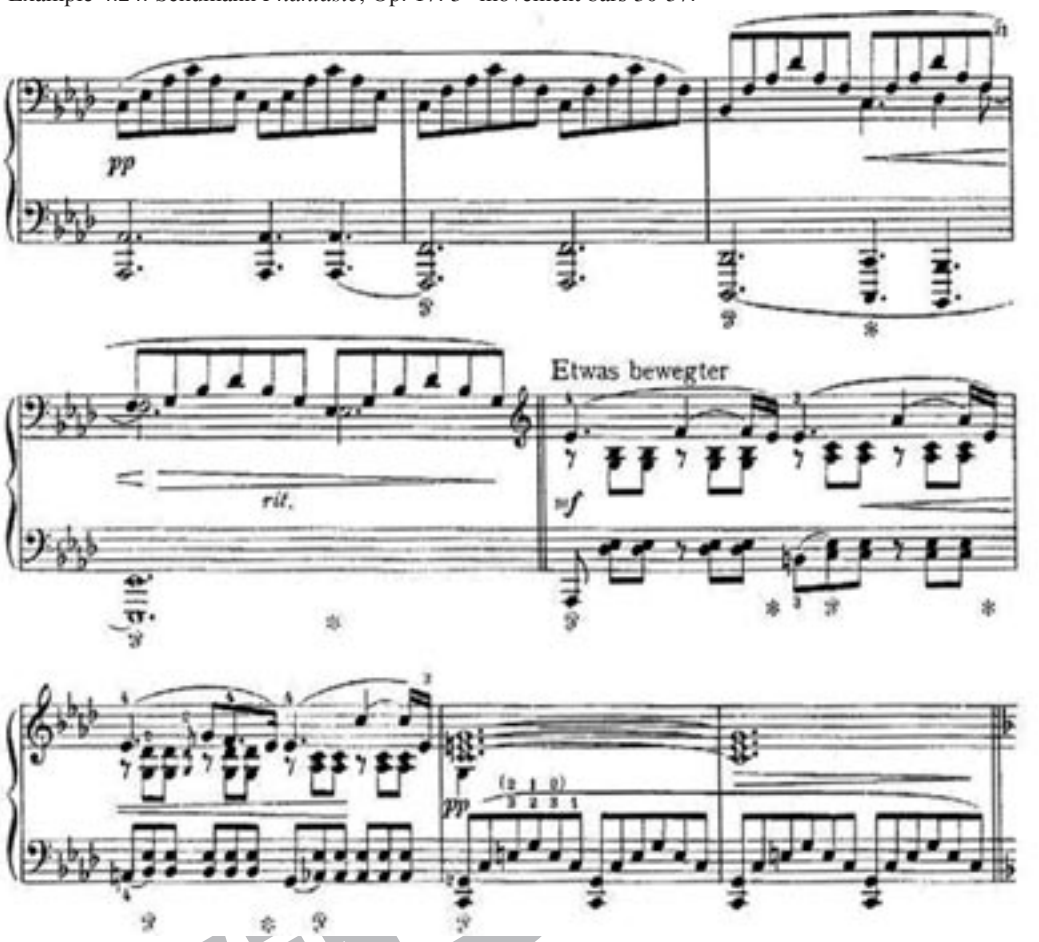


The following section acts as a transition using the extreme registers of the piano. The first four-bar phrase is based on the dominant seventh chord, but the subsequent sequential treatment of the same phrase (and the two corresponding phrases in the recapitulation) are based on the diminished chord—a chord of an extremely ambiguous and indefinable nature, due to the fact that any of its notes can be interpreted as a leading note. It does not seem absurd to me that, given the requested pedalling, Schumann was not exploring the real but the spiritual world here. The whole section is impressionistic in harmonic language and texture and evokes the 'watery column' of mist described in *Songs of Selma*.

Example 4.23. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 3rd movement bars 15-20 (Peters Edition).
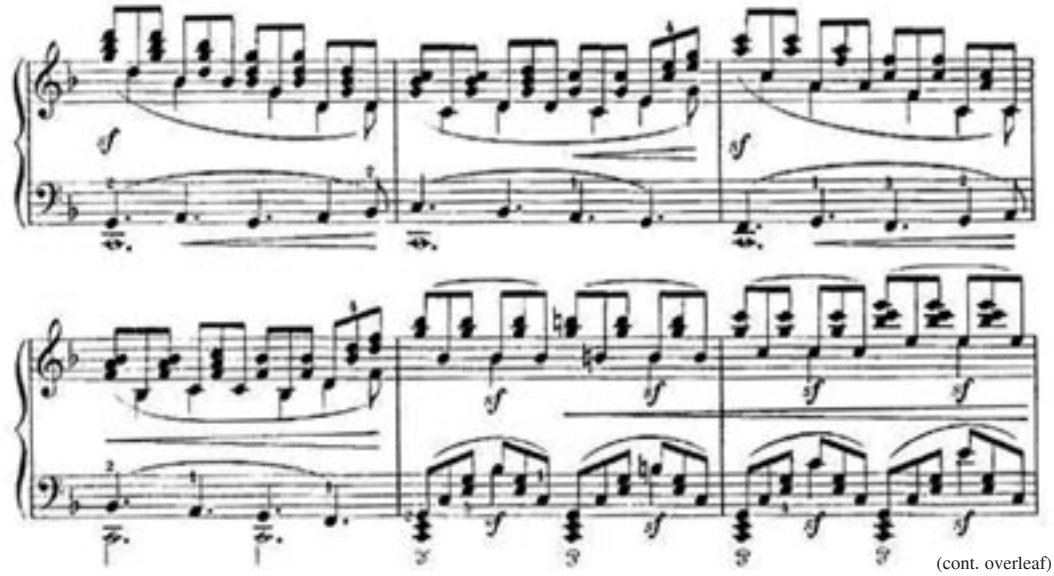


The following section includes the quotation from the 'Allegretto' from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and alternates between this and a pentatonic melody that makes liberal use of third-relationship modulations, suggesting the Phrygian cadence.

Example 4.24. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 3rd movement bars 30-37.
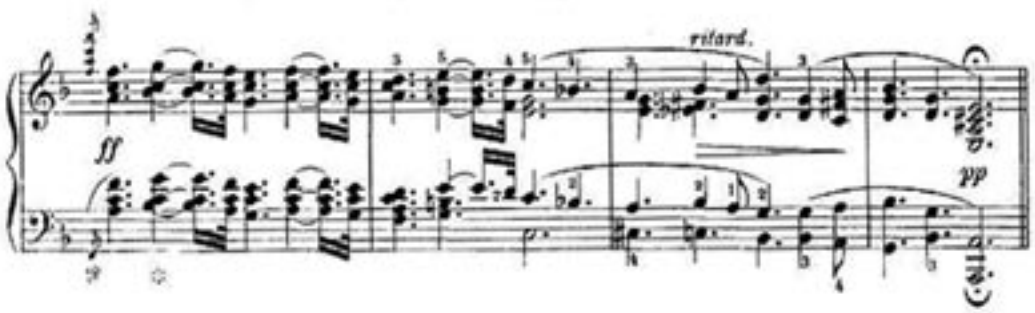


After modulating through many keys and a lot of contrapuntal interplay between the melody and bass, an eight-bar pedal point leads into a fanfare that seems totally out of keeping with the quiet nature of the movement. This also dissolves into a Phrygian cadence after a mere four bars.

Example 4.25. Schumann *Phantasie*, Op. 17: 3rd movement bars 65-71.



(cont. overleaf)



Most of the ideas are then repeated with a different tonal structure: the arpeggiated introduction is extended into a lengthy coda, which makes emphatic use of tonic pedal points.

