

Towards the semiotic and the symbolic in music theory and analysis: Kristeva's dialectics as a model for plurality in metadiscursive and discursive engagements with music

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This article examines both metadiscursive and discursive theoretical and analytical engagements with musical experience from the perspective of Julia Kristeva's distinction between semiotic and symbolic signifying dispositions, and the dialectic in which they are poised, as these are set out in *Revolution in poetic language* (1984), in particular. To this end analyses of the Beethoven and Schubert settings of the character Mignon's first song in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* are offered, focusing on selected analytical approaches deemed to represent symbolic and semiotic dispositions, respectively, which, in turn, expose aspects of transposition or intertextuality. In this manner, a model for long-debated notions of heterodoxy and plurality in the practice of music theory and analysis is suggested.

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Dialectical thinking, by its very nature, pursues a comprehensive point of view, one wherein the world is an interconnected, contradictory and dynamic labyrinth. In it, our understanding of what something is, is unavoidably conditioned by our understanding of what it is not, leading post-structural thinker Julia Kristeva to propose that negativity, in fact, be acknowledged as the ‘fourth term’ of what is ordinarily thought of as the dialectical triad (Kristeva 1984: 109).¹ On this basis, she continues, the thetic or symbolic condition of language is ever poised in a dialectic with its semiotic antithesis. In addition, the interconnectedness of multitudinous language acts and the dynamic nature of the dialectic mean that, whereas a stable, fixed Hegelian synthesis is always approximated, in reality it can never be fully achieved (Kristeva 1984: 55).

This article argues for an engagement with musical signification from the perspective of Kristeva’s distinction between semiotic and symbolic signifying dispositions, and the dialectic in which they are poised, as these are set out in her seminal work *Revolution in poetic language* (1984). There are three reasons, in my opinion, why Kristeva’s understanding of this dialectic may usefully apply in the case of music. First, although Kristeva’s interests in *Revolution in poetic language* are primarily in exploring the nature of language *per se*, she variously resorts to the use of generic terms such as “signifying process” (Kristeva 1984: 24), “signifying position” and “significance” (Kristeva 1984: 26) in order to indicate the inseparability of these interests from those processes within the human psyche that are as applicable in

1 Since first arriving in Paris in 1964, Bulgarian-born Julia Kristeva has been an unmistakable figure in French intellectual circles, and has held the position of chair of linguistics at the University of Paris since her doctoral thesis, *La Révolution du langage poétique*, was published there in 1974, disseminated in the English-speaking world a decade later as *Revolution in poetic language* (1984). Her academic background in communist Bulgaria provided her an intimate understanding of the writings of Hegel, Marx, Lenin and Bakhtin, and, in developing Hegel’s concept of negativity in conjunction with the ideas of Freud, Lacan and several others, she played a large part in the global shift from structuralist to post-structuralist thought. Since *Revolution in poetic language*, Kristeva has produced several works that further explore its various themes, including *Powers of horror: an essay in abjection* (1980), *Tales of love* (1987), *Black sun: depression and melancholy* (1989), *Strangers to ourselves* (1989) and *Lettre ouverte à Harlem Désir* (1990).

non-verbal signifying systems such as music as they are in the verbal signifying system of language itself (Kristeva 1984: 24). Secondly, although different modes of discourse or “signifying practices” can be discerned – all of which bear testimony to some degree of the semiotic/symbolic dialectic inherent in signification – this dialectic is most apparent in poetic language, more so than in any other.² In poetic language, we are confronted with “the infinite possibilities of language” and with the realisation that “all other language acts are merely partial realizations of the possibilities inherent in poetic language” (Kristeva 1984: 2). In this instance, Kristeva slips between terms which confine her ideas to language in the narrower sense, on the one hand, but point to connections with artistic signifying practices in a more comprehensive sense, on the other. She thus uses the term ‘poetic language’ interchangeably not only with “poetry” *per se* (Kristeva 1984: 70), but also with broader terms such as “artistic practices” (Kristeva 1984: 50) or, simply, “art” (Kristeva 1984: 70). Thirdly, poetic language is construed as inseparable from music insofar as its grounding in the semiotic makes it, by its very nature, “musicalized text” (Kristeva 1984: 65).

In particular, the following arguments will be put forth in this instance:

- Our attempts to develop a metadiscourse of musical signification manifest in music theory – insofar as each theory posits its own explanation for musical meaning – may be fruitfully explored from the point of view of Kristeva’s metadiscursive writings on the nature of signification in poetic language, particularly as this metadiscursivity provides a model for conceptual and theoretical plurality.
- Kristeva’s subsequent application of the above metadiscursive plurality to her discursive analyses of literary texts may usefully be applied as a model for the analysis of individual musical works, one that answers to the challenge of developing heterodoxy and plurality within the confines of theoretical rigour.

Towards this end, Kristeva’s understanding of the semiotic/symbolic dialectic is sketched as theoretical framework in the next section of this

2 Kristeva identifies these as narrative, metalanguage, contemplation and text. See Kristeva 1984: 90-106.

article, in light of which the subsequent section begins by suggesting new insights into the metadiscursive structuralist/post-structuralist debate in music theory and analysis that was waged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in particular, before proceeding, by way of illustrating these insights in our discursive engagements with musical texts, with an analysis of two musical settings of Mignon's song 'Kennst du das land' from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.

1. The semiotic and the symbolic

Two influences emerge as significant in Kristeva's explanation of the semiotic signifying disposition, namely Freud's understanding of the bodily drives, and Plato's notion of the *chora*. For Freud, subjectivity is regulated by two fundamental and conflicting drives. The first of these, the life drive (libido or Eros) is the energy underlying many human processes, structures and object representations, including hunger, thirst, survival, propagation and sex. The second of these, the death drive, describes the mind's inclination to act as though it could eliminate tension entirely, thus to reduce itself to a state of extinction. Freud found evidence for this in the compulsion to repeat.³ Accordingly, although invested with the life drive and hence 'mobile', Kristeva's semiotic is also "already regulated" (Kristeva 1984: 49) by the death drive, and hence prone to the interjection of stases or articulations (Kristeva 1984: 64).

The vacillation of drives that produce both facilitations and stases, endlessly repeated, is what leads Kristeva to describe the semiotic as a "rhythmic space" (Kristeva 1984: 26), and thus to deduce from it the notion of the Platonic *chora*, "a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (Kristeva 1984: 25). In Plato's *Timaeus*, the *chora* is described as a watery "receptacle", the "wetnurse of Becoming", that must ultimately be qualified by both the physical substance ("earth and air") and the "affections" that deity bestows upon it (Comford 1997: 52). From this, we may clearly infer Plato's gendered understanding of the *chora* and of deity, respectively. Hence, as the birthing process of subjectivity, for Kristeva the semiotic *chora* becomes structured around the mother's body and the drives that regulate the mother's

3 For further reference to the Freudian drives, see Freud 1920, 1930.

body become the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora* (Kristeva 1984: 27), from which she deduces the first evidence of negativity, a notion that re-emerges in various guises throughout *Revolution in poetic language*, in this instance to indicate the maternal *chora* as the most fundamental place “where the subject is both generated and negated” (Kristeva 1984: 28).

