

UC Irvine

UC Irvine Previously Published Works

Title

Brahms's Ascending Circle: Hölderlin, *Schicksalslied* and the Process of Recollection

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/89p0m2tk>

Journal

Nineteenth-Century Music Review, 11(1)

ISSN

1479-4098

Author

Grimes, Nicole

Publication Date

2014-06-01

DOI

10.1017/s1479409814000159

Peer reviewed

Nineteenth-Century Music Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/NCM>

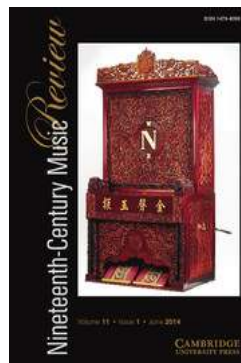
Additional services for *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Brahms's Ascending Circle: Hölderlin, *Schicksalslied* and the Process of Recollection

Nicole Grimes

Nineteenth-Century Music Review / Volume 11 / Issue 01 / June 2014, pp 57 - 92

DOI: 10.1017/S1479409814000159, Published online: 05 August 2014

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1479409814000159

How to cite this article:

Nicole Grimes (2014). Brahms's Ascending Circle: Hölderlin, *Schicksalslied* and the Process of Recollection. *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, 11, pp 57-92 doi:10.1017/S1479409814000159

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

Brahms's Ascending Circle: Hölderlin, *Schicksalslied* and the Process of Recollection

Nicole Grimes
University College Dublin
Email: nicole.e.grimes@gmail.com

The ending to Brahms's Schicksalslied confounds scholars for two reasons: his setting of Hölderlin's ostensibly despairing poem ends with an orchestral section that evokes comfort and reconciliation, and the postlude transposes the material of the introduction down to C major, ending in a key other than its opening. This represents 'a rare instance of a composer not merely placing an arbitrary interpretation on words but explicitly contradicting a poet's statement' (Petersen, 1983). Daverio (1993) and Reynolds (2012) hold similar views, seeing Hölderlin's poem as if divorced from the novel Hyperion.

Although the poem marks the chronological endpoint of the novella, it is intricately bound up with levels of time, and it serves a continuous engendering function. The recollection of music in an altered key in Brahms's postlude is apposite to Abrams's notion of 'the ascending circle, or spiral'. Drawing on musical and hermeneutic analysis, on evidence from Brahms's personal library, and on newly discovered correspondence from Hermann Levi, I argue that Brahms's 'eccentric path' – like Hölderlin's – leads us away from the original unity of the work in order to restore it in a heightened manner. The postlude prompts reflection and realization on the part of Brahms's listener akin to that of Hölderlin's reader.

More you also desired, but every one of us/
Love draws earthward, and grief bends
you with still greater power;/ Yet our arc not for nothing/
Brings us back to our starting place.¹

—Friedrich Hölderlin

Now it seems to me you return cultivated and ripe back to your youth, and will
unite the fruit with the blossom. This second youth is the youth of the gods, and
immortal, like them.²

—Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller

The research for this article was funded by a Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowship under the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission. I gratefully acknowledge this support. A number of people have read and responded to earlier drafts of this paper. I wish to express my gratitude to them for their valuable feedback and advice. They include David Brodbeck, John Michael Cooper, Julian Horton, David Kasunic, Benjamin Korstvedt, Meredith Lee, Benedict Taylor and Harry White. All shortcomings in the article remain my own.

¹ 'Größeres wolltest auch Du, aber die Liebe zwingt/ All' uns nieder, das Leid beuget gewaltiger,/ Und es kehrt umsonst nicht/ Unser Bogen, woher er kommt'. Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Lebenslauf', as translated in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger, ed. Jeremy Adler (London: Penguin, 1998): 59–60.

² 'Jetzt dünkt mir kehren Sie, ausgebildet und reif, zu Ihrer Jugend zurück, und werden dir Frucht mit der Blüthe verbinden. Diese zweite Jugend ist die Jugend der Götter

Introduction

Brahms's *Schicksalslied*, Op. 54, a setting of the poem 'Hyperion's Schicksalslied' from Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, is one of a number of distinctly elegiac works by Brahms. Although many of his instrumental compositions can be described as elegiac, *Schicksalslied*, along with *Nänie*, Op. 82, and *Gesang der Parzen*, Op. 89, can be distinguished from the larger group on account of the nature of their poetic texts. All three compositions are concerned with the legends of Classical antiquity as mediated through the turn-of-the-century New Humanism of Goethe, Schiller and their contemporaries. Furthermore, when viewed as a group these works speak to the poetics of loss in German culture that runs from before these Hellenic humanists up to figures such as Martin Heidegger and Theodor Adorno.³

Brahms's interest in the renaissance of Greco-Roman civilization was not a passing intellectual phase. His love for and deep appreciation of the literature of Greek antiquity is evidenced not only by the well-worn copies of the writings of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Homer in his library,⁴ but also by the fact that his friend, the philologist Gustav Wendt, dedicated his 1884 translation of Sophocles to Brahms.⁵ The idea of looking back to antiquity that these Hellenic humanists advocated resonates with Brahms's own focus on musical styles of the past as representative of a lost golden age.⁶ As is the case with many of Brahms's compositions, however, the form of nostalgia found in these poetic texts also looks toward the future.

Brahms's library testifies to the depth of his involvement with the writings of Hellenic humanism.⁷ He shared his profound interest in Schiller and Goethe with those in his circle of cultivated and learned friends in Vienna. His continued interest in the writings of Hölderlin was, however, somewhat more unusual.

und unsterblich wie diese'. Letter from Schiller to Goethe, 17 January 1797. This translation is taken from *Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe from 1794 to 1805*, trans. George H. Calvert, 2 Vols (New York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1845): Vol. 1, 220–21.

³ A very useful, and recent, source dealing with this aspect of German culture is found in Mary Cosgrove and Anna Richards, eds, *Sadness and Melancholy in German-Language Literature and Culture*, *Edinburgh German Yearbook* 6 (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2012).

⁴ In addition to the 1884 Wendt edition of Sophocles listed in the next note, Brahms also owned Friedrich Wilhelm Georg Stäger, *Sophocles. Tragödien*, in the original and translated by Stäger, 2 Vols (Halle: Verlag von Richard Mühlman, 1841); and a number of titles by Aeschylus and Homer. See Kurt Hofmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms* (Hamburg: Wagner, 1974).

⁵ Sophocles, *Tragödien*, trans. Gustav Wendt, 2 Vols (Stuttgart: Verlag der J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1884).

⁶ For a discussion of the relationship between Brahms's compositional output and early music, see, for instance, Elaine Kelly, 'An Unexpected Champion of François Couperin: Johannes Brahms and the "Pieces de Clavecin"', *Music and Letters* 85/4 (2004): 576–601; Elaine Kelly, 'Evolution versus Authenticity: Johannes Brahms, Robert Franz, and Continuo Practice of the Late-Nineteenth Century', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 30/2 (Fall 2006): 182–204; William Horne, 'Brahms's Düsseldorf Suite Study and His Intermezzo, Opus 116, No. 2', *Musical Quarterly* 73/2 (1989): 249–83; William Horne, 'Through the Aperture: Brahms Gigue WoO4', *Musical Quarterly* 86/3 (2002): 530–81; and Virginia Hancock, *Brahms's Choral Compositions and His Library of Early Music* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983).

⁷ Most of these books can now be found at the archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna. For a catalogue of Brahms's library, see Kurt Hofmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms*.