The whole narrative strategy of the movement is based on different sections with contrasting textures, harmonic metres and dynamics. The opening bars of the introduction are arpeggiated are and the harmonic rhythm is slow lending an atmosphere of quiet and meditation. The ensuing section, based on broken chords, is triadic and answered by a contrasting section in step-wise motion with longer phrase lengths: it conveys a calmness and serenity that is quite sublime in character. This section is again answered with a more symmetrical melody with a chordal accompaniment. After the double bar line the structure is repeated untilthe coda. The effect is of a dialogue between two very different beings: one calm and at peace and the other experiencing anguish and possible loss. It is clearly narrative in intent and judging by the title of the movement, *Sternbild*, the subject could in all likelihood be otherworldly and of a spiritual nature. Remembering the widespread pagan idea that true heroes were immortalised in the heavens as stars, it may possibly be depicting an invoking of Beethoven's spirit. Taking cognoscence of the titles of other movements, *Ruins* and *Siegesbogen*, the Ossianic inferences become almost inescapable.

All Schumann's piano sonatas follow a four-movement format. Given that the composer conceived the *Phantasie* as a 'Sonata for Beethoven' it seems strange that he reverts to three movements. The problems of form in this work compel one to ask questions that may not be substantively answered. Might the tri-partite design of the Songs *of Selma* have influenced the form of this so-called 'sonata'? Or does the nature of the narrative dictate the overall design. In a period of his life when he was obsessed with the idea of an alter ego, (having encountered it in Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre* as 'Wult/Walt' and Kapellmeister Kreisler's 'Murr the cat' in E T A Hoffmann) did Robert Schumann equate Beethoven with some type of Fingal-figure and as a departed leader of the *Davidsbund* army?

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The *Phantasie* in C major is possibly the only undisputed work of genius in Robert Schumann's piano repertoire. It can be interpreted as being biographical without being programmatic. It balances form with poetic content, but defies stereotypical analysis. It displays more unity of design than any of the sonatas do, yet remains improvisatory in character. It has been the most frequently performed, recorded and written about of all the piano works and has earned a permanent place in the piano repertoire from its inception to the present day.

Waldszenen, Op. 82

Revolutionary Dresden

Late in 1848, just after moving to Dresden, Schumann began one of his most productive periods. In contrast to his earlier creative stages, when he generally concentrated on one type of composition at a time, this period showed him embarking on a number of different projects. He treated them all with typical enthusiasm, from the large-scale works like the oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri*, Op. 50 to the 43 piano pieces that comprise *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68. Closely related to the *Album für die Jugend* is *Waldszenen*, Op. 82, a collection of piano pieces in the same intimate and naïve style, but beyond the technical and physical scope of the young pianist. In the year of devastating revolutions throughout Europe, Schumann turns to nature and all the symbols of the German forest and hunting tradition in a work of patriotic romanticism. In my view *Waldszenen* does not relate directly to the Ossianic epics, but was alluding to the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* that express the deeper links that man has to nature within a cosmic unit. This was an idea not only closely linked to Hölderlin and Novalis, but also to Heine and viewed by Matthew Arnold as a major Celtic characteristic in poetry (Smart: 19).

As the philosophy of egalitarianism spread through Europe, the political system became increasingly unstable. Factory workers lived in squalor with few civil rights and minimal accesses to the law. Political and financial freedom was still in the hands of a privileged minority and the German government was facing a constant and explosive pressure for reform. Dresden became a cauldron of revolutionary sentiment and Schumann, the family man, was not immune to the dangerous environment to which he and his family were exposed. He recognised the importance of the role of the youth in the future, and focusing on his cultural

[10] Derived from the satirical journal *Fliegende Blätter* by Adolf Kussmaul and Ludwig Eichrodt. 'Gottlieb Biedermeier' is the fictitious author of ridiculously sentimental poems written by Samuel Friederich Sauter, a village schoolmaster, depicting a profoundly conservative mentality with an outdated moral code. These poems represented indifference in the face of political change and were the direct opposite of the Romantic aesthetic. The name is derived from the German word 'bieder' meaning 'honest but unexceptional' and the extremely common surname 'Meier' (Sheehan: 538).

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heritage as an anchor of stability, he increasingly reverted to time-honoured traditions (Taylor: 194). He believed in the upliftment of the individual as the soundest investment in Germany's future and in the ancient Greek principal of education that the only means to achieve meaningful change was to change oneself. Although he had met Wagner and attended performances of his operas, he could not agree with his party-political radicalism and sought the road of the moderate (Ostwald: 203). Some would call it the voice of reason, others, like Daverio, accuse him of 'Biedermeier' sentiments[10] (Daverio 1997: 395).

A return to miniatures

Starting *Waldszenen* on 26 December, Schumann finished in typical speed for that time on 12 January, but continued to hone and polish the work for most of 1849. One of the major traits of the Romantic Movement in music was the shift away from the abstract forms of classicism to a more representational style of music (Einstein: 41). Music was seen almost to have semantic content as well as the greatest ability of any art to express unadulterated emotion. This becomes abundantly evident in the symphonic poems of Liszt, the symphonies of Berlioz, the Ballades of Chopin and the operas of Wagner. Schumann's *Waldszenen*, together with many of his other piano cycles, are miniatures that can stand alongside these masterworks that are evidence of nineteenth-century music's ability of narrative power. In the version of *Waldszenen* that Schumann finally published, only one of the movements has a poetic header. In a recently discovered manuscript at least six of the nine movements had accompanying verses from Gustav Pfarrius' *Waldlieder* and Heinrich Laube's *Jagdbrevier* (Daverio 1997: 410).

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In the following analysis of *Waldszenen* I will endeavour to show how the characteristics of the 'Nordic' style (the horn and harp passages, counterpoint, Phrygian cadences, folk elements and improvisation) are embedded in the formal structure of the work.
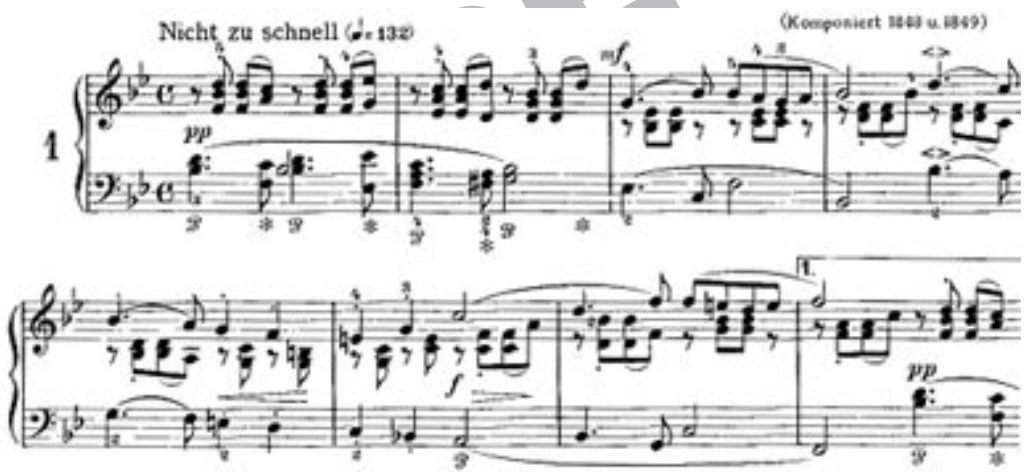
Waldszenen embodies the ancient Greek concept of the country retreat and should be understood as a form of active leisure. The concept was to commune with nature and take part in peasant activities, encouraging one to remember one's heritage. 'Eintritt' (Entering the Forest) with its rocking dotted rhythms, is in the style of a lullaby and invites one to dream of the forest as it is in the dream state that one communicates with the spirits. Its triadic disposition in

[11] The basic principles of 'Im Volkston' were to use simple keys and formal structures, pentatonic melodies of a folk character and to incorporate elements of national dances. There are two distinct styles here: the one is an accurate reworking of existing folk music, often employing rapid alternations between simple and duple meter, and the other original composition using folk elements and subjects.

close harmony evokes strong connotations of horn choirs. For most of the time the melody is doubled at the octave and the eight-bar phrases are sub-divided in irregular groups suggesting speech patterning rather than musical symmetry. For critics who berate Schumann's square phrasing this is certainly an exception (Daverio 1997: 14). All the pieces in the collection have an externally simple design that belies the inner textural complexity. Set in B♭ major, 'Eintritt' is in simple rondo form, in keeping with Schumann's ideas on *Im Volkston*[11] (Daverio 1998: 251). Section A (bars 1-8²) is mainly in step-wise movement, creating a gentle calm atmosphere. Section B (bars 8³-16²) is mainly based on triadic motifs and uses modulations based on third relationships.