Although the semiotic *chora* cannot be “definitively posited” or given “axiomatic form” insofar as, in it, no distinction exists as yet between the real and the symbolic, and although it is “deprived of unity, identity [and] deity”, its significance is paramount for two reasons (Kristeva 1984: 26). First, anterior to the mirror stage, its movements and stases, oriented towards the mother’s body, provide for the fundamental constitution of signification by means of the rhythmic ordering of pre-symbolic functions susceptible to semiotisation, such as voice, gesture and colour (Kristeva 1984: 28), important “concrete operations” that “precede the acquisition of language, and organize preverbal semiotic space according to logical categories” (Kristeva 1984: 27). These concrete operations, in turn, are important precursors for language acquisition, identified in Kristeva’s case as relating to the two fundamental poles of semiotics – metaphor and metonymy – or, in Freudian psychoanalytic terms, to the structuring of the unconscious through condensation and displacement (slippage).⁴ The mother’s body is, therefore, not only the receptacle for the semiotic *chora* as an end unto itself, but also that which allows for the mediation of social relations and symbolic law.

Secondly, the semiotic *chora* is that which returns to the subject in the “complete, post-genital handling of language”, emerging “from and after [...] the Oedipus complex and especially after the regulation of genitality by the retroactive effect of the Oedipus complex in puberty” (Kristeva 1984: 50). Grounded in, and dependent for its intelligibility

4 In Freud’s work on the unconscious, condensation and displacement (*Verdichtung* and *Verschiebung*) are two closely linked concepts. See Freud 1899, 1905. Inspired by linguist Roman Jakobson’s essay entitled *The metaphoric and metonymic pole* (1956), wherein Jakobson discusses metaphor and metonymy as the two fundamental and opposite poles along which a discourse with human language is developed, Lacan (1957) argued that the unconscious is structured like a language and, therefore, that Freud’s condensation and displacement are equivalent to the poetic functions of metaphor and metonymy.

on, the subject's entry into the symbolic, the semiotic returns in order to constantly "tear open" language, and it is this important transgression upon which creativity depends (Kristeva 1984: 62). The semiotic is, therefore, not only diachronically anterior to the symbolic, but also synchronically present in it (Kristeva 1984: 29). Although all texts emerge as the confluence of a semiotic genotext and a symbolic phenotext, for Kristeva the extent of the resumption of the functioning characteristic of the semiotic *chora* within the signifying device of language is precisely what distinguishes artistic practices from all other signifying acts (Kristeva 1984: 50).⁵ In the case of poetic language as artistic practice, she resorts to the writings of the poet Mallarmé to re-affirm her belief that the effect of this important transgression is both feminine and musical:

Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgement, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax (Kristeva 1984: 29).

From the above passage it is evident that entry into the symbolic is as necessary for artistic practice as is its subsequent transgression. In and of its own, the semiotic cannot function as signifying practice; it is dependent for its intelligibility on the "guarantee of syntax", thus on the boundaries (Kristeva 1984: 48) established for it by the symbolic, and on the dialectic thus established. Kristeva (1984: 51) thus adds:

This completion constitutes a synthesis that requires the thesis of language to come about, and the semiotic pulverizes it only to make it a new device – for us, this is precisely what distinguishes a text as *signifying practice* from the "drifting-into-non-sense" [...] that characterizes neurotic discourse.

In reading Husserl's phenomenology in the context of Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic writings, Kristeva's understanding of the symbolic devolves upon the subject's reaching what she calls the

5 Kristeva's understanding of genotext merges with that of the semiotic insofar as she describes the former as "a *process*, which tends to articulate structures that are ephemeral (unstable, threatened by drive charges, 'quanta' rather than 'marks') and nonsignifying" (Kristeva 1984: 86), whereas her understanding of the phenotext merges with that of the symbolic insofar as she describes it as a "structure" that "obeys rules of communication" (Kristeva 1984: 87).

“thetic phase”, the “threshold of language” (Kristeva 1984: 45).⁶ This requires an ability to “separate an object from the subject, and attribute it a semiotic fragment, which thereby becomes a signifier” (Kristeva 1984: 43), thus an ability wherein the attribution of difference is crucial. The subject reaches the thetic at what is described in Lacanian terms as the mirror phase, wherein the child’s ability to recognise his/her image in the mirror assumes his/her ability to separate him-/herself from his reflected image (Kristeva 1984: 46-7), so that, from the very outset, signification is dependent upon negativity, upon the “subject lacking in the signifier” (Kristeva 1984: 48), and this negativity is further ensconced in subsequent experiences of the Oedipal crisis, castration and detachment from the mother.⁷ Negativity or “perception of the lack (*manque*)” is thus what “makes the phallic function a symbolic function – *the symbolic function*” (Kristeva 1984: 47). In so entering the realm of the law of the father, the subject transfers semiotic motility onto the symbolic order, where the negativity first experienced in the movements and stases of the maternal semiotic finds further manifestation in “the gap between the signifier and the signified” (Kristeva 1984: 47), or between what Frege would describe as the gap between enunciation and denotation.⁸

In this way, a further experience of negativity emerges in the gap between semiotic motility and symbolic law, and this gap is subsequently breached by the process of mimesis, which is

the construction of an object, not according to truth but to *verisimilitude*, to the extent that the object is posited as such [... by ...] a subject of enunciation who [...] does not suppress the semiotic *chora* but instead raises the *chora* to the status of a signifier, which may or may not obey the norms of grammatical location (Kristeva 1984: 57).

Facilitated by means of Freud’s displacement and condensation, or Jakobson’s metonymy and metaphor, “mimesis and the poetic

6 She thus parts ways with Husserl’s notion of the transcendental ego, which requires for its existence “a projection of signification (*Bedeutung*) as it is presented by judgement” (Kristeva 1984: 39). Instead, she holds that judgement is thetic, a *doxa*, and thus posterior to the “I”. The “I” precedes judgement and *cogito* and is located in the semiotic *chora*. Rather than a Cartesian ego or a transcendental ego, she thus suggests that the ego should be thought of as “in process” or “on trial” (Kristeva 1984: 35-7).

7 See Lacan 1977: 1-8.

8 See Geach & Black (eds) 1952.

language inseparable from it [...] prevent the thetic from becoming theological; in other words, they prevent the imposition of the thetic from hiding the semiotic process that produces it” (Kristeva 1984: 58). In this way, a second-degree thetic is established, which is “the resumption of the functioning characteristic of the semiotic *chora* within the signifying device of language” (Kristeva 1984: 50). The resultant revolution that the second-degree thetic brings about is not confined to a revolution in the structure of language *per se*, but has implications also for the social order in which it operates. Thus:

... within this saturated if not already closed socio-symbolic order, poetry – or more precisely poetic language – reminds us of its eternal function: to introduce through the symbolic that which works on, moves through, and threatens it. The theory of the unconscious seeks the very thing that poetic language practices within and against the social order: the ultimate means of its transformation or subversion, the precondition for its survival and revolution (Kristeva 1984: 81).

As a result of syntactic disturbance caused by the second-degree thetic and the ensuing “nonrecoverable deletion” (Kristeva 1984: 56), a stable Hegelian synthesis can never be reached (Kristeva 1984: 55). Instead, terms become linked *ad infinitum* and sentences become “infinitized” (Kristeva 1984: 56). Thus, according to Kristeva (1984: 65), “musicalization pluralizes meanings”. Such musicalisation, such shattering or proliferation, therefore leads to acknowledgement of the text as intertext, or of what Kristeva prefers to call transposition, “an altering of the thetic position” wherein, ultimately, “every signifying practice [must be understood as] a field of transpositions of various signifying systems” (Kristeva 1984: 59-60).