For this Swabian poet (born in Lauffen am Neckar, near Stuttgart, in 1770) was little understood or appreciated in the nineteenth century. Although he was catapulted to fame in the early years of his adult life, in the second half of the eighteenth century, he was largely viewed with scholarly scepticism because of the madness that isolated him from society for the last forty years of his life, until his death in 1843.⁸ As a result, his work was almost entirely forgotten, and his translations of the texts of Classical antiquity were regarded as the fruits of madness, until the pioneering efforts of early twentieth-century editors.⁹ Brahms is perhaps the only nineteenth-century composer to have set Hölderlin, a poet who seems instead to have captured the imagination of many twentieth-century composers and thinkers.¹⁰

Brahms's interest in Hölderlin predates the composition of *Schicksalslied*. We find Hölderlin in the pages of the notebooks that Brahms compiled in his youth to record quotations he especially liked.¹¹ Annotations to his 1846 edition of Hölderlin's *Sämtliche Werke*, and his eventual setting of 'Hyperion's Schicksalslied', bear witness to his continued preoccupation with this poet. Although there are no markings on the pages of *Hyperion*, the *Thalia* fragment or the poem 'Hyperions Schicksalslied' itself, we can learn much from Brahms's annotations in this volume to Hölderlin's other poems.¹² Singled out for attention are 'Die Nacht' (extracted from 'Bread and Wine' in Brahms's 1846 edition), 'Die Heimath' ('Home'), and 'Lebenslauf' ('The Course of Life'), all of which are concerned with the human condition, and more specifically, with the dichotomy between nature and civilization, with the 'cycle of endowment and loss' as portrayed through the antithesis between the human and the divine, and with humankind's ultimate destiny.¹³

⁸ Michael Hamburger provides a compassionate account of what he refers to as Hölderlin's 'self-alienation' in the 'Preface' to Friedrich Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin, Poems and Fragments*, fourth edition (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2004). See in particular, page 14.

⁹ These include Berthold Litzmann (1896), Wilhelm Böhm (1905), Norbert von Hellingrath (1913–23) and Franz Zimmermann (1914–26). It was in Böhm's edition that many of Hölderlin's theoretical essays and fragments became available for the first time. On the reception history of Hölderlin's writings, see Dieter Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Hölderlin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997): 2. See also Robert Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe: Heidegger – Adorno – Brecht* (London: Camden House, 2008).

¹⁰ Laura Tunbridge reports that Schumann thought highly of Hölderlin's poetry and even, to some extent, identified with the poet on account of his psychological condition. He spoke of Hölderlin's mental illness 'with fear and awe'. Although Schumann's original title for *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133, was *An Diotima*, he never set any of Hölderlin's poetry. See Tunbridge, *Schumann's Late Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 137–8. The twentieth-century figures to whom I refer, as we shall see below, include Heinz Holliger, Luigi Nono, Wolfgang Rihm, György Ligeti, Hans Werner Henze and Hanns Eisler.

¹¹ Brahms cites the last four lines of Hölderlin's 'Sokrates und Alcibiades'. See *The Brahms Notebooks: The Little Treasure Chest of the Young Kreisler*, ed. Carl Krebs, trans. Agnes Eisenberger, annotated by Siegmund Levarie (New York: Pendragon, 2003): 204–5.

¹² Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Christoph Theodor Schwab, 2 Vols (Stuttgart & Tübingen: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1846).

¹³ Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, *Heidegger, Hölderlin, and the Subject of Poetic Language: Toward a New Poetics of Dasein* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004): 113. Brahms includes references in the poetry of the first volume at the poems 'Die Heimath' and 'Lebenslauf' to a discussion of these poems in the second volume, in a section called 'Hölderlin's Leben' (presumably written by the editor, Christian Theodor Schwab), Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, 265–333 (298).

The nature and extent of Brahms's preoccupation with fate-related texts is immediately evident in Figure 1, where his underlining of certain words and, at some points, even particular letters (presumably with an eye to prosody) in Hölderlin's poem 'An die Parzen' ('To the Fates') suggests that he considered setting this to music. This resonates with his ongoing quest throughout the 1870s and 1880s to find suitable texts that deal with the poetics of loss in a secular manner, evidenced most explicitly in his correspondence with Elisabet von Herzogenberg. On a number of occasions in the years around 1880 Brahms expressed his dissatisfaction with his lot as a composer of spiritual music, and explicitly stated his wish to find 'heathen' texts for musical setting. On 14 July 1880 he wrote to Elisabet von Herzogenberg:

I am quite willing to write motets, or anything for chorus (I am heartily sick of everything else!); but won't you try and find me some words? One can't have them made to order unless one begins before good reading has spoilt one. They are not heathen enough for me in the Bible. I have bought the Koran but can find nothing there either.¹⁴

In August 1882 Brahms asked Herzogenberg, 'shall I never shake off the theologian?'¹⁵ Most likely referring to *Gesang der Parzen*, Op. 89 he wrote that 'I have just finished one which is actually heathenish enough to please me and to have made my music better than usual I hope'.¹⁶

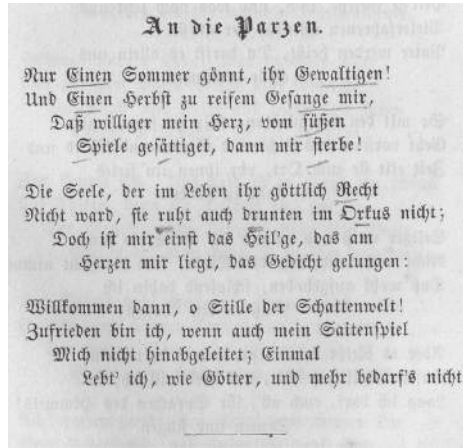
The Hölderlin poem that Brahms set – the artistic, structural and formative heart of *Hyperion* – is in three verses. The first verse directly addresses the gods, the 'blessed genii' who wander 'above in the light'; the second is a reflection on the condition of the gods, a consideration of the unattainable state of the naïve or the 'aorgic'; and the third is about 'suffering mortals', who – in contrast to the 'heavenly' ones – are 'hurled like water from ledge to ledge, downward for years to the vague abyss':

Ihr wandelt droben im Licht	You walk above in the light,
Auf weichem Boden, selige Genien!	Weightless tread a soft floor, blessed genii!
Glänzende Götterlüfte	Radiant gods' mild breezes
Rühren euch leicht,	Gently play on you
Wie die Finger der Künstlerin	As the girl artist's fingers
Heilige Saiten	On holy strings.

¹⁴ 'Motetten oder überhaupt Chormusik schreibe ich ganz gern (sonst schon überhaupt gar nichts mehr), aber versuchen Sie, ob Sie mir Texte schaffen können. Sie sich fabrizieren lassen, daran muß man sich in jungen Jahren gewöhnen, später ist man durch gute Lektüre zu sehr verwöhnt. In der Bibel ist es mir nicht heidnisch genug, jetzt habe ich mir den Koran gekauft, finde aber auch nichts.' Johannes Brahms to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, 14 July 1880, in Max Kalbeck, ed. *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Heinrich und Elisabet von Herzogenberg*, 2 vols (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1908), Vol. I, 123. English translation in *Johannes Brahms: The Herzogenberg Correspondence*, Max Kalbeck, ed., Hannah Byrant, trans. (London: Murray, 1909).

¹⁵ Brahms to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, 8 August 1882 in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Heinrich und Elisabet von Herzogenberg*, Vol. I, 199. This translation taken from *Johannes Brahms: The Herzogenberg Correspondence*, ed. Max Kalbeck, trans. Hannah Bryant (London: Murray, 1909): 174.

¹⁶ Brahms to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, 8 August 1882, *Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Heinrich und Elisabet von Herzogenberg*, note I, 200. This translation taken from Bryant (trans.), *Johannes Brahms: The Herzogenberg Correspondence*, 174.



To the Fates

One summer only grant me, you powerful Fates,
 And one more autumn only for mellow song,
 So that more willingly, replete with
 Music's late sweetness, my heart may die then.

The soul in life denied its god-given right
 Down there in Orcus also will find no peace;
 But when what's holy, dear to me, the
 Poem's accomplished, my art perfected,

Then welcome, silence, welcome cold world of shades!
 I'll be content, though here I must leave my lyre
 And songless travel down; for *once* I
 Lived like the gods, and no more is needed.