Section A¹ (bars 16³-28²) starts in a similar manner to the opening, but no longer keeps to the smooth step-wise movement, progressing to ever widening leaps as the tension mounts. Section C (bars 28³-37²) is based on an ascending scale-type motif containing many semitonal shifts; the section retreats within itself and relaxes ending on the second inversion tonic. Section A² (bars 37³-44) acts as a brief coda ending plagally with an arpeggiated figure.

Example 4.27. Schumann *Waldszenen*, Op. 82 'Eintritt' (Peters Edition).



'Jäger auf der Lauer' ('Hunter on the lookout') is in D minor and once again conceived for brass ensemble and depicts the favourite pastime in Ossian—hunting. It is a short binary-form piece with an eight bar introduction based on tonic—sub-dominant relationships. The restless quality is created by the rhythm and we see of Schumann clearly thinking in orchestral terms by indicating impossible crescendos on held notes—simple on wind instruments, but impossible on the piano. The triplet parallel octave writing is reminiscent of the earlier Beethoven Variations (Var. 2) as well as the pianoforte style of Johann Nepomuk Hummel and depicts the nervous flight of the quarry. The first section (bars 9-22) is 14

bars long and shows some very irregular phrasing. The second section is little longer (bars 23-39) with the energy reaching a brief hiatus at the second-inversion major tonic chords in bars 35-36. The halo effects achieved with the pedal, depicting the death of the animal show a macabre sense of humour, but also raise the question of animals having spirits. The entire movement is based on the horn calls of the hunters and the accompaniment figure appears again in the eighth piece, *Jagdlied*. This is an energetic effective score requiring considerable skill on the part of the pianist.

'Einsame Blumen' *(Solitary Flowers)*, an extremely romantic symbol which may also be a reference to the poetry of Novalis,[12] returns to the home key of B♭ major and has imitative part-writing that obscures some dissonant cross relations that arise as purely co-incidental to the invertible counterpoint. The first section (b. 1-18) contains two phrases of ten and eight bars respectively. The second section (b. 19-44) is in G minor recalls the first section with the parts inverted at b. 27. The third section (b. 45-76) returns to B♭ major and is not as fragmented as previously, but retains the 'sigh' motif. The initial theme is heard again in b 64, which now serves as a coda. A schematic diagram of the piece would look something like the following: A ‖ BA¹ ‖ CA² ‖ Even in this unassuming little piece the brass writing creeps in bars 23-26.

Verrufene Stelle (Haunted Spot) is the only one of the nine pieces to retain their poetic motto—two very macabre verses from a poem by Franz Hebbel. It is probably referring to the Celtic tradition of a burial mound, mentioned not only in the episode quoted on page 70 ('She will raise my tomb. The hunter shall see it and praise me'), but throughout the poems. On the surface this is simply a poem of dubious literary value about forest flowers that have absorbed the blood from the spot of some great slaughter:

Die Blumen, so hoch sie wachsen	The flowers growing here so tall
Sind blaß hier, wie der Tod;	Are pale as death
Nur eine in der Mitte	Only one stands dark red
Steht da im dunkeln Rot	There in the middle
Die hat es nicht von der Sonne:	But its colour doesn't come from the sun
Nie traf sie daren Glut;	Whose glow it has never encountered
Sie hat es von der Erde	But rather from the earthUnd die trank
Menscheblut.	From drinking human blood.
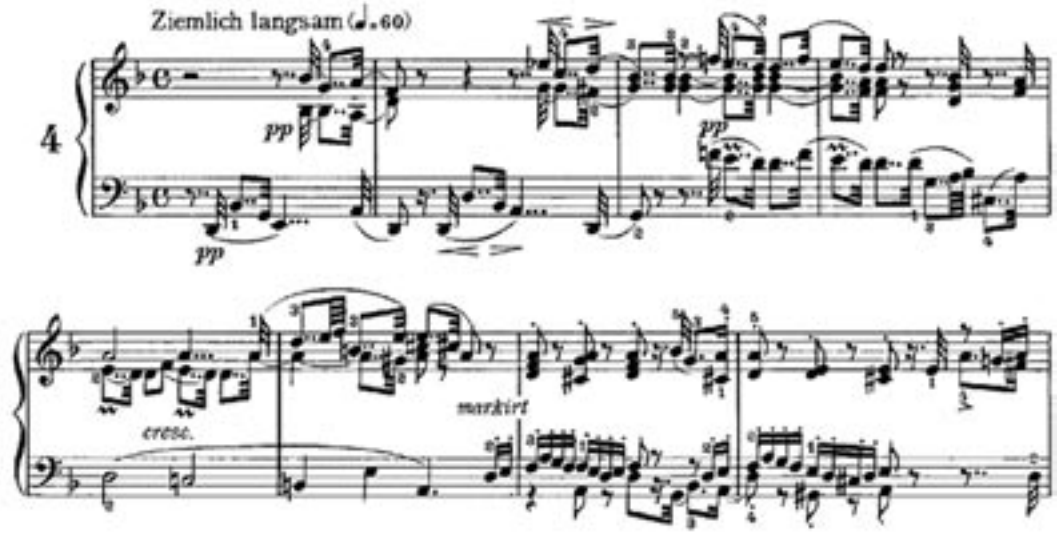
[12] 'Novalis' was the nome de plume for Georg Friederich Philipp von Hardenburg (1772-1801), creator of *Hymnen an der Nacht* and *Fragmenten* (a title also linked to Ossian) among other poems, whose symbol became the unattainable 'blue flower'. Most of his poetry expresses a longing for death and release from the human world. Schumann may also have been drawing attention to this, not only in *Waldszenen*, but also in *Gesänge der Frühe* (http: //www.logopoeia.com/novalis)

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This unusual metaphor, probably again referring to Novalis, is apparently intended to exhort the reader to become involved and take strength in a return to roots and recognition of past experience. It may be seen as a message of hope to counteract the 'doom and gloom' popularised in the poetry of Byron, Novalis and, of course, Ossian. Hebel's poem is certainly not regarded as great literature by modern standards, but has a message for the current time of uncertainty. Here Schumann looks back to the Baroque period, namely the French overture, with its double-dotted rhythms and antiquated ornaments. The rhythmic writing here could be suggesting the ceremonial funeral march (Cooke: 100), although the melodic and harmonic style softens the effect (Example 4.14). After all, this work is in the style of a child's fairytale where death is romanticised. The opening melodic motif: 1-6-4-2, is strongly reminiscent of melodic material from the Düsseldorf period, and has strong suggestions of pain, loss and suffering (Cooke: 90-91). The interval of the sixth, especially in the minor mode, is strongly indicative of the pentatonic scale and hence folk elements and has firm associations with 'Ossianic' compositions of Le Seur, Mendelssohn and Gade. The opening bars are written as a duet between the bass and the upper parts until the tenor enters in bar 7 with a counter melody derived from the previous piece. The main motif is clearly pentatonic and modulates to the sub-dominant in bar 3. The juxtaposing of a sophisticated style from the Baroque with the naive style of 'Im Volkston' was typical of Schumann's wry sense of paradox and humour. It may also be Schumann's way of raising the simple elements of folk style to an art form. There are also allusions to material that will become the main motif of the 'Vogel als Prophet' in the final bars.