In conclusion, by urging us to rethink the decisive break with the maternal that is posited in Freud and Lacan’s understanding of language in the paternal, symbolic, social order, Kristeva parts ways, first, with mainstream psychoanalysis. Much of her later work (for example, *Tales of love*) is intent upon further theorising a discourse of maternity, which has endeared her to many in feminist scholarly circles. However, while she does not deny the value of the work that feminist scholars have thus far achieved, Kristeva has preferred to maintain a certain critical distance from mainstream feminism, pointing out in her well-known essay *Women’s time* (1997) that neither feminism’s so-called first generation - intent upon women’s “*insertion*

into history” (Kristeva 1997: 202) – nor its so-called second generation – intent upon “the radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations imposed [...] in the name of irreducible difference” (Kristeva 1997: 202) – aspire to what she believes should be sought, namely a condition wherein “the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to *metaphysics*” (Kristeva 1997: 214). In addition, by seeking to find validation for these notions in the existence of artistic or aesthetic practices such as poetry and music, Kristeva seeks not only to uplift human consciousness above the mediocrity and conformity of modern mass production, to re-inscribe the value of the esoteric, but also ultimately to deconstruct the binary oppositions that gender studies often inadvertently re-inscribe:

It seems to me that the role of what is usually called ‘aesthetic practices’ must increase not only to counterbalance the storage and uniformity of information by present-day mass media, data bank systems, and, in particular, modern communications technology, but also to demystify the identity of the symbolic bond itself, to demystify, therefore, the *community* of language as a universal and unifying tool, one which totalises and equalises. In order to bring out – along with the *singularity* of each person and, even more, along with the multiplicity of every person’s possible identifications [...] – the *relativity of his/her symbolic as well as biological existence*, according to the variation in his/her specific symbolic capacities (Kristeva 1997: 215-6).

2. Theories of music and the semiotic/symbolic dialectic: Mignon’s *Kennst du das Land*

Emerging, to some degree, as a reaction against traditions of journalistic criticism that dominated the musicological writings of the nineteenth century, music theory as a basis for musical critique acquired a heretofore unknown level of maturity, scholarly rigour and esotericism from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The birth and proliferation of university music departments during this time enabled a growing number of theorists to establish themselves from within the institutional power base that such departments provided them, both as individuals and as a community of scholars. In addition, this founding period of music theory as institutionalised musicological interest was dominated by the emigration of late-nineteenth-century European thought – notably Austro-German

thought – to the English-speaking world, and to the US, in particular.⁹ Traditions of theoretical orientation thus established include, among others, function theory (Riemann), psychologically argued theory (Kurth), linguistic theory such as semiotics (Ruwet, Nattiez), phenomenology (Husserl) and rhetoric (Mattheson), as well as structural organicism pertaining to both tonal (Schenker) and atonal (Schoenberg) music. To these must be added the later adaptation and translation of a thinker such as Adorno, who advocated the analysis of musical structure as a basis for social critique, thus influencing the important subsequent Anglo-American interest in exploring musical meaning as socio-political discourse.

What happened next is all too well known. By the middle decades of the twentieth century, established practices of theory and analysis had increasingly come to be regarded as problematic, mainly due to the conflation of the notion of analysis with a structural Schenkerian or neo-Schenkerian brand of such. Seminal works such as Joseph Kerman's *How we got into analysis and how to get out* (1980) and Leo Treitler's *To worship that celestial sound: motives for analysis* (1982) thus advocated not so much a retreat from musical analysis, as from the analysis of an autonomously perceived musical structure. A long and fiercely contested debate was to follow. In the so-called hermeneutic tradition, proponents against theory and analysis argued that it was too "monistic" in its practice (Kerman 1985: 73), too concerned with its own inner workings, that it did not take sufficient heed of the musical text as historically located intertext, as "a meaningful item within a wider context of practices, conventions, assumptions, transmissions, receptions – in short, a musical culture" (Treitler 1989: 37), thus allowing it to emerge as "an inexhaustible source of possible meaning" (Treitler 1989: 156). What was needed instead was for theory to develop "a crossroads of approaches" (Treitler 1982: 54), its own brand of "heterodoxy" (Kerman 1985: 152), "eclecticism" and "infiltration" (Kerman 1985: 148). In the case of radical hermeneutics,

9 This emigration also saw a greater degree of autonomisation of music theory, with the establishment of bodies such as The Society for Music Theory, a number of regional societies, and a host of journals devoted to this field to the exclusion of all else. In Europe, however, analytical and theoretical studies were never pursued in isolation of historical studies to this same extent. For further discussion hereof, see Beach 1985: 278.

on the other hand, the detractors of theory and analysis argued for a deconstruction of musical texts and their established, traditional contexts so that these could be constructed anew as contested spaces wherein “models of organizing the social world are submitted and negotiated”, and thus wherein “the ongoing work of social formation occurs” (McClary 1991: 21).

From their side, proponents for theory and analysis protested that the alternative models suggested by theory’s detractors were themselves equally – if somewhat differently – monistic, not sufficiently “destabilizing” of themselves, despite their call to postmodernism (Tomlinson 1993: 39), often too “imprecise”, “blunt” and even “corny”, operating “at too great a distance from the real and actual details of music” (Van den Toorn 1993: 290), and given to a “vulgar form of pluralism” (Agawu 1993a: 406) wherein no concrete model for pluralism had yet been provided, according to which a “syntax of networks” could be argued as a specific “set of procedures for discovering relationships embedded in context-to-music or music-to-context approaches” (Agawu 1993b: 91).

Currently, of course, this debate has mainly been consigned to the *passé*; both sides have either agreed to disagree, or, thankfully, in some instances, have also cultivated a renewed awareness, as Peter Burkholder put it, that “music theory is better when it is historically conscious”, and “music history is better when it is theoretically informed” (Burkholder 1993: 13). Kofi Agawu, it seems to me, takes an eminently reasonable stance on the matter, one from which I take my cue in the writing of this article, when he argues for acceptance of the necessity of that initial period wherein theory and analysis could focus – almost to the exclusion of all else – on the “canonization of [its own] techniques” (Agawu 1993b: 403). This not as an end unto itself, but in order to allow the relatively young discipline of musicology time and space to develop an inherently musical critical and theoretical vocabulary, upon which a new generation of scholars, in turn, have since been able to develop – or, in some instances, are still being challenged to develop – strategies for critical engagement with musical texts that embrace postmodernism’s call for personal and social contingency, pluralism, intertextuality and deconstruction, while simultaneously not “retreat[ing] from building on the hard-won technical achievements of earlier scholarship” (Agawu 1993b: 406).

In their totality, theories of music and the particular style of analysis each requires, present a large and complex body of musicological thought that cannot possibly be adequately accounted for in all of its details in this article.¹⁰ Nor do I wish to do so. Instead, the remainder of this article focuses on a select number of approaches indicative of certain important tendencies within this body of knowledge, particularly as these may be seen to address the Kristevan dialectic; more specifically, as these may be deemed to provide for either symbolic or semiotic dispositions in the experience of musical meaning (thus to be understood to function individually as a mere part thereof), while necessitating a dispositional ‘crossroads’ and a ‘shattering’ that expose intertextual transpositions.