Fig. 1 A copy of Brahms's annotations to Hölderlin's poem 'An die Parzen' as found in his copy of Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Christoph Theodor Schwab, 2 Vols (Stuttgart & Tübingen: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1846): I: 55. This book is housed in the Archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreude* in Vienna¹⁷

Schicksalslos, wie der schlafende
 Säugling, athmen die Himmlischen;
 Keusch bewahrt
 In bescheidener Knospe,
 Blühet ewig
 Ihnen der Geist,
 Und die seligen Augen
 Blicken in stiller
 Ewiger Klarheit.

Fateless the Heavenly breathe
 Like an unweaned infant asleep;
 Chastely preserved
 In modest bud
 For ever their minds
 Are in flower
 And their blissful eyes
 Eternally tranquil gaze,
 Eternally clear.

¹⁷ This translation taken from Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Poems and Fragments*, trans. Hamburger, 71.

Doch uns ist gegeben	But we are fated
Auf keiner Stätte zu ruhn,	To find no foothold, no rest,
Es schwinden, es fallen	And suffering mortals
Die leidenden Menschen	Dwindle and fall
Blindings von einer	Headlong from one
Stunde zu andern,	Hour to the next,
Wie Wasser von Klippe	Hurled like water
Zu Klippe geworfen,	From ledge to ledge
Jahrlang ins Ungewisse hinab.	Downward for years to the vague abyss. ¹⁸

This potent *Götter/Menschen* antithesis is reflected in Brahms's setting, although with altered weight. The work is divided into two halves: the first is bound up with the gods, a setting of verses one and two, and the second is concerned with the pitiful lot of humanity, a setting of the third verse, which is

Ex. 1 Brahms, *Schicksalslied*, Op. 54, bars 94–103 (including the diminished seventh chords at 102–103)

repeated in full. Twice-repeated diminished triads at bars 102–103 delineate this cleft between the divine and the human, between youth and maturity, and nature and art (see Ex. 1).

¹⁸ This translation by Michael Hamburger in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Poems and Fragments*, 121.

Brahms's setting is framed by an instrumental prelude and postlude. The former is 28 bars long and tonicizes E-flat major. Its performance direction, 'Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll' ('slow and full of longing'), is an unusual tempo designation for Brahms. The *Nachspiel* texturally elaborates the same thematic material, but now transposed down a minor third to C major. Moreover, in the postlude, following the articulation of the poem, the performance direction is 'Adagio'. (See Exx. 2a and 2b.) The text–music relationship outlined here has been one of the most contentious aspects of the work's reception.

Ex. 2a Brahms, *Schicksalslied*, Op. 54, orchestral introduction, bars 1–7

Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll

2 Flutes
p sempre

2 Oboes

2 Clarinets in B flat
p sempre

2 Bassoons
p sempre

2 Horns in E flat
p

2 Trumpets in C

3 Trombones

Timpani
p

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violin 1
con sord.
p espressivo

Violin 2
p espressivo

Viola
p sempre

Violoncello
pizz.

Double Bass
p sempre

Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll

Ex. 2a Continued

The musical score for Ex. 2a Continued is arranged in a standard orchestral format. It features the following parts:

- Flute (Fl.):** Plays a melodic line with long, expressive notes and slurs.
- Oboe (Ob.):** Remains silent throughout this section.
- Clarinet (Cl.):** Provides harmonic support with sustained notes and some rhythmic patterns.
- Bassoon (Bn.):** Plays a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings like *p*.
- Horn (Hn.):** Plays a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings like *p*.
- Trumpet (Tpt.):** Remains silent throughout this section.
- Trombone (Tbn.):** Remains silent throughout this section.
- Timpani (Timp.):** Features rhythmic patterns with triplets and accents.
- Vocalists (Sop., Alt., Ten., Bass):** All vocal parts are silent throughout this section.
- Violin 1 (Vln 1.):** Plays a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings like *f*.
- Violin 2 (Vln 2.):** Plays a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings like *f*.
- Viola (Vla.):** Plays a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings like *f*.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Provides a steady rhythmic accompaniment.
- Double Bass (Db.):** Provides a steady rhythmic accompaniment.

Troubled Reception of *Schicksalslied*

As though cast in the shadow of its poet's maligned reputation, Brahms's *Schicksalslied* has had a troubled reception from the time of its premiere in Karlsruhe in 1871 to the present. The two principal reasons for this are precisely the points just raised, the first of which is the presence of the *Nachspiel* identified above. This is considered problematic because Hölderlin's ostensibly despairing

Ex. 2b Brahms, *Schicksalslied*, Op. 54, orchestral postlude, bars 380–392

Adagio
1. Solo

Fl. *legato e molto espressivo*
Ob. *pp* *pp sempre*
Cl. *pp sempre*
Bn. *pp sempre*
Hn. (C) *pp sempre*
Tpt. (C) *pp sempre*
Tbn. *pp sempre*
Vln. 1. *arco* *pp* *sempre pp*
Vln. 2. *pp* *sempre pp*
Vla. *pp* *sempre pp*
Vcl. *Vcll. con sord. arco* *pp dolce* *sempre pp*

Adagio

Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bn.
Hn. (C)
Tpt. (C)
Tbn.
Vln. 1.
Vln. 2.
Vla.
Vcl.

poem now ends with a section that is widely regarded to evoke comfort and reconciliation. Secondly, the instrumental postlude transposes the thematic material of the E-flat major introduction down a minor third to C major, thereby creating a progressive tonal scheme.

The largely positive response to the work's early performances was mitigated by critics seeking to add another dimension to Hölderlin's poem, an imaginary continuation of its contents, in order to make sense of Brahms's setting. Hermann Kretzschmar, for instance, asserted that Brahms 'ethically wishes to imply an entire third part of the work', the interpretation of which required a hermeneutic leap on Kretzschmar's part beyond what is stated either in the poem or in Hölderlin's text. Voices would have been redundant in this *Nachspiel*, he argues, for they have already 'mourned, pleaded, and hoped. But the answer comes in other tones, it comes from above [...] The choir sang, "below it is dark," from above the comforting reminder urges perseverance, with the blessed promise: "Above is light"'.¹⁹

Others understood the postlude to supplement Hölderlin's poetic message, and interpreted the music as conquering or subjugating the words of the poem.²⁰ Eduard Hanslick pointed to such a discrepancy, interpreting Brahms's poem as conveying something that was beyond the expressive capacity of the poem:

In this hopelessness the poet finishes – but not so the composer. It is an extremely beautiful poetic turn, which reveals to us the whole transfiguring power of music. Brahms returns, after the final words sung by the choir, to the solemn, slow movement of the opening, and dissolves the confused hardship of human life in a long orchestral postlude, in blessed peace. In a touching and generally accessible way, Brahms conveys this train of thought via pure instrumental music, without the addition of a single word. The instrumental music here replenishes and complements the poem, and it articulates that which can no longer be expressed in words.²¹

In Leipzig, the anonymous critic of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* surmised that 'such an ending [as Hölderlin's] could seem permissible to a musician.

¹⁹ 'Was sollen die Menschen, die bis jetzt gesungen haben, hier noch weiter thun. Sie haben geklagt, gefragt und gehofft. Die Antwort aber kommt in anderen Tönen, kommt von oben, himmlische Mächte tragen ihnen im schönen Gesang (es ist der Einleitungssatz des Werkes; jetzt in C dur) das Bild, auf dem das Leben der Seligen geschrieben steht, entgegen. Der Chor sang: "unten ist dunkel", von oben mahnt es tröstend zum Ausharren, mit der seligen Verheissung: "Oben ist Licht"'. Hermann Kretzschmar, 'Neue Werke von J. Brahms', *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 7 (1874): 95–97; 9 (1874): 107–111 (here at 110).