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Example 4.28. Schumann *Waldszenen*, Op. 82 'Verrufene Stelle' (Peters Edition).
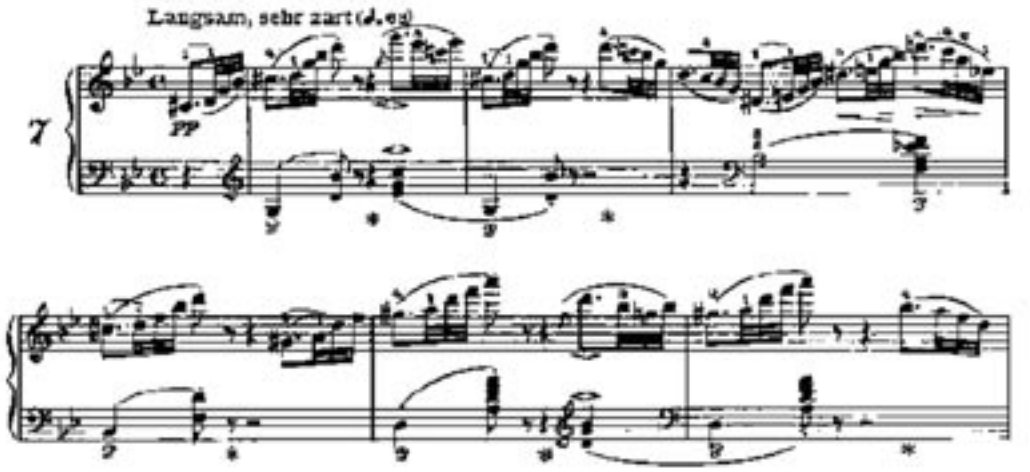


'Freundliche Landschaft' *(Pleasant Scenery)* has a four-bar introduction setting the triplet motion that characterises the entire piece, which is in B♭ major. The folk element can be seen in the use of drone notes (bars 4-6 and 12-14), so characteristic of hurdy-gurdy music and other folk instruments. In bars 14-16 a strange bass progression appears: E♭-F♯-G♯-A-B-C-possibly suggesting an instrument with an exotic tuning system or out of tune.

'Herberge' *(At the Inn)* in E♭ major is a duet between bass and treble almost throughout and is in the style of a German dance. The individual rhythms are complementary in that the one pauses while the other moves. The tempo changes indicated are to accommodate the turns, curtsies and bows typical of the folk-dance. The middle section is derived from the opening of No 5.

'Vogel als Prophet *(The Prophet Bird)*, in G minor, is most probably the best known of the *Waldszenen* and even in its titles conjures up the ancient superstitions of birds having mystical powers such as pre-cognoscence. The magical powers of birds have often been referred to in literature from the doves of the biblical "Genesis' to the ravens of Pluto's underworld. In *The Poems of Ossian* birds play a significant role as harbingers of death and as a form of portage for spirits from this world to the 'other' world. They serve more as omens and are not given a specific personality or role in the narrative as they are in many other myths or legends. They seem to be a symbol of mystery and also solitude. The original poem that Schumann earmarked for this piece was set to music as No 10 'Zwielicht' of the 'Eichendorff' *Liederkreis* Op 39 (Jensen: 81-4). The strong presence of the C sharp, in G minor the tritone, (also referred to as *diabolus in musica*), has always suggested the forbidden and has been known to represent 'devilish and inimical forces' if not the devil himself (Cooke: 89-90). It was used by Weber in Der Freischütz in the 'Wolf's Glen' scene where Caspar summonses Samiel, the Black Huntsman. The displacement of the melody over the octave shifts can also be seen as representing flight (Sams: 14). The cross-relationship of the C sharp-C natural from bar 1-2, the strong plagal harmonic progressions, the modulation from the tonic to the mediant and the avoidance of the dominant chord create tonal colours of a dark and mysterious hue that could be interpreted as the diffused light of the Ossianic poems. This seemingly simple ternary form, with its short contrasting middle section of six bars, is certainly a most unusual piece in the repertoire. The end comes extremely suddenly, implying that the whole thing was illusional.

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Example 4.29. Schumann *Waldszenen*. Op. 82 'Vogel als Prophet' (Peters Edition).
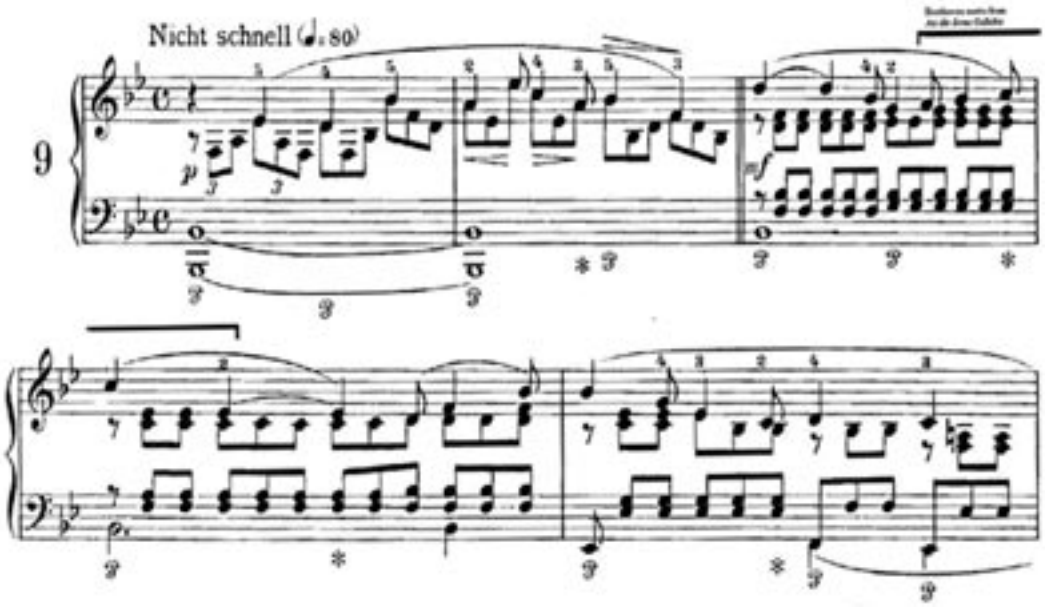


The *Jagdlied* in the heroic key of E♭ major is associated by Schumann with works such as Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, Op. 55 and the *Emperor* Piano Concerto, Op. 73 as well as more expressively ambivalent works such as the *Les Adieux* Sonata, Op.81a. E♭ was also the key of Schumann's own *Rhenish Symphony* and the second movement of his *Phantasie*, Op. 17, both works with a strong folk element. 'Jagdlied' is a typical hunting song in its compound duple timing and relentless dotted-rhythms with the exception of some brief horn interjections in duplets before cadential sections. The overall structure is ternary with the first section (bars 1-48) comprising six eight-bar phrases, the first two of which are repeated. The phrasing is very square and the tonal structure is built on the third relationships so strongly associated with the mythical subjects not only in Schubert and Gade, but also in Beethoven (E♭ major-G minor; A♭ major-C minor). The middle section (bars 48-80) is much lighter in texture and characterised by syncopations. Remarkably, it has the same rhythmic cast and mood as the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture.