Insofar as the semiotic describes a maternal space wherein the Freudian drives create “energy charges” and “stases” (Kristeva 1984: 26, 64) by “temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again” (Kristeva 1984: 26), and insofar as the symbolic is described as a paternal space of “syntax” (Kristeva 1984: 29), “social order”, “structuration” (Kristeva 1984: 81) and “totalization” (Kristeva 1984: 51), it is possible at first glance to align these two signifying dispositions with standard classifications of music theoretical approaches dating from the mid-1900s in a relatively straightforward manner (see Table 1). In addition, it is interesting to note the allowances already made in these classifications for notions approximating ‘transposition’ or intertextuality, albeit in a somewhat rudimentary fashion. To this latter category may, of course, be added a great many more recent music analytical strategies loosely carrying the etiquette post-structural.

10 For a comprehensive coverage, see Bent 1980: 340-88.

Table 1: Semiotic and symbolic signifying dispositions in standard music theoretical classifications

	Semiotic signifying dispositions	Symbolic signifying dispositions	Transposition or intertextuality
The general vs the particular ¹¹ :	-	“Analysis of the individual work”	“Stylistic analysis”
Hermann Erpf ¹²	“Psychological analysis” and “analysis of expression”	“Constructional analysis”	-
Leonard B Meyer ¹³	“Kinetic-syntactic” analysis	“Formal” analysis	“Referential analysis”
Carl Dahlhaus ¹⁴	“Energetic interpretation”	“Gestalt analysis”	“Hermeneutics”
John Rahn ¹⁵	“Analog” “In-time” “Bottom-up or data-driven - “Theory of experience”	“Digital” “Time-out” “Top-down or concept-driven”- “Theory of piece”	-

For purposes of illustrating how a crossroads of approaches might be operationalised in terms of Table 1, this article will briefly examine two settings of the first song of the character Mignon in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, completed between 1795 and 1796), which composers have variously titled ‘Sehnsucht nach Italien’, ‘Mignon’, or ‘Kennst du das Land’. Detailed and exhaustive analyses will far exceed the limitations of the scope of this article, therefore a focus on selected salient features must suffice.

- 11 See Bent 1980: 369. Bent does not attribute this to any particular author(s), calling it merely a “widely accepted division”. Sifting through data on the particular in order to make inductive conclusions about the general may, of course, be traced to the very beginnings of musicological thought, as evidenced in Adler 1885.
- 12 See Bent 1980: 369 for reference to Erpf’s classification in the MGG, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.
- 13 See Meyer 1967: 2.
- 14 See Bent 1980: 370 for reference to Dahlhaus’s classification in the *Riemann Lexicon*.
- 15 See Rahn 1979: 205-18, wherein he provides this very astute grouping of “four sets of paired terms which loosely indicate some general, mutually interpenetrating conceptual areas” (Rahn 1979: 204).

We begin with an aspect of the intertext by way of the character Mignon herself. Since her appearance as a secondary, enigmatic character in this Goethe novel, Mignon has become one of the most celebrated heroines of German literature, widely depicted in European fiction, music, and painting. Indeed, in addition to the two settings of Mignon's first song that will be discussed, in this instance – those by Beethoven and Schubert – there are in excess of 70 other known settings, dating almost entirely from the nineteenth century. Most of these use Goethe's original German text, but there are also well-known translations, such as the setting in Russian by Tchaikovsky, and in French by Gounod. After Wilhelm buys Mignon's freedom from her abductor, a brutal circus-troupe director, who used her as an acrobat, he is at first puzzled by this silent, angry child, whom he mistook for a boy (Goethe 1989: 50, 54). However, his fondness for her grows, whereas she, in turn, devotes herself completely to her saviour in the course of his further travels, loving him in secret (Goethe 1989: 65, 82). Sadly, Mignon dies of a broken heart before she is able to know that Wilhelm has brought her to Italy. He mourns her deeply, especially after learning of her childhood abduction and the incestuous relationship between brother and sister that resulted in her birth.

Table 2 gives Mignon's words, when she first spontaneously bursts out in song at the beginning of the third book in this seven-volume novel, with an English translation provided alongside it. These words, in the play unsolicited and subsequently unexplained,¹⁶ are a touching outpouring of her then still misunderstood homesickness, but also of the complex nature of her devotion towards Wilhelm, her beloved, protector and father. Evident also is the trust she places in him as the one who will make things right in her life, and her belief that their paths are forever joined. At the same time, her vaguely remembered sense of abandonment is tragically underlined. The Italian countryside is beautiful, but the house has no real people in it, no love, with only statues staring down at her, whereas the road to and from it is fraught with dangerous dragons and perilous mountain cliffs, shrouded in mist.

16 This is the first of four songs Goethe gives her to sing through the course of the seven volumes of this novel, and it is only in these songs, all equally unsolicited and subsequently unexplained in the events of the novel surrounding them, that she expresses her innermost feelings.

Table 2. Original German text and English translation of
Kennst du das Land.

<p>Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn, Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn, Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht, Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht? Kennst du es wohl? Dahin! dahin Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn. Kennst du das Haus? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach. Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach, Und Marmorbilder stehn und sehn mich an: Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan? Kennst du es wohl? Dahin! dahin Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Beschützer, ziehn. Kennst du den Berg und seinen Wolkensteg? Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg; In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut;</p>	<p>Knowest thou where the lemon blossom grows, In foliage dark the orange golden glows, A gentle breeze blows from the azure sky, Still stands the myrtle, and the laurel, high? Dost know it well? 'Tis there! 'Tis there Would I with thee, oh my beloved, fare. Knowest the house, its roof on columns fine? Its hall glows brightly and its chambers shine, And marble figures stand and gaze at me: What have they done, oh wretched child, to thee? Dost know it well? 'Tis there! 'Tis there Would I with thee, oh my protector, fare. Knowest the mountain with the misty shrouds? The mule is seeking passage through the clouds; In caverns dwells the dragons' ancient brood; The cliff rocks plunge under the rushing flood!</p>
<p>Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut! Kennst du ihn wohl? Dahin! Dahin Geht unser Weg! O Vater, laß uns ziehn!¹⁶</p>	<p>Dost know it well? 'Tis there! 'Tis there Leads our path! Oh father, let us fare.¹⁷</p>

As intertext, the poem's popularity among the composers of the nineteenth century may be explained from several points of view. First, Goethe's iconic stature as the exemplary figure of nineteenth-century German nationhood and the perfect embodiment of the enlightenment man must, of course, be taken into account. During this time, as Lesley Sharpe (2002b:3) put it, in the eyes of many, and certainly in the eyes of most German composers, "he became an ideal human being, the genuine and proper embodiment of German art". The list of Goethe works that received musical settings in the nineteenth century is long indeed. Secondly, what drew so many composers to this work, in particular, is not only the foundation it laid for the popular *Bildungsroman*, a prototype for the romantic artist's search for purpose and identity, but also its autobiographical nature. Wilhelm Meister's many travels and aspirations, his idealism, his journey as apprentice of life, may in a very direct sense be viewed as an expression of Goethe's own character and life, whereas Mignon, in turn, may be regarded as a mirror for Wilhelm's psyche; much of what she expresses and voices in the novel reflects his desires and emotions rather than her own, whereas her inability to remember her early years is a mystery that slowly unfolds over the course of the novel at the same time that a process of self-discovery unfolds in Wilhelm's own life (Albert 2009: 17). Thirdly, just as Wilhelm becomes obsessed with Shakespeare's Hamlet in the course of the novel, so he takes on attributes of Hamlet's character, whereas Mignon takes on a role not unlike that of Ophelia. Albert (2009: 18-9) notes:

Both Ophelia and Mignon exhibit an ethereal beauty and tragic element [...] Ophelia is at the mercy of Hamlet's affection and violent whims, becoming a projection of his own repressed sexual desire and ambiguity, which leads to madness. Similarly, Mignon functions as an object of projection for Wilhelm, absorbing and reflecting his ambiguity, longing and desire for the approval of others, particularly a father figure.