²⁰ Horstmann, *Untersuchungen zur Brahms-Rezeption*, 197.

²¹ 'In dieser Trostlosigkeit schließt der Dichter—nicht so der Componist. Es ist eine überaus schöne poetische Wendung, welche uns die ganze verklärende Macht der Tonkunst offenbart, daß Brahms nach den letzten Worten des Chors zu der feierlich langsamen Bewegung des Anfanges zurückkehrt und in einem längeren Orchesternachspiel das wirre Mühsal des Menschenlebens in seligen Frieden auflöst. In ergreifender, allen verständlicher Weise vollzieht Brahms diesen Gedankengang durch reine Instrumental-Musik, ohne Hinzufügung eines einzigen Wortes. Die Instrumental-Musik tritt also hier ergänzend und vollendend hinzu und spricht aus, was sich in Worte nicht mehr fassen läßt'. Hanslick, 'Brahms *Triumphlied* und *Schicksalslied*', in *Concerte, Componisten und Virtuosen der letzten fünfzehn Jahre, 1870-1885: Kritiken* (Berlin: Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur, 1886): 51–54 (53). The translation is my own.

The poetic justice, however, demands resolution and reconciliation. And so enters a bright, comforting *Nachspiel* in C major, which takes the thoughts of the introduction and brings them to a satisfactory conclusion in a small orchestral section of really wonderful harmonic and instrumental effect'.²² None of these critics, however, countenanced the notion that Brahms's setting was faithful to the context of Hölderlin's book.

Such divisive views persist in more recent commentary, which charge Brahms with either fundamentally misunderstanding or consciously contradicting Hölderlin's poetic message. Michael Musgrave argues that the text 'posed a problem for Brahms in ending in despair, with mankind plunged "headlong into the abyss", thus denying him the opportunity, always exploited in the texts of his own selection, for ending with consolation, with a hope of some kind'.²³ Malcolm MacDonald is convinced that Brahms has been faithful to the despondent nature of the ending of Hölderlin's poem. He finds 'the "hopeless longing" aroused in the postlude' to underscore 'the impassability of the divine/human cleft in Hölderlin's poem. Brahms's ultimate decision to close without recourse to words thus reinforces the conviction that verbal recall would create only a false sense of comfort'.²⁴

Similarly, James Webster notes that 'despite Brahms's love for the poem', it lacked 'some hope of consolation', with the result that Brahms's setting 'violates no fewer than three fundamental aesthetic principles: fidelity to the sense of the text, tonal coherence, and the assurance of closure by the use of all performers at the end'.²⁵ Christopher Reynolds adds that whereas 'Brahms ultimately rejected the notion that the choir should repeat the earlier verses at the end,' his 'qualms' did not prevent him 'from patching on a seemingly unmotivated reprise of the opening instrumental music, which even without words bewildered listeners struggling to understand what Brahms's conciliatory ending contributed to Hölderlin's despairing text'.²⁶ Peter Petersen puts it most forcefully by asserting that the postlude is 'a rare instance of a composer not merely placing an arbitrary interpretation on words but explicitly contradicting a poet's statement'.²⁷

²² Anon., *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 46 (1871): 730. Hermann Levi suspected this anonymous critic to have been Frau Hofrath Henriette Feuerbach, the stepmother of Ludwig Feuerbach, to whom Brahms's *Nänie*, Op. 81, was dedicated. See the letter from Levi to Brahms, 30 November 1871 in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Hermann Levi, Friedrich Gernsheim, sowie den Familien Hecht und Fellingner* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1974).

²³ See Michael Musgrave, *The Music of Brahms* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985): 88.

²⁴ See Malcolm MacDonald, *Brahms* (London: Dent, 1990): 203.

²⁵ James Webster, 'The *Alto Rhapsody*: Psychology, Intertextuality, and Brahms's Artistic Development', in *Brahms Studies*, ed. David Brodbeck (Lincoln NA: University of Nebraska Press, 2001): 19–46 (26).

²⁶ Christopher Reynolds, 'Brahms Rhapsodizing: The *Alto Rhapsody* and its Expressive Double', *Journal of Musicology* 29/2 (Spring 2012): 191–238 (223).

²⁷ 'In Brahms' Hölderlin-Vertonung begegnet uns der seltene Fall, daß ein Komponist einen vorgegebenen Text durch die Musik nicht nur eigenwillig interpretiert, sondern erklärtermaßen in Opposition zur Aussage des Dichters tritt'. Peter Petersen, 'Werke für Chor und Orchester', in *Johannes Brahms: Leben und Werke*, ed. Christiane Jacobsen (Wiesbaden, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1983). This translation by Mary Whittall in sleeve notes for the Deutsche Grammophon CD, 'Johannes Brahms: Werke für Chor und Orchester', Cat. No. 449 651 2, 22–28 (25). Michael Steinberg's commentary on this work is one of few to avoid a reductive reading of the poem. See Steinberg, *Choral Masterworks: A Listener's Guide* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 76–81.

This fraught reception can be attributed to two related scholarly tendencies, the first to underestimate the sophistication of Brahms's appreciation of the poetic texts he set, the second for musical commentators to attempt to force Brahms's literary settings into an existing formal scheme.²⁸ For, unlike much of Brahms's instrumental output that evinces a closed form, this choral work is open ended and does not meet such formal requirements. The resistance to viewing *Schicksalslied* in this manner is perhaps bound up with how scholars view the poem itself.

Commentators on *Schicksalslied* have regarded the interpolated poem that Brahms set as a self-contained entity, a fragment that is divorced from the broader context of Hölderlin's book. Yet, 'Hyperion's Schicksalslied', as we shall see, is the poetic nucleus of this epistolary novel. *Hyperion* belongs to the genre of the *Bildungsroman*. The poem that Brahms set, for reasons that will be elucidated below, is intricately bound up with the spiritual journey embarked upon in the book; it encapsulates its manifold contradictions and dissonances and, in bringing these to their peak, clarifies the poetic, moral and philosophical direction of the journey of hero and reader alike. Moreover, such a reading of this *Bildungsroman* might well have occurred to Brahms because of his considerable knowledge of, and meaningful engagement with, the poetic and literary writings of Hölderlin, Schiller and Goethe.

This article, therefore, looks anew at Brahms's *Schicksalslied* and its ending in the full context of *Hyperion*, the literary and philosophical tradition to which it belonged, and Brahms's literary and intellectual preoccupations at the time of composition. Drawing on musical and hermeneutic analysis of *Schicksalslied*, on post-Kantian philosophy, on Brahms's annotations of pertinent books, and on literary theory, I dispute the notion that Brahms's setting is at odds with Hölderlin's poetic message. Rather, I make the case that precisely because of the tonal trajectory of its ending, amongst other features, we can meaningfully consider this work to assume the characteristically Romantic shape of the spiral. Consequently, Brahms's *Schicksalslied* can be understood as a musical manifestation of the notion of *Bildung* that prompts reflection and realization on the part of Brahms's listener akin to that of Hölderlin's reader. This proposed interpretation of *Schicksalslied* further prompts a reassessment of the extent to which Brahms's intellectual pursuits informed his compositional process.