The *Abschied* is a typical coda to the collection in the manner of 'Zum Schluss' in the *Humoreske*, Op. 20. The two-bar introduction, derived from the coda of 'Eintritt' is repeated before the second section in bars 11-12. Remarkably, there is an uncanny correlation between the Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* quotation used in the *Phantasie*, Op. 17 and the opening subject of 'Abschied' (Jensen: 81-4). For me this is merely further proof of the (perhaps) unconscious links that Robert made between Beethoven and this type of music. The characteristic falling motifs that convey a mood of despondency in the opening, are inverted in the final section giving a moralising tone that can be interpreted as indicative of Schumann's 'Biedermeier' mentality (Daverio 1997: 395).

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Ex. 4.30. Schumann *Waldszenen*, Op. 82 *Abschied* (Peters Edition).



There is an inner sense of unity in *Waldszenen* that goes further than mere compositional devices. As early as *Carnaval* one can observe Schumann organising what seem like totally disparate ideas into a closely knit whole through the use of connective motifs in the mysterious 'Sphynxes'. In *Waldszenen* there is a unity in the key structure (centred around B♭ and its closely related keys) and also the use of connecting motifs that are shared between various pieces; for example between No 4 and No 7 or the first and last piece.

The *Waldszenen* are not related to *The Poems of Ossian* in any direct form of representational musical narrative, but the notion of whimsical narratives does indeed have a parallel in the poetry of the bard. Not all the Ossianic poetry is in epic form. The first volume was *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* and both *Fingal* and *Temora* were published together with numerous shorter poems. Schumann utilises the hunting traditions and closeness to nature that characterise the work of writers who openly admitted to emulating Ossian (Burns and Heine). As I have suggested in Chapter 1, *The Poems of Ossian* were more important for encapsulating the current changes in social and political trends than they were as a work of literature. They brought about a national pride and were seminal to revolutionary thought in nineteenth-century Europe.

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***Gesänge der Frühe,* Op. 133**

The final phase

This set of five character pieces was composed between 15 and 18 October 1853, when Schumann was director of music in Düsseldorf. During this time, as in the Dresden years, he did not restrict himself to any one type of composition, but preferred to explore a number of different genres. He experimented with what could be seen to be a new one: the dramatic ballad for soloists, chorus and orchestra. Schumann's duties as a holder of public office included the rehearsing of the orchestra and choir of the *Algemeine Musikverein* for the subscription concerts, conducting the actual concerts, planning the programmes and supervising the music for major feast days at two Catholic churches, *Saint Lambertus* and the *Maximilliankirche*. He was also expected to preside over additional chamber music concerts given as benefits for which he received an additional fee and was director of the *Niederrheinisches Musikfest*, an event of some national importance (Daverio 1997: 443). It can be assumed that his close association with several choirs brought about a renewed interest in the choral genre and there is a profusion of chorale settings, hymns and Gesänge from this time (Hinke; Harmonia Mundi: 8-10).

Schumann, ever the man of social conscience, saw in this responsibility of public office the duty to educate and uplift the community. Music became an integral part of everyday life with the composition of didactical pieces for the children, birthday odes and a whole host of miscellaneous compositions grouped under the title *Hausmusik*. Although the *Lieder* and shorter pieces for children sold well and brought in extra income, large-scale works enhanced his reputation as a composer. The initial concerts were well received and Schumann enjoyed both public and professional approval. In Hiller's words: 'The Düsseldorfers are now very happy and I think the present arrangement will work out for the best' (Kapp: 198).

Many critics view this as one of Schumann's weakest periods where there are many signs of impending insanity, poor creative powers and a morbid obsession with death (Sams: 179). This period produced more than 50 works, many of them containing several movements, and includes such masterpieces as the *Rhenish* Symphony and *Der Rose Pilgerfahrt*, both of which were highly acclaimed. Despite the obvious references to death, especially in the ballad-style works, there is just as much reference to birth and new opportunity. The first movement of the Third Symphony and the first movement of the Violin Concerto may be dark and dismal, but the finales are as triumphant and buoy-

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ant as any work by Beethoven. Amongst the five Gedichte der Königen *Maria Stuart* is a song celebrating the birth of her son, symbolic of a continuing line of heritage in the face of death. The ballads for soloists, chorus and orchestra have Garrick[13] endings with the souls living on through some apotheosis. Some of the Lieder are commentaries on the role of the artist in society as in the 'Ballade', a setting of a poem by Uhland taken from *Der Sängersfluch* (Sams: 274). Much of the music composed at this time could have had social significance after the highly charged post-revolutionary political climate. Schumann's new method of composing, embarked on in the late 1840s, shows an economy of style and motivic use (Daverio 1997: 306). The poems of the Lieder concentrate on the inner emotions of the subject and there is a conscious use of older styles, seen in the return to the harp-like accompaniment of the ballads, the return to monody in the *Maria Stuart* Lieder and an increase in the use of chorale melodies and counterpoint. As in Dresden, Schumann was advocating a policy of moderation and expounding the value of cultural heritage in order to develop a sense of identity and accountability.

The last piano cycle

Gesänge der Frühe is the last piano work that Schumann published and was written during this period of extreme distress. It was originally meant to bear the dedication to 'Diotima', a figure featuring in both the works of Plato and the German poet Hölderlin. This was withdrawn on discovery that most people, including Brahms and Joachim were oblivious to Diotima's identity, and the collection was inscribed: *An der Hoch Dichterin Bethina zugeeignit*. The work was hurriedly submitted to the publisher, Arnold, three days before Schumann's suicide attempt and before all the details had been completed. He seemed to attach considerable importance to these pieces and continued with the arrangements from the hospital at Endenich via post and through Joachim and Brahms (Struck: 465-77).[14] Bettina von Arnim (Brentano) was a multi talented and charismatic writer, poet and composer who had been a houseguest of the Schumanns on numerous occasions and was famous for her influential friendships that included Beethoven, Goethe, Schiller and Hölderlin. She had introduced Robert to the poetry of Hölderlin and the poet's platonic involvement with Susette Gonthard, the wife of his employer, whom he called Diotima. Hölderlin was an enthusiastic

[13] David Garrick (1717-79) was a celebrated British actor who revolutionised theatrical performances in England which became fashionable throughout Europe. One such practice was to rewrite the endings of the plays, especially tragedies like *Romeo and Juliet*, in order to supply a happy ending. (http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/refpages/refarticle.aspx?refid=761572402)

[14] Struck sees these five pieces as hymns to a new utopian age, despite a letter from Schumann to his publisher describing them as portraying different times of the morning. Similar anomalies are encountered in letters to the publishers for the *Phantasie*, Op. 17.

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follower of Pantheism and had the burning desire to raise the German language to the same level of purity as Classical Greek (Unger: 9). Bettina tried to assist the schizophrenic Hölderlin, as she did Schumann.

The title *Gesänge der Frühe* may also be a reference to Novalis' *Gesänge von der Nacht*. The latter are six prose poems of a fashionably 'gloomy' character, portraying the modern world as a travesty and wishing for death. Novalis uses the symbolic light quality expressed in the Ossianic poems, but rather than interpret it as dawning light, he sees it as waning light. Schumann has a more positive approach in his *Gesänge der Frühe*, expressed in the major mode endings of all five pieces. He sees the way forward as being paved by the artistic aesthetics of the past, not the uncharted future.