The mystery, tragedy and unrequited love which surrounds her is thus what made Mignon the Ophelia of nineteenth-century art song, what drew composers of the romantic period to her again

17 Goethe1795/1796.<http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=6461>

18 Translator unknown. Translation taken from http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=6461.

and again. The ambiguities of her personality have been a source of constant interest, being as she is simultaneously an impetuous and volatile child, a somewhat androgynous figure, a devoted servant and adopted daughter, but also one who secretly loves with the tragically misunderstood heart of a woman.

Aside from the literary intertextual matrix, discussed earlier, against which each of these compositions must be read, a further aspect of intertextuality that needs to be taken into account is, of course, their shared musical syntax, the symbolic signifying disposition common to most German composers of the nineteenth century – at least up to Brahms – on which these two works both rely in some measure or other. As one theory – although by no means the only one – that epitomises this symbolic disposition, Heinrich Schenker’s theory of the *Ursatz* presents a historically grounded argument for nineteenth-century German musical syntax which, in contrast to the teachings of Rameau, takes the longstanding thorough bass tradition with its compromise between contrapuntal voice-leading and vertical harmony as point of departure. The first two volumes of Schenker’s *Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien* (*New musical theories and fantasies*) thus present a thorough training in harmony and in counterpoint, before showing in the third volume, *Der Freie Satz* (*Free composition*), that free composition is grounded in the same procedures that controlled strict composition. Burkholder (1993: 17) thus notes:

In short, Schenker’s theory works because it is historically well founded. It is a model of how composers during a certain era thought in music, based in large part on the pedagogical approaches which taught them how to think in music.

In the extent to which Schenker’s dictum, “always the same but not in the same way”, relies upon an understanding of a simple underlying tonal sentence (the *Ursatz*) that undergoes composing out at various background, middle ground and foreground layers or *schichten* in order to emerge as free composition, his theory has often been likened to Chomskyan generative grammar.¹⁹ This likeness lies in the fact that “both are concerned with characterizing both the uniqueness

19 See, for example, Baroni et al. 1983: 175-208; Lerdahl & Jackendoff 1983; Heman 1988: 181-95; Swain 1995: 281-308.

of single utterances or pieces of music and the way in which such individual utterances or pieces relate to other utterances or pieces in the language by means of hierarchical descriptions that exhaustively characterize their structures” (Meredith 1996: 7). It is thus interesting to note that Kristeva accepts the legitimacy of generative grammar as the epitome of the symbolic signifying disposition in language, and agrees that “Chomsky is quite correct” when he accepts the “deep structure” as positing “the proper contexts for lexical insertion”, notwithstanding the fact that, when ultimately noted in the larger context of the semiotic/symbolic dialectic, that is, “in the practice of the *text*, deep structure or at least transformational rules are disturbed” (Kristeva 1984: 37). In similar vein, Carl Dahlhaus suggests, for example, that the value the Schenkerian perspective may ultimately provide in tonal musical analysis lies in accepting its validity as a mere latent structure. Even its absence may be musically meaningful, since suppressed implications, ambiguities and paradoxes are, in fact, the most characteristic features of musical reality (Dahlhaus 1983: 87). The point, however, is that the disturbance only becomes meaningful if it is understood from the point of view of that which is disturbed. Thus Kristeva (1984: 50) is vehemently opposed to any form of textual analysis that posits “the refusal of the thetic phase and an attempt to hypostatize semiotic motility as autonomous from the thetic – capable of doing without it or unaware of it”.

In addition, it should be noted that, although the practice of Schenkerian theory, which is predominantly an Anglo-American practice, has tended to emphasise the *Ursatz* as a hypostatized notion, Schenker’s own understanding was, to a large extent, based on a personal and aesthetic experience of the dynamic nature of this construct, inextricably linked with the Freudian life drive and death drive, hence with the semiotic signifying disposition. Schenker (1979: 13) states:

To man is given the experience of ending, the cessation of tensions and efforts. In this sense, we feel by nature that the fundamental line must lead downward until it reaches $\hat{1}$, and that the bass must fall back to the fundamental. With $\hat{1}/I$ all tensions in a musical work cease.

A gap thus emerges between the manner of Schenker’s personal experience of the tonal works of ‘the great masters’, the manner in

which he argues for the application of his theories, and the manner in which these theories, in turn, have subsequently been perceived and practised. This presents a very real (musical) instance of Kristeva's description of the symbolic as positing the gap between the signifier and signified, between enunciation and denotation, and between semiotic motility and symbolic law (Kristeva 1984: 47, 54, 57).

Given the *Ursatz* as both a relevant historical intertext and a convincing theoretical grounding for explanations of the musical symbolic in this particular case, it is interesting to note that both works, in fact, manifest identical background syntactical structures, and are quite incidentally both in the key of A major. Analytical reductions are shown in Examples 3 and 4, where the Schenkerian *Ursatz* and selected aspects of the middle ground are shown in each case at the staves indicated as 'symbolic'. In addition, they both thematise the minor third as a significant area of tonal digression at middle-ground level, although this modal mixture is not manifest in the same way: whereas Beethoven's strophic formal design²⁰ employs it as an area of tonal digression to A minor and C major within each of the three stanzas that begin and end in A major, Schubert's overall semi-strophic design treats the first two stanzas differently to the third. In stanzas 1 and 2, the minor third is introduced to support a brief tonal digression to C major, F major and A minor in stanzas that begin and end in A major, whereas, in the final stanza, the minor third is introduced from the very outset to provide an A minor beginning, with a subsequent brief sojourn to F major, before the tonic major key is reintroduced from bar 63 until the end. Another significant similarity in tonal planning between the two works involves the planning of cadences that divide each stanza into two parts: the central cadence for each stanza, in the case of both works set to the words 'Kennst du es wohl?', is a poignant half cadence in A minor (see Examples 1 and 2), whereas, in both works, each stanza concludes with an authentic cadence in the tonic major (see Examples 6 and 7).

Little will be gained at this point from presenting detailed Schenkerian analyses that follow the composing out of these remarkably similar background structures in all of their miniscule

20 This despite some textural thickening and a prolongation of the final cadence in the third stanza.

details to their quite different musical foregrounds. Were this all that was to be noted of these works, this article would achieve nothing more than the rich tradition of Schenkerian theory has already done, and in far more eloquent terms. Instead, we turn our attention now to the semiotic signifying disposition as it finds its manifestation in these two works, in order to consider how both musical settings negate the symbolic, each in their own unique way. In the text of this song, the tragedy of Mignon's life is merely implicit, never explicit. In manifesting salient details of the musicalised text as a contravention of the *Ursatz* in many respects, what the music mainly does in each case, in this instance, is to support the semiotic signifying disposition of language by 'tearing open' Mignon's words, to actualise her tragedy, and to empathise with it. In this sense, one may consider music to act not only metaphorically, as Kristeva considers its role in language *per se*, but also quite literally, when she states the following:

Language thus tends to be drawn out of its symbolic function (sign-syntax) and is opened out within a semiotic articulation; with a material support such as the voice, this semiotic network gives "music" to literature (Kristeva 1984: 63).