Schiller, Goethe and the Renaissance of Classical Antiquity

German Idealist aesthetics – especially in Schiller's formulation, which was to have such a profound impact on Hölderlin – were inspired by a perceived disjunction between imperfect reality and ideal. The imperfect reality refers to modern Germany, both at the level of the individual and society. It concerns the modern condition that has seen mankind as a unified whole fall into a state of fragmentation and opposition. This splintering of primal unity was brought

²⁸ Margaret Notley considers similar difficulties with the reception of *Gesang der Parzen*, particularly issues that arise from underestimating the sophistication of Brahms's knowledge of poetic texts. See Notley, 'Ancient Tragedy and Anachronism: Form as Expression in Brahms's *Gesang der Parzen*', in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, ed. Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012): 111–43.

about with the mechanization of modern man whereby the individual became increasingly highly developed in one faculty or function at the expense of the whole, at the cost of the *harmonisch gebildeter Mensch*. Schiller analyses the condition thus:

Enjoyment was divorced from labour, the means from the end, the effort from the reward. Everlastingly chained to a single little fragment of the Whole, man himself develops into nothing but a fragment; everlastingly in his ear the monotonous sound of the wheel that he turns, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of putting a stamp of humanity upon his own nature, he becomes nothing more than the imprint of his occupation or of his specialized knowledge.²⁹

The ideal, on the other hand, refers to the perceived wholeness that existed prior to this destruction by modern civilization. It refers to a golden age of Classical antiquity, when man was a creature of instinct, unspoiled by reason.³⁰ A re-imagination of the scriptural account of a paradise lost formed the basis for a secular philosophical humanism that would witness the recovery of the lost unity of the mind and spirit of humanity through the development of the intellect and culture. This conceptual design of the past, present, and future of human history was given powerful expression by Hellenic humanists for whom, as M.H. Abrams formulates it, 'the right-angled biblical pattern of Paradise-Fall-Redemption-Paradise Regained' was assimilated and re-imagined in the 'post-Biblical circular pattern of Unity-Multiplicity-Unity Regained', that is, a 'Neoplatonic circular scheme of emanation and return'.³¹

Schiller is regarded as having provided the most sophisticated theory of such unity in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* and *On Naïve and Sentimental in Poetry*. In the latter he makes a distinction between a naïve character – a childlike nature, a state of innocence, which is all but lost – and a sentimental character – a nature that seeks the naïve, and engages in a reflective, retrospective contemplation. Schiller clarifies that the naïve is unattainable for humanity: it requires a victory of art over nature, which entails both a heightened consciousness and an attempt to reflect on nature. The naïve, therefore, although it yearns for a state of innocence, is not comparable to innocence, because it exists solely in one's awareness of it.

The dialectical thrust of Schiller's distinction is that 'neither the naïve nor the sentimental', taken alone, exhausts the 'ideal of beautiful humanity', which 'can only arise out of the intimate union of both'.³² In order to heal the (self-)inflicted 'wound' – which has severed the 'inner union of human nature' – one must strive

²⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, ed., trans., and with an introduction by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967). The Sixth Letter discusses the fragmentation of unity, 31–43 (here at 35). M.H. Abrams discusses Schiller's 'diagnosis of the modern malaise'. See M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York and London: Norton, 1971): 198–217.

³⁰ Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental in Poetry*, trans. and with an introduction by H.B. Nisbet in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe*, ed. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 211.

³¹ M.H. Abrams, 'Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History: A Reply to Wayne Booth', *Critical Inquiry* 2/3 (Spring 1976): 447–64 (453).

³² Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental in Poetry*, 224.

for wholeness.³³ This is to be found in Schiller's concept of the 'aesthetic', that is, a belief in education through art.³⁴

Here Schiller parted ways with the aesthetics of Kant. Whereas Schiller was indebted to Kant as a critic, both he and Goethe recognized a deficiency in the subjective basis of Kant's aesthetic system. Although convinced that pleasure in beauty must be disinterested, Schiller could not dissociate art from virtue. He and Goethe agreed that Kant's critical philosophy taught much about man but very little about art and beauty.³⁵ These Weimar Classicists aspired to a state of mind that would transform intellectual into moral virtue.

Thus, a moral imperative underpins the notion of *Bildung* that characterizes the work of these authors. Schiller and Goethe corresponded at length on this topic, which caught Brahms's attention – and captured his imagination – as he highlights and annotates many such passages in his copy of their *Briefwechsel*. Of particular note is a letter from Schiller to Goethe of January 1797 which we might allow ourselves to imagine Brahms may have read as though it were addressed to him:

I should wish particularly to know the chronology of your works. It would not surprise me, if, in the developments of your being, a certain necessary course in the nature of man were not traceable. You must have had a certain, not very short, epoch, which I might call your analytic period, wherein through division and separation you struggled toward wholeness; wherein your being was as if it were fallen out with itself and sought to reinstate itself again through Art and Science.

Now it seems to me you return cultivated and ripe back to your youth, and will unite the fruit with the blossom. This second youth is the youth of the gods, and immortal, like them.³⁶

The concept of *Bildung* encapsulated in this passage, and the literature it gave rise to, with its characteristic assimilation of philosophical thought, gripped the German artistic imagination throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the heart of this philosophical and literary movement is what Constantin Behler terms 'nostalgic teleology' – that is, 'the classical German theory of modernity, in which typically an idealized image of ancient Greece anchors a critique of an alienated present that is to be dialectically overcome in a utopian third stage of history'.³⁷ Each of the texts Brahms chose for the works that espouse the poetics of loss engages in one way or another with this 'nostalgic teleology', confronting the dichotomy between the real and the ideal, between nature and a higher spiritual world. It is to Friedrich Hölderlin's attempt to reconcile these differences in *Hyperion* that we now turn.

³³ Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Wilkinson and Willoughby, 33.

³⁴ L.A. Willoughby, 'Schiller on Man's Education to Freedom through Knowledge', in Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, *Models of Wholeness: Some Attitudes to Language, Art and Life in the Age of Goethe*, ed. Jeremy Adler, Martin Swales, and Ann Weaver (Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang, 2002): 53–67 (61).

³⁵ Wilkinson and Willoughby, introduction to Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, xxvi.

³⁶ Letter No. 268 from Schiller to Goethe, 17 January 1797, in Brahms's copy of the *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe in den Jahren 1794 bis 1805*, 2 Vols (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1856): I: 267, here translated by Calvert in *Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe*, Volume 1, 220–21. Brahms marked the second paragraph in this excerpt, as cited as the second epigraph at the outset of this article.

³⁷ Constantin Behler, *Nostalgic Teleology: Friedrich Schiller and the Schemata of Aesthetic Humanism* (Bern and New York: Peter Lang, 1995): 2.

The Caesura in Hölderlin's Theory of Tragedy

Hölderlin's *Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece* – as the full title reads – is written in the spirit of Sophoclean tragedy, a central tenet of which is an acceptance of circumstances endemic to the human condition over which mankind exerts no control. Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles, with which he was preoccupied for many years, profoundly influenced the writing of this novel and the theoretical writings on tragedy to which *Hyperion* is intimately connected.³⁸ A number of facets of this theory are crucial to understanding the structure and meaning of the novel.

First, central to the struggle of Greek Tragedy, according to Hölderlin, are the conflicting drives of what he calls the 'aorgic' and the 'organic'.³⁹ The 'aorgic' is loosely comparable to Schiller's concept of the 'naïve'. It is the 'condition of highest simplicity'⁴⁰ and represents nature prior to human intervention.⁴¹ Also referred to as a 'Greek unicity', the 'aorgic' is unattainable, because humanity's only access to it is through a conscious realization that it is lost.⁴² The 'organic' (setting aside any connotations of organic compounds or growth) is loosely comparable to Schiller's concept of the 'sentimental'. It is the 'condition of highest development' that humans are capable of giving themselves.⁴³ It represents the peculiarly human activities of self-action, art and reflection. Hölderlin considered what he refers to as the 'eccentric orbit of all human life' to run between the two poles of the 'aorgic' and the 'organic'.⁴⁴ The path of life for Hölderlin, therefore, entails contemplating the relation between reflection and being, between real and ideal, between art and nature.