The repeated motif of D-E-A-B or in the German system D-E-A-H is an elaboration of a motif used often in the later works, including the Violin Concerto (first movement) and the *Ballade*, Op. 139/7 as D-A-B♭. The same intervallic relationship is transposed into E minor of the last two *Maria Stuart* Lieder (1-5-6). In either the major or the minor form these intervals suggest a pentatonic scale and are hence cyphers of the past. The first and last letters of both Diotima and Bethina are contained in the minor version and it could be that the relationship of 1-5-6 or 1-2-5-6 in either major or minor had significance for Schumann as did the many other analogues that he used in his earlier music. If *Gesänge der Frühe* symbolises new beginnings, or the start of a new era, they might constitute a form of social commentary[15] (Walker: 317-24). One could see this motif (1-5-6) as being a unifying characteristic of this cycle and of several other works discussed in this report. The Ballade from *Der Sängersfluch* uses it, and it appears in the *Exercices* and *Phantasie*. (Many years later the great Schumann interpreter, Serge Rachmanninov, would also use it in his Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 3/2). It could be seen as connected once again to Hölderlin's theories on 'Unity'.

The key of D may also be of some consequence. Although the key is often associated with the Dorian mode (the key most associated with Greek music), it is also associated with pastoral music (as in the sonatas of Beethoven and Scarlatti). It is also the key associated with jubilant trumpet music. (Bach's Sinfonias Nos. 3 and 4, Handel's 'Hallelujah' chorus and the 'The Trumpet Shall Sound' from

[15] Brahms, during the time of Schumann's illness, composed a number of works using similar ideas. The *Cello Sonata in E minor*, Op. 15 also uses 1-3-5-6 in the melody, with harp-like chordal accompaniment in the piano. It has a very similar atmosphere to the *Exercices* and the final two movements are old forms—i.e. a minuet and trio and a fugue.
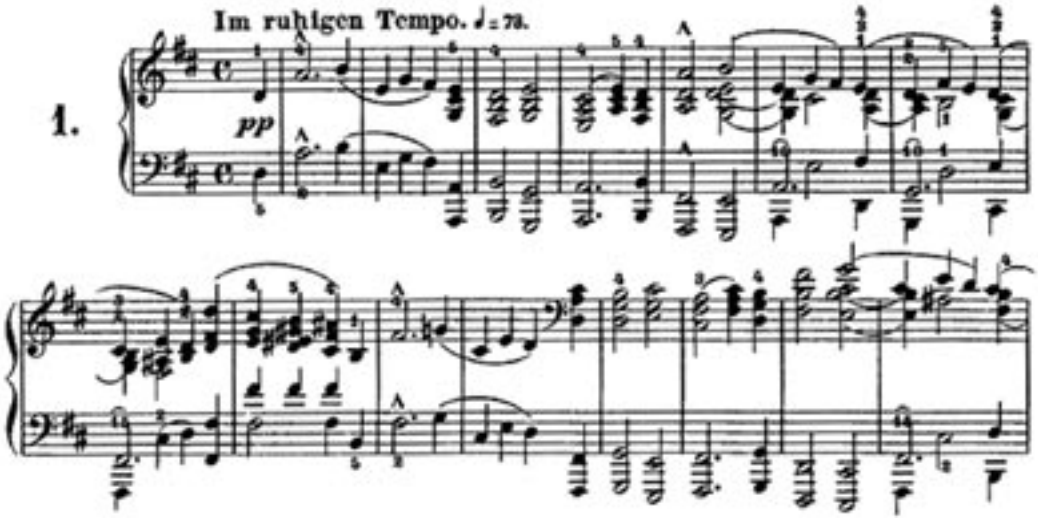
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The Messiah and Beethoven's 'Gloria' from *Missa Solemnis* are famous examples). The role of the bard was not only to record for posterity but also to entertain. Often the bard conveyed a prophetic warning of dangers to come.

The first of Gesänge der Frühe is a simple chorale. The melody, starting D-A-B-E, is doubled at the octave. It bears a remarkable resemblance to the 'Gruss an G…' from Album für die Jugend and in setting out the motto to be used could be seen as a model for free improvisations. The first four notes represent a rising and falling fifth, seen by both Sams (14) and Cooke (89-90) as representing a rebirth and a death (or an assertive and defeatist idea). They also form consecutive fifths which were used by both Mendelssohn in Die Hebriden, and Gade in the Nachklänge von Ossian to suggest a feeling of antiquity. The first phrase can be broken down into three motifs, as suggested by Schumann's phrasing, and contain all the material for the entire piece. The tonal scheme also harks back to Mendelssohn, Gade and Schubert with modulations displaying third relationships to B minor (bar 8), G major (bar 17). In place of the normal rising third relationships used by the other composers (which imply Phrygian cadences), Schumann uses a descending third relationship, which has a darker tone colour, going through the relative minor to the sub-dominant. A strict contrapuntal style is maintained throughout and there is strong evidence of an organ style in the bass octave pedal notes of bars 30-33. Schumann alternates stark diatonic passages with rich chromaticisms achieved by multiple suspensions.[16]

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Example 4.31. Schumann *Gesänge der frühe*, Op. 133/1 (Peters Edition).
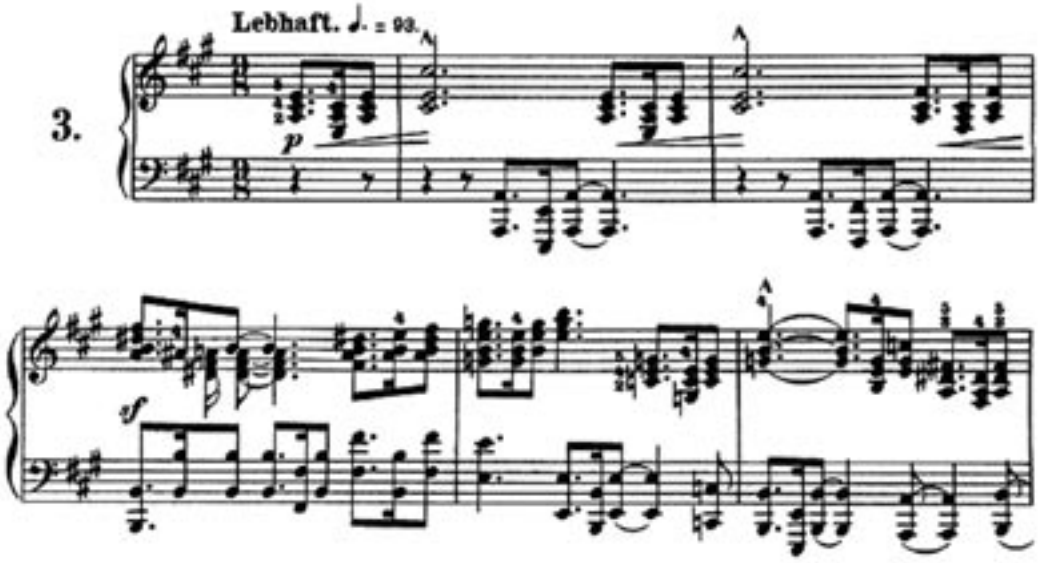


[16] Brahms uses similar suspensions in the middle movement of his D minor Piano Concerto and in the last movement uses a theme similar in many aspects being an ascending 5-1-2-3-5-1, which Derrycke Cooke interprets as 'bravery in the face of death' (Cooke: 129).

The second of the set is more restless, its triplet quaver accompaniment possibly suggesting the broken chord figure of harp accompaniment. The main motif, now in the inner voices, starts A-D-B-E and is in the ideal register and idiom for horns. The *forte* B section makes use of a dotted rhythm suggesting the full brass ensemble and maintains the pentatonic character. Although only 35 bars long, the piece is a miniature sonata-rondo form; A B A^1 C A^2 B^1 A^3. The middle section, a short episode, is only two bars long but forms a complete break in the general forward flow and is evocative of a 'Chopinesque' arabesque. The tonal centre is obscured until the B section, a fanfare-like dotted rhythm motif set against the triplets, where D major emerges as the tonic. The raised fourth, the tritone, makes a regular appearance again, but this time passes smoothly between the regular fourth degree and the dominant (b. 4).