The semiotic dispositions of music theory and analysis, as suggested in Table 1, are those that may collectively be identified by their inclination to find ontological and epistemological grounding in music experienced as a series of "tension spans" (Bent 1980: 370). As a family of approaches, they reach at least as far back as the nineteenth-century 'University of Vienna school of absolute music' (Parkany 1988: 265), represented by the aesthetic and theoretical views of Eduard Hanslick, Guido Adler and Ernst Kurth. In this 'school', the idea of motion in music begins with Hanslick's reference to "*tönend bewegte Formen*" (Hanslick 1858: 38),²¹ and culminates in Kurth's understanding,²² influenced by contemporaneous Viennese developments in psychoanalysis, of music as "essentially a flux of moving lines, which generate and dissipate tension and which offer a pale surface manifestation of interplays of forces within the human psyche" (Chew 1991: 171-2). More recently, they may be seen to include, among others, Jan la Rue's notion of musical growth, the principles

21 Translation of the German into English please.

22 See Kurth 1917, 1920, 1925.

on which Leonard B Meyer bases his understanding of emotion and meaning in music and his subsequent implication-realisation model for tonal melody, as well as Steve Larson's theory of musical forces.

For Jan La Rue, musical growth devolves, *inter alia*, upon alternating perceptions of areas of stress and lull at different architectonic levels in the course of a musical work, and these emerge from the confluence of all musical parameters, expressed as "rhythmic concinnities" such as timbral rhythm, textural rhythm, harmonic rhythm, key rhythm, the rhythm of melodic contours, and so on (La Rue 1970: 94-102).²³ Meyer's *Emotion and meaning in music* (1956) sets out ambiguity, delay and unexpected consequents as three key creators of musical tension, upon which emotion and hence musical meaning is created. These ideas reach fruition in his *Explaining music: essays and explorations* (1973), wherein he sets forth the implication-realisation model for tonal melody, according to which implications or hypothetical meanings are created that draw active tones towards points of stability, either by conjunct motion, or by the so-called 'gap-fill' process (Meyer 1973: 131, 147).²⁴ Steve Larson, on the other hand, recognises three musical forces, according to which notes act, namely magnetism, which is "the tendency of an unstable note [...] to move to the nearest stable pitch" (Larson 1993: 98), gravity, which is "the tendency of an unstable note to descend to a lower, more stable pitch" (Larson 1993: 99), and inertia, which is "the tendency of a pattern of musical motion to continue in the same fashion" (Larson 1993: 99).²⁵ The correlation, in this instance, with the defining terms of Kristeva's semiotic signifying disposition is obvious, both as these theories describe moments of movement and stasis and, in La Rue's case, in particular, as these moments are ultimately expressed in metarhythmic terms.

The poem is written in strophic form, with a sequence of three six-line stanzas. The first four lines of each stanza are two sets of heroic couplets in an *aabb* rhyme scheme, followed by a two-line refrain in narrative form (Albert 2009: 22-3). What is interesting in both the Beethoven and the Schubert settings, first, is how the music transgresses or disturbs this poetic form. In both instances, the music

23 See semiotic stress profile and rhythmic concinnities shown in Examples 3 and 4.

24 See semiotic aspects of pitch shown in Examples 3 and 4.

25 See semiotic aspects of pitch shown in Examples 3 and 4.

divides around the central cadence, the half cadence in A minor, that occurs midway through the refrain rather than between couplets and refrain, as one might otherwise expect. For both composers, this occurs in order to dwell on the words ‘Kennst du es wohl?’, and, in both instances, these words are approached with a two-bar vocal silence which draws out this moment in the poem, lending it the status of a musical aposiopesis.²⁶ These cadences are shown in Examples 1 and 2.

Example 1: Beethoven’s setting of “Kennst du es wohl?”, bars 13-19²⁷

Example 2: Schubert’s setting of “Kennst du es wohl?”, bars 14-22²⁸

- 26 In rhetoric, aposiopesis is the breaking off or pausing of speech for dramatic or emotional effect.
- 27 The 2-bar passage setting the words “Kennst du es wohl” is repeated in stanza 2 at bars 48-49, and in stanza 3 at bars 80-81.
- 28 The 2-bar passage setting the words “Kennst du es wohl” is repeated for stanza 2, and in stanza 3 at bars 58-59.

Potgieter/Towards the semiotic and the symbolic in music theory & analysis

Example 3: Beethoven, *Mignon* from *Sechs Gesänge*, opus 75, no 1 (1809)

Semiotic Aspects of Pitch

Semiotic

Symbolic

8 bars (lull)	5 bars (stress)	6 bars (lull)	11 bars (stress)	5/6 bars (lull)
Tempo quite slow. Rhythmically, melodically and texturally thin. Diatonic and nonmodulating. Unusually begins with a traditional closing gesture, anticipating the further "tearing open" of syntax.	Melodic profile becomes more reactive, as does rhythmic texture. Chromaticism and modulation introduced.	Apoptosis in the vocal line draws attention to the poignancy of what follows, underscored by a deliberate decrease in rhythmic and textural intensity. Harmonic and tonal nonclosure on a half cadence in the tonic minor key.	Faster tempo indication, with time signature change. Ascending line underlying repetition of "dahin", emphasising urgency. Active rhythmic and melodic profiles, with relatively thick texture. Return to tonic major key, with diatonic and nonmodulating tonal character. <i>Ursatz</i> tonal closure reached.	Harmonically static, with a homorhythmic and homophonic texture. Descending vocal lines and a melodic emphasis on the non-tonic "intrusion" of the D, indicating resignation and dramatic nonclosure.

Semiotic: Rhythmic Concincities as per bar durations above:

Movement Stasis Movement Stasis

Example 4: Schubert, *Mignon*, D321 (1815)

Semitiotic Aspects of Pitch

Symbolic

Bar:

Stanza 1 and 2		Stanza 3																														
A: I		JIII		s VI		a: V		A: V		VI		I VI		V		A: V		I														
1	4	5	8	14	17	18	21	24	29	30	35	38	40	41	43	46	48	54	58	59	60	63	69	70	71	81						
Moderate tempo indication. Grows from a relatively neutral opening phrase to increased levels of activity in melodic profile, rhythmic and textural density, and tonal digression, with chromaticism and modulation introduced from bar 7 onwards.			Apoclopstis in the vocal line in bars 14-16 draws attention to the pugnacity of what follows, underscored by a lighter texture in the piano in bars 15 and 16. Harmonic and tonal closure on a half cadence in the tonic minor key.			Faster tempo indication. Rhythmically animated, with ascending melodic profile, to emphasise repetitions of "Dahin".			Deliberate reversion to homophonic and homorhythmic texture to emphasise "Dahin" exclamation by understatement.			Reversion to the melodic character, rhythmic and textural density and tonal character encountered in bars 19-28.			Rising repetitions of "Dahin" emphasise urgency. Closure on melodic high point.			Change of mode, and reversion to slower tempo. As in bars 1-16, grows from a relatively neutral opening phrase to increased levels of activity in melodic profile, rhythmic and textural density, and tonal digression, with chromaticism and modulation introduced from bar 48 onwards.			A repeat of bars 17-18.			A repeat of bars 19-28.			A repeat of bars 29-30.			A repeat of bars 31-40.		
16 bars (growing in stress levels) (lull)			2 bars (lull)			8 bars (stress)			2 bars (lull)			10 bars (stress)			17 bars (growing in levels of stress)			2 bars (lull)			10 bars (stress)			2 bars (lull)			10 bars (stress)					