In the published prologue to Book 1 of *Hyperion*, Hölderlin gave great emphasis to the notion of a 'resolution of dissonances in a particular character'.⁴⁵ Such dissonance, discernible on numerous levels in the novel, is most apparent in the struggles and hardships that face the protagonist (amongst them suffering

³⁸ Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth, introduction to Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, ed., trans., and with an introduction by Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth (London: Penguin, 2009): xxxi. On Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles, and his theoretical writings on tragedy, see in particular the following essays in the Adler and Louth edition (page numbers for each of which are provided in parentheses): 'Being Judgement Possibility' (231–2), 'Hermocrates to Cephalus' (233), 'On Different Modes of Poetic Composition' (254–7), 'When the poet is once in command of the spirit...' (277–94), 'Notes on the *Oedipus*' (317–24), and 'Notes on the *Antigone*' (325–32).

³⁹ For a detailed discussion of the 'aorgic' and the 'organic' see Hölderlin's essay 'Ground of the *Empedocles*', in *Friedrich Hölderlin, Essays and Letters*, 261–70, particularly 261–4. This is the only piece of Hölderlin's theoretical writings in the 1846 edition of the complete works that Brahms owned, where it is found on pages 253–62.

⁴⁰ Elaine P. Miller, *The Vegetative Soul: From Philosophy of Nature to Subjectivity in the Feminine* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002): 92.

⁴¹ 'Aorgic' is probably a word of Hölderlin's own devising; see Adler and Louth, commentary on Hölderlin's essay 'Ground of the *Empedocles*', in *Friedrich Hölderlin, Essays and Letters*, 381, note 46.

⁴² See David Farrell Krell, *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005): 274–5, note 16.

⁴³ Miller, *The Vegetative Soul*, 92.

⁴⁴ Hölderlin, 'The Ground of *Empedocles*', 261–4.

⁴⁵ 'Die Auflösung der Dissonanzen in einem gewissen Charakter'. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1965): 171.

and death), the antithesis between the divine and the human, and the tension between past and present, and youth and maturity, here played out in the contrast between modern society and the great heroic age of Greece.

Schiller's influence on the young Hölderlin was matched only by the latter's spiritual and intellectual exchange during the early 1790s with his friends and fellow students at the Tübingen Seminary, Hegel and Schelling. Each not only identified with the spirit of the French Revolution, but also shared a great deal of circumspection regarding Kant's critical philosophy.⁴⁶ The extent of their scholarly exchange and interaction was such that the exact authorship of their collaborative essay 'The Oldest Programme for a System of Idealism' remains unknown.⁴⁷

In his own way, each of these men intuited and recorded a process 'from a world-embedded consciousness to a philosophically reflective one'.⁴⁸ This process, as Schelling explicates it, consists in the clarification 'of that which is utterly independent of our freedom, the presentation of an objective world which indeed restricts our freedom, through a process in which the self sees itself develop, through a necessary, but not consciously observed act of self-positing'.⁴⁹ The process to which Schelling refers would later acquire the name 'dialectic' and was to be taken up and perfected in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁵⁰

Hölderlin channelled the intellectual energy of this philosophical triumvirate into his poetry and literature. The result is the poet's singular thinking regarding beauty. His point of departure is that the great saying of Heraclitus 'εν διαφερων εαυτω (the one differentiated in itself) ... is the very being of Beauty, and before that was found there was no philosophy'.⁵¹ For Hölderlin, beauty is manifest through unity-in-diversity, and offers a resolution of difference in aesthetic experience. As the hero proclaims in the novel, 'Poetry [...] is the beginning and end of philosophical knowledge. Like Minerva from the head of Jupiter, philosophy springs from the poetry of an eternal, divine state of being. And so in philosophy, too, the irreconcilable finally converges again in the mysterious spring of poetry'.⁵² Aspiring to the same concept of wholeness as Schiller – and anticipating Nietzsche and Heidegger – Hölderlin believed in a dialectical scheme whereby 'division and difference' and 'suffering and confusion', are the 'conditions of experiencing unity', and it is precisely in these conditions that 'unity or wholeness manifests itself'.⁵³

⁴⁶ The spirit of the French Revolution was celebrated in the 'Liberty Tree' that the three planted in the market square in Tübingen on 14 July 1793.

⁴⁷ This essay is translated by Adler and Louth in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, 341–2.

⁴⁸ Michael Vater, 'Introduction' to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath with an introduction by Michael Vater (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978): xiv.

⁴⁹ F. W. J. von Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1856–64): X: 97, here translated by Peter Heath in Michael Vater's introduction to Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, xiv.

⁵⁰ Following the halcyon days at the 'Stift' and the later fragmenting of their friendship, Schelling would contend that credit for the discovery of 'the dialectic' is popularly misplaced. Vater, introduction to Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, xiii.

⁵¹ Hölderlin, *Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece*, trans. Trask, 93.

⁵² Hölderlin, *Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece*, trans. Trask, 93.

⁵³ Adler and Louth, introduction to *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, xvii. For a detailed and considered study of the relationship between Hölderlin, Nietzsche and Heidegger, see Babette Babich, *Words in Blood, Like Flowers: Philosophy and Poetry, Music and Eros, in Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006).

It does so at the point at which the opposition between the 'aorgic' and the 'organic' reaches its highest peak. Hölderlin calls this the 'caesura' and in his notes on the tragedies of Sophocles he locates this watershed moment in the speeches of Tiresias.⁵⁴ He elaborates:

Hence the rhythmic succession of ideas wherein the *transport* manifests itself demands a counter-rhythmic interruption, a pure word, *that which in metrics is called a caesura*, in order to confront the speeding alternation of ideas at its climax, so that not the alternation of the idea, but the idea itself appears.⁵⁵

The 'caesura' is comparable to a catastrophe in the literal sense: it entails a double-movement, 'a complete (*kata*) destruction and overturning (*strophé*) of the old, thus opening onto a new beginning'.⁵⁶ It does nothing to change the course of events. Rather, the moment of the caesura is a decidedly prophetic one. By crystallizing the moment of deepest tragedy and conflict, it is the catalyst for a fundamental change of perspective brought about by a piercing moral clarity, and it thus marks the point at which humanity, through suffering, becomes wise. This crucial point of reversal or inversion speaks to the idea that 'a poem or a dramatic work turns on a moment of suspension or discontinuity'.⁵⁷ As Adler and Louth attest, this literary device is a constant of Hölderlin's poetics'.⁵⁸

Fate and Tragedy in *Hyperion*

Hyperion comprises a series of letters written to the recipient Bellarmin, in which the hero records a spiritual journey of 'reflection and realization'. In what has become known as the *Thalia* Fragment – published before the novel in 1794 in the journal *Thalia* and outlining the proposed trajectory for the complete work – Hölderlin charted the book as tracing the development of a character from a state of 'highest simplicity' (*höchste Einfalt*) brought about by the mere organization of nature, with no human intervention, to a state of highest formation (*höchste Bildung*), through the organization that humans are capable of giving themselves.⁵⁹ The published book proceeds through three successive stages, in each of which we become acquainted with one of the hero's three companions. By the end of the novel, Hyperion will have lost all three, and the reader will have shared in the numerous moments of fulfilment that end in his disillusionment or loss. Hyperion's relationships, therefore, involve a repetitive, increasingly intensified experience.

⁵⁴ See Hölderlin, 'Notes on the *Oedipus*' and 'Notes on the *Antigone*', in Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, 317–332.

⁵⁵ Hölderlin, 'Notes on the *Oedipus*', in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, 318. The emphasis is in the original.

⁵⁶ Patrick Dove, *The Catastrophe of Modernity: Tragedy and the Nation in Latin American Literature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004): 32.

⁵⁷ Charles Lewis, 'Hölderlin and the Möbius Strip: The One-Sided Surface and the "Wechsel der Töne"', *Oxford German Studies* 38/1 (2009): 45–60 (57).

⁵⁸ Adler and Louth, introduction to *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, xli.

⁵⁹ Hölderlin, 'Fragment von *Hyperion*' (*Thalia* Fragment), in Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Friedrich Beißner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1943–85). Vol. III (1957): 181. This fragment is not published in all recent editions of *Hyperion*. However, it is in the 1846 edition of Hölderlin's writings in the *Brahms Bibliothek*, which is undoubtedly the source that Brahms used.