The third piece is the liveliest of the set and is heraldic in character. It is in compound triple time and bares a remarkable resemblance to Brünhilde's 'Hojotojo' from Wagner's *Die Walküre*. The repetitive dotted rhythm is maintained throughout the piece disguising the simple rondo structure and lending it a monothematic character. There can be little doubt here that the instruments being suggested are the brass. The ritornello, eight bars long, is interspersed with episodes that modulate to distantly related keys (F and F sharp major) in b. 9 and b. 12, again keeping the pattern of third relationships in the key structure. The coda is perhaps the only section in the entire work that shows any sign of virtuosity.

Example 4.32. Schumann *Gesänge der frühe*, Op. 133/3 (Peters Edition).



As both Schumann and Wagner were in Dresden during the time of the 1849 revolution, it is quite possible that the melody had its origins in some revolu-

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tionary song heard on the streets of the city. It is in A major and monothematic throughout. The persistent dotted rhythm gives a frenetic and unabating energy. It is repeated with such regularity that it becomes like a mantra, and is not only reminiscent of a great deal of primitive music of all sorts of ethnic origins, but many battle cries. The modulations add a dynamic of varying tension to what would otherwise be a dreadfully monotonous piece. The B-E-A motto now becomes a cadential figure heard in the bass at various points in the piece.

The fourth piece is in F sharp minor with a more filigree accompaniment figure and returns to the main melodic motif of A-D-B-A repeated a third higher. The pentatonic character is maintained and the accompaniment becomes more filigree in its use of semi-quavers. The intervallic relationship of a falling fifth followed by a rising seventh conveys the implication of a 'despairing plea for help' (Cooke: 87). The theme returns after a short contrasting section that remains in the tonic (bars 25-9), but shows more resolve in its tonic- dominant progressions. It concludes with a coda at bar 43 and is based on harp-like plagalisms that shift the tonal centre to F sharp major. The listener is left with a sense of rapture.

The fifth piece in the cycle returns to the tonic, D major, with a melodic line loosely based on the same motto. The style is that of the chorale prelude with the second phrase in B major elaborating figurally on the harmonies. The third relationships prove to be a hallmark of the entire set and this final piece concludes with the same plagalisms that ended the previous piece.

The work as a whole has a rapturous beauty and is totally devoid of all signs of bravura, although it is by no measure easy or comfortable to play.

Schumann had demonstrated his political concern from an early age. Writing in his diary in 1827: 'Political freedom is perhaps the actual wet nurse of poetry; it is necessary above all for the unfolding of poetic blossoms; genuine poetry (that is poetry that enters into public life enthusiastically and passionately) can never thrive in a land where serfdom and slavery prevail' (Daverio 1997: 421). The political connotations attached to *The Poems of Ossian* (whether intended by Macpherson or not), shaped many revolutionary minds, but came with a strong admonition not to ignore the past. Schumann viewed his art within a social context, and viewed his new position in Düsseldorf within a civic context. His mission was to preach (maybe harangue) the observance of time-honoured Germanic musical traditions.

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During the revolutionary years he claimed to have read 'more newspapers than books' (Daverio 1997: 422). Clara commented on his reaction to the revolution: 'I find it remarkable that the terrible events from without awaken [Robert's] inner poetic feelings in such a diametrically opposite manner. A breath of the highest tranquillity hovers over all these songs . . . ' (Daverio 1997: 425). The German countryside, the source of inspiration for all Schumann's musical heroes of the past (and a source of learning for the ancient Celtic tribes themselves) had revealed to him a path for the future—a path steeped in tradition. Perhaps it is possible to view this pantheist approach to music as an alternative to other composer's sacred music. The ballad form and the simpler structures of folk music became one of his most frequently used styles, causing Sams to comment ' . . . yet another harp song' (Sams: 293). The *Wilhelm Meister* song cycle Op 98a, the *Gedichte der Königen Maria Stuart*, the *Rhenish* Symphony, the ballads for solo, choir and orchestra and the *Gesänge der Frühe* among others, point to a definite change in style based on an increased use of the older techniques that made art music more accessible to the average citizen. Whether Schumann succeeded or not is another matter. However, one cannot regard these works as the product of an insane man.

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Conclusion

One of the first obstacles I encountered in this research report was interpreting the negative historic response to the myths of Ossian and even more so to James Macpherson's translations of them. Most of this negativity originated in the intrigues of Samuel Johnson of the late eighteenth century.

As mentioned in chapter one Ossian (Oisan) and Cuchullan are figures of Irish mythology. Claude Lévi-Strauss has demonstrated admirably how myths from countries as far apart as Peru and Canada can be very similar (1978: 21-37). Ireland is very close to the Hebrides and the Scottish Highlands so it is understandable that there may have been a certain amount of influence between the two countries.

James Macpherson has been depicted as a boor and a charlatan. However, one must bear in mind that he was a recent graduate at the time of undertaking the research and that he grew up in a family persecuted by the English after the Jacobean revolt of 1745. His belligerent reaction to an English criticism of his translation is quite understandable.

The act of translation is in itself a minefield of problems as Hans Georg Gadamer avers in *Truth and Method* (1975, 524-551). Umberto Eco has a wittier response in *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (2003). The term 'translation' is generally used in relation to written texts. In negotiation and law courts which are oral the term 'interpreter' is more commonly used, suggesting an important distinction between the two between the two words that seems difficult to avoid (Eco 2003: 48).

Macpherson initially translated Gaelic ballads that were printed in *The Scots Magazine* from 1756 (see Chapter 1). Affirming his intimate knowledge of this language Hume, Blair and other doyens of the Faculty of Belle Lettres encouraged him to do further research—a task for which he was not at that point adequately trained. It is not unreasonable to assume that the Gaelic language had changed from the time that the ballads first emerged to the time that Macpherson translated them. Such 'structuralist' changes can be understood and traced as the result of social mutations (Rée and Urmson [eds.] 2005: 371-373).

Eco divides translation into three main categories: intralinguistic, interlinguistic and intersemiotic (2003: 123). By 'intralinguistic' he refers to the modernising of a text within the same language. There are many modern language versions

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of the Bible and myths of classical Greece and Rome. Musical equivalents exist in Ottorino Respighi's *Ancient Airs and Dances* and Prokofiev's reworking of Buxtehude.

'Interlinguistic' according to Eco is translation as we most commonly think of it; supplying counterparts of signification from one language system into another. Due to the emotive quality of words and the social structure of language this implies a certain amount of interpretation. Eco cites Martin Luther as using the German terms 'übersetzung' (translation) and 'verdeutschen' (Germanise) synonymously (2003: 89), indicating a process of cultural assimilation or domesticisation. Possibly the Ossianic poems had been so assimilated into German culture in the nineteenth century that the custom of copying or cloning by writers like Goethe, Heine and Uhland was totally acceptable.

'Intersemiotic' in Eco's categorisation is the adaptation from one medium of signification to another as in a literary work to film or music. Here Eco uses Walt Disney's film *Fantasia* and Luchino Visconti's film of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* to demonstrate his point. In such a situation interpretation is an essential element and must also take into account the social structures of the target audience.