Semitiotic Rhythmic Concinnities as per bar durations above:

Movement Stasis Movement Stasis Movement Stasis Movement

In so doing, the music urges us to dwell on all of the suppressed memories, secret desires and the tragedies of Mignon's life, always merely implicit rather than explicit in her words. In Beethoven's case, the underlying syntactic framework of the *Ursatz* is abandoned in favour of an upward movement towards the dominant note in the vocal line. In Schubert's case, the prominence of the augmented fourth interval in the vocal line in this phrase points as much to tonal instability as it does to the possibility that the uncovering of Mignon's hidden memories and desires may ultimately disrupt both Goethe's and Wilhelm's perception of her as it is portrayed at this point in the novel. Goethe intended the song to be heard as the uncomplicated musings of a child, with something of the naïve earnestness that a child's performance might hold. He is, therefore, infamous for having expressed his dislike, among others, of both Beethoven's and Schubert's settings of this poem (Dougherty 2002: 134), along with several other later settings. Of Beethoven and Spohr's settings, for example, Goethe is reported to have remarked:

I cannot understand how Beethoven and Spohr so thoroughly misunderstood the poem ("Kennst du") as to through-compose it.²⁹ I should have thought that the divisions occurring in each stanza at the same spot would be sufficient to show the composer that I expected a simple song from him. Mignon is a person who can sing a song, not an aria (Dougherty 2002: 131).

The semiotic stress profile for each setting given in Examples 3 and 4 also shows the extent to which a combined experience of musical parameters at the setting of 'Kennst du es wohl?' creates a two-bar hiatus, a stasis that effectively draws attention to itself by disturbing the regularity of metarhythmic durations and perceived movement of the surrounding musical passages, further underlined in the case of both composers by providing very soft dynamic indications and a pause on the final note, and offset against an indication that the tempo and dynamics should increase thereafter.

In the case of both settings, Goethe might have acknowledged that the naïve and childlike earnestness of Mignon's performance in the context of the novel is certainly captured in the opening couplet of each stanza. In this instance, Beethoven's opening line is particularly noteworthy for its adoption of what Dougherty (2002: 131) associates

29 Neither Beethoven's nor Spohr's settings are, in fact, through-composed.

with the solemnity and pomp of the French overture, in keeping with Goethe's description of her performance as one who rose to sing as though she had something important to say. Syntactically, however, the reversal of traditional opening and closing gestures in this phrase, shown in Example 5, foreshadows further disturbances of the musical symbolic that are to follow in this work.

Example 5: Syntactic reversal of musical opening and closing gestures in the first phrase of Beethoven's *Mignon*, bars 1-4³⁰

The image shows a musical score for the first phrase of Beethoven's *Mignon*, bars 1-4. The score is in 2/4 time, key of D major, and tempo 'Ziemlich langsam'. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are 'Kennst du das land wo die Zi - tro - nen blühn'. The piano part includes dynamic markings 'f' and 'p'.

Both Beethoven and Schubert begin to deviate from the simplicity and naiveté of the text in the second couplet of each stanza.³¹ Thicker rhythmic textures result, in both instances, from the introduction of the semiquaver triplet as accompaniment figure on the piano, in addition to which the minor third is introduced, disrupting the *Ursatz*, on which basic various melodic and tonal digressions follow before the half cadence in A minor, discussed earlier. These digressions intensify with the description of dragons and dangerous mountain cliffs in stanza 3, but whereas Beethoven presents essentially the same material with thickened texture, in this instance, Schubert presents a new variation of the music previously given to the couplets, this time rooted in the tonic minor key throughout. For this reason, the stress

30 Repeated for stanzas 2 (with one slight change) and 3 at bars 33-36 and 65-68, respectively.

31 In Beethoven's case, this occurs in stanza 1 at bars 8-12, in stanza 2 at bars 40-44, and in stanza 3, with a further thickening of the rhythmic texture, at bars 72-76. In Schubert's case, this occurs in stanza 1 at bars 9-14, repeated as stanza 2, followed by considerable variation in stanza 3 at bars 49-54.

analysis profiles in Examples 3 and 4 show the setting of the couplets as growing in levels of intensity in each case.

After the central cadence that brings about the hiatus in the refrain, as discussed earlier, these two composers treat the remainder of the refrain at first in a very similar manner.³² Each heralds a return to the tonic major key, along with an indication that the tempo should be increased. In Beethoven's case, the time signature is also changed from a simple duple to a compound duple metre, to further thematise the idea of the triplet introduced in the second couplet. In contrast to the dramatic subtext depicted in the central cadence of these two songs, therefore, both composers change register, in this instance, to depict Mignon's remaining words as the excited and urgent plea of a child – 'Dahin! Dahin!' – along with the various closing lines that follow. Rising melodic profiles along with this rhythmic animation emphasise an increased urgency in each repetition of her childlike plea, as shown in the respective stress profile analyses in Examples 3 and 4. Both composers take some licence, in this instance, by repeating the final line of the refrain, thus further disrupting Goethe's intended poetic form for this song. In musical terms, this repetition provides a closing section for each stanza that better balances, in durational terms, the section preceding the central cadence. In Schubert's case especially, where this section is made much longer than Beethoven made it, the settings of these lines receive much greater metarhythmic agogic accent than given to it in Goethe's original version.

In Beethoven's setting, the repeat of this final line heralds closure of the *Ursatz*, the background tonal structure.³³ Significantly, however, Beethoven continues to have the singer utter the words 'Dahin' twice more thereafter. Following on the childlike excitement of this section of each stanza up to that point, these repeated words at the end provide a second hiatus in the musical energy, defying previous syntactical closure of the *Ursatz* by opening the music up yet again in order to dwell on the non-tonic note D. As shown on the stave 'semiotic aspects of pitch' in Example 3, this D is a problematised note – an object of syntactic intrusion – recurring throughout the work. It is

32 See Beethoven, stanza 1 at bars 18-32, stanza 2 at bars 50-64, and stanza 3 at bars 82-98. See Schubert, stanzas 1 and 2 at bars 19-40 and stanza 3 at bars 60-81.

33 See Beethoven, stanza 1 at bars 27-28, stanza 2 at bars 59-60, and stanza 3 at bars 91-92.

often treated as a musical implication that receives realisation as the most immediate form of tension it creates, namely to be resolved according to the rules of musical gravity, in a descending direction towards the lower C-sharp, the initial tone of the *Ursatz*. Later, however, it opens up a further implication in leading, by a process of musical magnetism, to the upper dominant note, E (as found in the central cadence, for example). The final ‘Dahin’, especially as it is encountered at the end of stanza 3 where it is replaced by the words ‘lass uns ziehn’, receiving additional emphasis through rhythmic augmentation (see Example 6), hangs unresolved for some time before the music simply abandons it in favour of a restatement of the tonic note. This lack of final resolution of the D, along with Beethoven’s adoption of a harmonically static, homophonic and homorhythmic accompaniment texture, suspends the final bars of this song in an unresolved stasis, ‘tearing open’ the symbolic to draw our attention yet again to the tragic subtext underlying Mignon’s words.

Example 6: Closing bars of Beethoven’s *Mignon*, bars 94-98.

The image shows a musical score for the closing bars of Beethoven's *Mignon*, bars 94-98. The score is in 6/8 time and D major. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: "Da - hin lass uns ziehn." The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) is homophonic and homorhythmic, featuring a static harmonic texture with a prominent D note in the bass line.