There is first his revered mentor Adamas, who represents learning and awakens Hyperion's consciousness from a state of childlike innocence; second, his friend Alabanda, the guardian of his soul, who represents friendship, yet also conflict and dissonance; and third, his beloved Diotima, the ideal of beauty and perfection in the world. Diotima teaches Hyperion humility and shows him the path back to the natural beauty of the world, and to the human realm, all of which she does through love.

Most eighteenth-century epistolary novels, from Rousseau's *La nouvelle Heloise*, are characterized by subjective expression. In *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, Goethe emphasized this subjectivism by including only letters by Werther himself and the voice of the editor. Hölderlin takes this a step further by making Hyperion his own editor.⁶⁰ We learn of this hero's tale through his first person account to Bellarmin, in which he is both 'subject and object of his own discourse in a way that Werther, always writing out of an immediate situation, is not'.⁶¹ As Hyperion narrates his own life, the reader witnesses him coming 'to discern in it a pattern and coherence he had not been able to grasp at the time of experiencing'.⁶² Consequently, the reader of *Hyperion* accompanies the character Hyperion on his spiritual journey and the artist Hölderlin-Hyperion on his artistic journey towards becoming a poet. Both paths are fused, and the story of loss and disillusionment is 'recounted in a philosophically resigned but poetically transformative retrospect'.⁶³

M.H. Abrams's explication of the romantic notion of 'the ascending circle, or spiral' is apposite to the form of this book. It is written as a secular *Bildungsroman* in which Hyperion must earn his return to wholeness by 'incessant striving along a circuitous path'.⁶⁴ This speaks to the spiral form that many Romantic figures considered to be the shape of all intellection, and in which they ordered their philosophies (for instance, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*), their histories (for instance, Carlyle's *Past and Present* and Karl Marx's writings on capitalism) and their fictional writings (for instance, Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*). Abrams provides a compelling and lucid account of how this Christian experience is intentionally reconstituted into secular thinking in the works of Goethe, Schiller, Hegel, Hölderlin, Wordsworth and T. S. Eliot, amongst others:

The mind of man, whether generic or individual, is represented as disciplined by the suffering which it experiences as it develops through successive stages of division, conflict, and reconciliation, toward the culminating stage at which, all oppositions having been overcome, it will achieve a full and triumphant awareness of its identity, of the significance of its past, and of its accomplished destiny. The course of human life [...] is no longer a *Heilsgeschichte* but a *Bildungsgeschichte*;

⁶⁰ Hölderlin's use of the first person, as Lawrence Ryan notes, represents a significant advance in the treatment of the subject in the novel from Goethe's epistolary novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. See Lawrence Ryan, 'Einleitung: von terra incognita im Reiche der Poesie', in Hölderlin's 'Hyperion': *Exzentrische Bahn und Dichterberuf* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), 1–7 (particularly 3–5).

⁶¹ Michael Minden, *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 105.

⁶² Minden, *The German Bildungsroman*, 117.

⁶³ Minden, *The German Bildungsroman*, 104.

⁶⁴ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 185.

or more precisely, it is a *Heilsgeschichte* translated into the secular mode of a *Bildungsgeschichte*.⁶⁵

The self-education of the mind is also a central trope of the Romantic philosophy of consciousness. The figure of the circuitous journey homeward, as Abrams formulates it, is developed into a sustained vehicle for Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), which recounts a spiritual journey from the 'moment' of departure of an alienated self until it finds itself 'at home within itself in its otherness'.⁶⁶ The goal of this spiritual *Reise* is 'an ultimate recognition of the spirit's own identity'.⁶⁷

This circuitous path is reimagined in *Hyperion*, which the author makes explicitly clear to the reader in the *Thalia* fragment of 1794:

We all pass through an eccentric path, and there is no other way possible from childhood to consummation [*Vollendung*].

The blessed unity, Being (in the only sense of that word) is lost to us, and we had to lose it if we were to gain it again by striving and struggle. We tear ourselves loose from the peaceful *en kai pan* of the world, in order to restore it through ourselves. We have fallen out with nature, and what was once one, as we can believe, is now in conflict with itself, and each side alternates between mastery and servitude. ... *Hyperion* too was divided between these two extremes.⁶⁸

As we make our way through the novel, privy to the powerfully intimate nature of *Hyperion*'s correspondence, we experience the increasing intensity of his joys and the depths of his grief. Because each stage in the development of the novel 'involves transformation and regression as well as growth and progression, *Hyperion* becomes a meditation on identity, time, and memory'.⁶⁹ This incorporates three temporalities: that of an earlier time to be recollected, the narrated present (the time at which the poet recalls the past – and the poem), and narrative time (when the poet formulates and tells of the multifaceted effect that such recollection has on him). In the course of composing this autobiographical narrative, as Abrams notes, '*Hyperion* has recollected, faced up to, and to a degree comprehended his own past'.⁷⁰

Hölderlin breaks the epistolary form only once in the book, to insert the interpolated song accompanied by a lute that Brahms would later set to music. This occurs in the fourth book at a juncture that marks the lowest ebb in *Hyperion*'s fortunes. His hope in revolution has been dashed; due to his world-weariness, the elderly Alabanda has chosen to end his life by Romantic suicide; and *Hyperion* will soon learn of the death of his beloved Diotima. It is

⁶⁵ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 188.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner Felix Verlag, 1987): 549, as translated and cited in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 192.

⁶⁷ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 230.

⁶⁸ Hölderlin, 'Vorrede' to the 'Vorletzte Fassung', *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Beißner, III: 236. Here translated and cited in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 237. Terry Pinkard reports that Hölderlin entered the Greek phrase 'Hen kai pan' (the 'one and all') in Hegel's yearbook in 1791 'to indicate their emerging view of a kind of synthesis of Kantianism, Spinozism, and an (idealized) Greek view of the world'. Terry Pinkard, 'Hegel: A Life', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 15–51 (21–22). (The disparity in spelling lies in 'hen' being attributed to ancient Greek, and 'en' being attributed to modern Greek.)

⁶⁹ Miller, *The Vegetative Soul*, 85.

⁷⁰ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 243; see also Ryan, *Hölderlin's 'Hyperion'*, 223.

here that Hyperion recalls the song learned from his revered teacher Adamas during an earlier, immature time and, in his time of loss, he narrates it to Bellarmin. The recollection of the interpolated poem occurs in the letter that marks the chronological endpoint – but not the actual ending – of the novel. The poem itself is therefore supratemporal in its intersection of the three temporalities within the novel outlined above – an earlier time, the narrated present, and narrative time.

This poem, then, serves the crucial function of the caesura in Hölderlin's tragedy: it is the expression of catastrophe, epitomizing that term's double meaning of both destruction and renewal. In experiencing the acute division and conflict between his self and his outer world, and in suffering utter devastation and deprivation whilst at once feeling elation at his union with the universe, Hyperion reaches the farthest poles of his eccentric orbit. Lawrence Ryan points to the structural significance of the poem, observing that 'in the context of the novel, this song marks the very depth of suffering which soon turns into a new bliss (*Seligkeit*). [...] *Schicksalslied* is thus a turning point in the novel'.⁷¹ From here, Hyperion will turn back. Yet he does so self-consciously, aware that his suffering and anguish have afforded him a deeper insight into beauty and humanized nature.

The process of recollection, and the circularity which it entails, is crucial to understanding Hölderlin's novel and to our reading of Brahms's setting of its poetic nucleus, for, the depth of despondency and dissonance that is articulated in this song is the agent of its own resolution. To put it more explicitly, the caesura of Hölderlin's *Hyperion* as articulated in this poem contains its own resolution, from which it cannot be separated.