Eco alerts his reader to two other linguistic phenomena: 'ekphrasis' is a process of describing something so evocatively without actually naming it that the reader intuitively recognises the reference. Could these poems of Ossian have resonated with a primal memory in the collective unconscious of the nineteenth century? This process invariably relies on the education of the reader. Here Eco refers to his own writing in which he describes a Vermeer painting (2003: 110). The absence of a source is of interest to me in this study and may be why Friedrich Silcher (mentioned in chapter four) found that all Beethoven's music sounded Ossianic. This implies a double coding and it is important to note that Schumann invariably hid his sources (Daverio 1998: 255). He deemed blatant references to other works as poor style and this is probably the reason he never published the *Exercices*.

Eco does not give the second linguistic phenomenon a name. He quotes from Ortega's *The misery and splendour of translation*: 'The Basque language . . . forgot to include in its vocabulary a term to designate God and it was necessary to pick a phrase that meant "Lord over the heights".' He continues quoting from Schleiermacher's *On the Different Methods of Translating*: ' . . . all free-think-

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ing people with any mental initiative at all also play their part in shaping their language ' (2003: 81). Schumann, in most references to what may be Ossianic tradition, uses pentatonic or chorale-like melodies possibly to denote the pantheistic beliefs of the time. This is clearly a case of assimilating and domesticising the allusion for the German listener.

The choice of the word 'trace' in the title of this research report should be seen in the Derriddean sence of the term. Jacques Derrida uses the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's concept that difference is the determinant of the terms of language (Derrida 1980: 11). For De Saussure sounds, words and concepts do not directly 'attach' themselves to their supposed references, but rather derive their significance as a result of their difference from other sounds, words and concepts in a linguistic system (Derrida 1980: 11). Derrida creates a difference in the spelling of his term 'difference' by substituting an 'a' for an 'e'. By his notion of *difference* Derrida believes he has found an order that resists one of the fundamental oppositions of philosophy, 'the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible' (Drobb 2004: 3). He relates the word 'trace' to its Latin root *texere* meaning 'to weave', and posits the theory that there is a common thread linking all words, ideas and concepts. This common thread makes the words 'defer' to each other for meaning, and thus all words and ideas are embedded in a greater signifying network or matrix. Sanford Drobb discusses the Derriddean 'trace' as set forth in *Writing and Difference*.

Derrida introduces the notion of the 'trace' in order to indicate that all we regard as present to consciousness, all that is in the temporal present, is only significant because it is marked by a trace of something else, something that is not present. According to Derrida, language, and particularly writing, makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be 'present' appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. This trace relates no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by this very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not . . . [it] is not only relevant to language, but to all experience as well, as any experiential present is unavoidably marked by a past and a future that contextualises it and renders it meaningful. A pure point of 'presence' could have no significance whatsoever; in fact, it could not even be regarded as an experience at all (Drobb 2004: 3-5).

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This may not be such a novel idea. Richard Rorty has suggested that it may be a new term for an old concept (Drobb: 2004). Indeed it may very easily be a convoluted way of justifying the Thibaut quotation in chapter three from *Über Reinhardt der Tonkunst*. Thibaut emphasises the importance of studying the musical compositions of the old masters (a field in which he was an acknowledged authority in his time). Hegel refers to this same historical approach to enlightenment in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Beiser 2005, 29-30). It was the very foundation of the Gymnasium education system.

My understanding of this is that the 'trace' relates not only to the past, but also the present and the future. Goethe, Heine and Uhland were drawing on elements of the past to formulate the present. In turn it created new paths into the future. These elements were clearly recognisable to readers of the period.

At this point I must make a parabolic link to the introduction of this research where I infer a comparison with Khumalo's *uShaka* and a possible political motivation for the composition. Parabolas are normally associated with arches, bridges and domes. Many triumphal arches have a tripartite structure with two adjacent smaller arches on either side, similar to a triptych. For me this implies a time element linking present to the past and future, which is almost exactly how Schumann described his idea of a monument (a ruin pointing forward) in regard to the C major *Phantasie* (Daverio 1997: 152) and is the basis of Derrida's 'trace'.

Gadamer discusses Husserl's term of 'transcendental historicity' as a means to discovering ones identity within a time structure (1975: 240). He also explores the idea of transcendental subjectivity as a quest for the 'Uhr-Ich' (1975: 531). I understand the 'Uhr-Ich' to imply a concept similar to the super-ego and possibly akin to Hegel's 'Absolute' or the 'Ein Sof' of the kaballah referred to by Derrida (Drobb 2004: 6). This search for self-awareness was the basis of classical education and the German nation who embraced the Gymnasium system seems to have had an innate awareness of this.

Johann Gottfried von Herder, who had a profound affect on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and was viewed as the founder of the whole Romantic *Sturm und Drang* movement, emphasised the importance of folksong. His essay of 1773, *Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker (Extract from a correspondence about Ossian and the songs of ancient people)* was merely one of his writings in this regard.

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> A poet is the creator of the nation around him . . . he gives them a world to see and has their souls in his hand to lead them to that world. Poetic ability is no special preserve of the educated; as the true mother tongue of mankind it appears in its greatest purity and power in the uncivilised periods of every nation. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel resisted taking on the mantle of 'Volkslehrer' in his early career, but after the publication of his self-described 'journey of self-discovery', *Phenomenology of Spirit*, found it hard to avoid, especially in Berlin (Beiser 2005: 13-17). Robert Schumann had the stated intention of changing public taste with his *Neue Zeitschrift für Muzik*. Both men saw education as a lifelong process as was the practice in the classical Greek system. The object of this was to develop a state of self-awareness.

The metaphor contained in the poems of Ossian becomes interesting in the understanding that being blind, senile and living totally in the past through memory, as a 'seer' or 'visionary', he had a heightened perception of the future. Paul de Man's book *Blindness and Insight: Essays in Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (1971), as well as Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and other Ruins* (1990), offers greater insight on this subject. Ossian is from a distant land and time and ostensibly totally alien both geographically and temporally fittingly fulfilling Herder's notion of an ancient primitive society. However the same problems of freedom posed in the poems relate to the current problems of nneteenth-century Europe. Lévi-Strauss makes an interesting observation that myths, like music, should be understood contigually (1978: 39-48). That is to say not as a linear narrative, but in bundles with one idea being related to another not necessarily adjacent.

Schumann's diary entries from his student days of 1829 concerning the synaesthesic confusion induced by wine, coffee and cigars (Chapter 3) suggest a long interest in sensory perception. His comments on Mendelssohn's *Preludes and Fugues, Op. 35*—'The best fugue will always be the one the public takes for a Strauss Waltz; in other words, where the artistic roots are covered as are those of a flower, so that we only perceive the blossom' (Daverio 1997, 309)—imply that difference, like time, is perceptual. One must attempt a multidimensional understanding which seems to suggest the Hegelian idea of the 'Absolute' being made up of a multitude of fragments. His comment that there is more melody in the first two chords of the *Eroica* than in ten Bellini melodies (Chapter 3) seems to sustain this.

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It appears to be this clouding of sources that creates the confusion surrounding Schumann's music. If the study of music consists of a semiotic and hermeneutic code the destabilisation of one of these invariably affects both. It is very possibly this element of the creative process that Foucault is referring to in the extract I gave at the beginning of chapter three. Recognising the various forms of signification allows the listener to place the work in a particular paradigm and render a more objective interpretation.

An appreciation of this fragmentation of ideas and the centripetal force referred to by Rosen in discussing the nature of aphorisms (see Chapter 3) ties in with the subjective nature of Greek education and its aim in developing self-awareness.

The weight of the vast amount of evidence suggests that there is definitely an Ossianic paradigm behind many of the instrumental works given that there is no textual reference to the poems. The widespread popularity of the works and their heavy reliance on nature and folklore, added to many musical clichés used in other works with more overt Ossianic associations, intimate that this is more by inference than direct allusion.

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