In Schubert’s case, we encounter a similar note of intrusion, one that also constantly ‘tears open’ the syntax of the musical symbolic. This is the sixth scale step, the note F-sharp or the chromaticised F-natural, in the latter case drawing even greater attention to its intrusiveness. Its repeated occurrence throughout the course of this song is shown on the staff ‘semiotic aspects of pitch’ in Example 4. As in Beethoven’s case, this non-tonic note of intrusion intensifies musical movement by creating implications, mostly anticipating that these implications will be realised as musical gravity, drawing it in the form of an upper appoggiatura back down to the dominant note

E. However, this implication is only once realised, and very briefly at that. In the first half of each stanza, it repeatedly creates a gap by dissonant diminished fifth from F-natural to B, which is never resolved or filled by conjunct motion. Instead, the second half of each stanza restores it to F-sharp, and, after briefly visiting the lower E, creates a new implication for its magnetism towards the upper tonic note, with which each stanza ends. Unlike Beethoven, Schubert prefers to dwell throughout this passage on the childlike excitement of Mignon's plea, not only repeating the final line of the refrain but also having 'Dahin' uttered four times during this repeat, instead of only twice as Goethe intended. In so doing, Schubert intensifies the underlying rising melodic line encountered at each repetition of 'Dahin', ultimately allowing the non-tonic note of intrusion, the F-sharp, to lead the way to the singer's ending on a triumphant and excited upper tonic note. The unabated energy of this ending, shown in Example 7, emphasises on-going movement, as though Mignon's plea would immediately convince Wilhelm to embark on the journey to Italy she so desires. Musically, it has the effect of 'tearing open' the background syntax implicit in the *Ursatz*, since not only is the previously mentioned gap between F and B never filled, but in so doing, the B, the middle tone of the *Ursatz*, which begs to be resolved downward towards its goal tone by musical gravity in order to complete the *Ursatz* as Schenker would have it, in fact never occurs. Thus, as far as the vocal line is concerned, the implications of both tones – F/F-sharp and B – as well as the gap between them, are ultimately left unresolved³⁴.

34 Although *Ursatz* closure is given in a middle voice in the piano accompaniment, it remains significantly absent from the vocal line, which is the most prominent melodic line in this work.

Example 7: Closing bars of Schubert's *Mignon*, bars 74-81.

o Va - ter, lass uns ziehn! Da - hin! da - hin, da -

hin, da - hin!

An additional dimension of Schubert's setting worthy of note is its frequent change in levels of parametric activity, leading to the perception of a background semiotic stress profile that is much more active and erratic in terms of the metarhythmic concinnities it implies, whereas Beethoven's design of passages with higher or lower levels of movement and stress divide each stanza in his composition into two regular units. In this way, the overall experience of metarhythmic change, hence of movements versus stases, is less evident in Beethoven's setting than in Schubert's.

In closing, a final return to matters of intertextuality. Aside from using Goethe's verbal text, with all the associations that the character of *Mignon* brings with it, and aside from basing their compositions on the same established symbolic signifying disposition, expressed as the Schenkerian *Ursatz*, in this instance, it has been noted throughout this discussion how very similar these two works are in many of their musical details. Although it is not ascertained that Schubert was acquainted with Beethoven's setting of this poem when he wrote his own six years later, it would not be unfounded to assume this to be most likely, given the high regard that Schubert was known to have held for Beethoven throughout his life, the thorough study he is known to have made of many other Beethoven works, and the

fact that they both lived, worked and had their works performed in Vienna. From this point of view, it is interesting to note the extent to which many of the details of Beethoven's setting are "shattered", "proliferated", "transposed" and ultimately "infinitezied" in Schubert's setting (Kristeva 1984: 56-60). Further study could of course be made along similar lines of the extent to which both of these works, in turn, were thereafter to be similarly shattered, proliferated, transposed and infinitezied in the many subsequent settings that followed throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.³⁵

In addition, one might return to consider the dialectic, both verbal and musical, presented, in this instance, not only in generally applicable terms as a dialectic between the paternal phenotext and the maternal genotext, but also very pertinently pointing to a gendered discourse in Mignon's song, one that resonates with Barbara Becker-Cantarino's understanding of Goethe, the personification of the enlightenment male, as positing "the reduction of woman to those elements which remain subservient to and controllable by male interests", wherein lies her "ultimate conquest, destruction and exclusion" (Becker-Cantarino 2002: 190-1). Mignon's inability to express in words what is hidden in her heart and her suppressed memories, along with Beethoven and Schubert's shattering of the symbolic signifying disposition of language in order to problematise and highlight that which remains unspoken by her, is a very real instance of the "musicalized text" (Kristeva 1984: 65), and posits, in this instance, in very literal terms, the semiotic signifying disposition as both a feminine and a rhythmic – hence musical – space. Perhaps Goethe unwittingly sensed this, prompting his decision to give Mignon a song to sing rather than merely presenting her words in the form of spoken dialogue. In psychoanalytic terms, language manifests the fundamental inequality of the Oedipal complex, so that the feminine remains at all times othered by language. As quintessential feminine discourse, on the other hand, music is able, as no other signifying practice is, to give account of the barred subject, to suture the symbolic with the pre-castration and pre-linguistic experience of

35 This has, in fact, been attempted in part in several instances, among others by Dougherty (2002) and Albert (2009), but in somewhat different terms to those suggested in this instance.

wholeness associated with the mother's body.³⁶ The intelligibility of this experience of wholeness, however, is nevertheless dependent upon its restraint within the syntax of the symbolic signifying disposition, hence Kristeva's (1997: 214) reminder that, ultimately, signification is always reliant on both, and that the binary divide presented by gender difference should be understood merely as a metaphysical construct.

3. Conclusion

In the details of its analytical procedures, this article has contributed nothing new to the way in which musical analysis and theory have long been practised. What it has attempted to present in a fresh light, however, is a way in which theoretical perspectives, traditionally practised in isolation from each other, can, on the basis of the semiotic/symbolic dialectic, be brought together in a coherent and purposeful way to serve neither a form of pluralism that is unsubstantiated and "vulgar" (Agawu 1993a: 406), nor one that makes itself guilty of retreating from "hardcore analysis" (Agawu 1993b: 91), but rather one motivated by the inevitable plurality of its underlying rationale, and one to which that rationale lends a structured framework for the establishment of a convincing and comprehensive "syntax of networks" (Agawu 1993b: 91). In claiming thus, I do not mean to imply that Kristeva's semiotic/symbolic dialectic is the only underlying rationale for such a syntax of networks in music theory and analysis, merely that it is worthy of investigation as one such possibility, in order to remind us, if nothing else, that the challenge of developing heterodoxy and plurality within the confines of theoretical rigour is not a challenge unique to the discipline of musicology; that linguistics and musicology may have more to learn from each other in this regard than either discipline is usually given credit for.

36 The extent to which music may be perceived as quintessential feminine discourse is the extent to which Kristeva describes the maternal *chora* and the genotext as "musical" (Kristeva 1984: 22), "nonsignifying" (Kristeva 1984: 86) and "preverbal" (Kristeva 1984: 26). Music, in this sense, is closely linked with what Freud called 'the oceanic feeling', or what has also been referred to in psychoanalysis as 'the sonorous envelope'. But this is, of course, not the only sense in which music signifies. As noted in this instance, music as autonomous symbolic and semiotic discourse is a highly developed self-referential signifying practice, in addition to which it may also attach itself to other signifying practices, thus to act as signifier contingent upon such contexts.

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