Hölderlin's eccentric path, and perhaps also Brahms's, is both autobiographical and vocational. As Abrams sees it, 'the act of writing *Hyperion* is [...] a functional part of the autobiography itself, on which its conclusion turns', and this very act has led towards the vocation of the poet: 'at the end of the novel *Hyperion* is beginning to be the poet Hölderlin himself now becomes'.⁷² *Hyperion*, therefore, as Michael Minden expresses it, epitomizes 'the figure of autobiography redeemed by art'.⁷³ The passage with which Hölderlin has *Hyperion* introduce the poem is a testament to his redemption in that it bespeaks a level of maturity and wisdom that the younger *Hyperion* had not known:

I stayed by the shore and, wearied by the pains of parting, gazed silently at the sea, hour after hour. My spirit told over the sorrowful days of my slowly dying youth and waveringly, like the beautiful dove, flitted over the time to come. I wanted to strengthen myself, I took out my long forgotten lute to sing a Song of Fate that once in happy, heedless youth I had repeated after my Adamas.⁷⁴

Here Hölderlin inserts the poem. The reader will observe that the preposition with which the poem concludes – 'hinab' ('downward') – 'signifies a direction,

⁷¹ Ryan, *Hölderlin's 'Hyperion'*, 207–8. The translation is my own. Both this book and Lawrence Ryan, *Hölderlin's Lehre vom Wechsel der Töne* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), are seminal texts, and they remain at the forefront of scholarship on *Hyperion* and its relationship to Hölderlin's intellectual thinking.

⁷² See both Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 243, and Minden, *The German Bildungsroman*, 118. John Daverio and Christopher Reynolds are amongst those who have read such biographical meanings into Brahms's *Schicksalslied*. See Daverio, 'The "Wechsel der Töne" in Brahms's "Schicksalslied"', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46/1 (Spring 1993): 84–113 (93); and Reynolds, 'Brahms Rhapsodizing', particularly 217–21.

⁷³ Minden, *The German Bildungsroman*, 118.

⁷⁴ Hölderlin, *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece*, trans. Trask, 153–4.

not an ending'.⁷⁵ This speaks to Hölderlin's understanding of a poem being as a metaphor. For Hölderlin, a poem literally 'carries' something 'across' into sensible form.⁷⁶ In encapsulating and juxtaposing all of the extremes of this novel, 'Hyperions Schicksalslied' brings to bear the fact that Hölderlin's poetry integrates that which 'seems to lie outside it – the unpoetic – in order to be its "highest form"',⁷⁷ for, as he boldly expresses it in his famous 'Verfahrungsweise' essay ('When the Poet is at Once in Command of the Spirit ...'), at 'this point the spirit is feelable in its infinity'.⁷⁸

Following the poem, Hyperion continues to narrate his recollections to Bellarmin, paying particularly poignant attention to the letters in which Diotima reassured him that 'perfection' [*Völlendung*] is attainable in 'change' as well as in 'continuity'. The letter containing the poem (that is, the chronological endpoint of the novel) ends in a manner that speaks to a resolution of dissonance, and an acceptance of suffering and conflict. The caesura results in the ensuing effusive paean to the naïve, which extols the rewards of sentimental reflection:

Ye airs that nourished me in tender childhood, and ye dark laurel woods and ye cliffs by the shore and ye majestic waters that taught my soul to surmise your greatness – and ah! ye monuments of sorrow, where my melancholy began, ye sacred walls with which the heroic cities girdle themselves, and ye ancient gates through which many a beautiful traveller passed, ye temple pillars and thou rubble of the gods! and thou, O Diotima! and ye valleys of my love, and ye brooks that once saw her blessed form, ye trees where she rejoiced, ye springtimes in which she lived, lovely with her flowers, depart not, depart not from me! yet if it must be, ye sweet memories! grow dim ye too and leave me, for man can change nothing and the light of life comes and departs as it will.⁷⁹

The Sophoclean and the dialectical bent of the novel are given further powerful expression in Hyperion's exclamation to Bellarmin, that 'like nightingale voices in dark, the world's song of life first sounds divinely for us in deep affliction'.⁸⁰

Form and Tonality in the *Song of Destiny*

Analysts have tended to view *Schicksalslied* within the framework of sonata form. Timothy Jackson, for instance, considers this work to have a 'tragic reversed

⁷⁵ As Walter Silz astutely notes in *Hölderlin's Hyperion: A Critical Reading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969): 114.

⁷⁶ Adler and Louth, introduction to *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, xxxvii. Ian Balfour draws attention to the use of this technique in Hölderlin's poem 'Wie wenn am Feiertage', wherein 'the poem insistently points to something beyond itself, yet it is in principle productive of whatever is beyond it, because it is itself the privileged site of mediation between the gods and the mortals'. Ian Balfour, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002): 180. On this topic, see also Alice A. Kuzniar, *Delayed Endings: Nonclosure in Novalis and Hölderlin* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

⁷⁷ Adler and Louth, 'Introduction', in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, xxxvii.

⁷⁸ Hölderlin, 'Über die Verfahrungsweise des poetischen Geistes', translated as 'When the poet is at once in command of the spirit...', by Adler and Louth in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, 277–94 (285).

⁷⁹ Hölderlin, *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece*, trans. Trask, 163.

⁸⁰ Hölderlin, *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece*, trans. Trask, 167

recapitulation' in which Brahms sacrifices the recapitulation of the first group.⁸¹ (See Table 1) This interpretation is based purely on formal features and avoids all hermeneutic elements of the piece, including the poetic text. It takes no account of the correspondence between the introduction and the coda that lie outside Jackson's sonata space, cyclic elements that are further bound up with the psychological journey of the piece and its attendant reflection and sense of contemplation. For Jackson, the circularity of this sonata space – which he sees as a metaphor 'for entrapment or flight without escape' – is attributable solely to the reversed sonata.⁸² Nonetheless, this thematic material of the first group is never brought back in the tonic.

John Daverio analyzes the work as a double-sonata form, whereby the first sonata form maps onto the first two verses of Hölderlin's poem, eschewing a development section, while the second sonata form, concerned with Hölderlin's depiction of the pitiful lot of mankind, ostensibly includes all of the formal functions of a sonata. (See Table 2) Daverio does not account for the lack of a development section in what he deems to be the first of these conjoined sonata forms, nor does he explain the lack of cadential structures demarcating the formal functions he outlines.⁸³ Most significantly, he restricts his discussion of Brahms's setting to the poem as a self-contained entity divorced from the book. The hermeneutic gap that Daverio attempts to bridge, I assert, is not present if Brahms's composition is considered in relation to the entire novella.⁸⁴

This is precisely because our understanding of the poem is integral to how we understand the piece. By limiting our field of vision to seeing the poem as a self-contained entity, and interpreting the piece as a closed form, we severely limit the scope of our hermeneutic reading. This is borne out in Daverio's hermeneutic interpretation. Although he goes so far as to acknowledge that the poem is a '*mise en abyme*, an encapsulated summation of the contraries informing the novel as a whole', he does not take the next step, which is to recognize that the purpose of the poem within the novel is to bring about a resolution of dissonance. His mapping of Brahms's *Schicksalslied* onto Hölderlin's theory of poetics seems to draw more on knowledge of the theory of Hölderlin's poetry, than on the poetry. Hölderlin's theory is diagnostic, not prescriptive.⁸⁵ Daverio uses it in a prescriptive manner, hence his conclusion: 'Only with the reflective orchestral *Nachspiel* do we come up against a problem, for here Brahms does overstep the structural bounds of his text. The music [...] modulates, so to speak, out of the

⁸¹ Timothy Jackson, 'The Tragic Reversed Recapitulation in the German Classical Tradition', *Journal of Music Theory* 40/1 (Spring 1996): 61–111 (78).

⁸² In their extensive study of sonata theory and sonata deformation, Hepokoski and Darcy reject the concept of the reversed recapitulation. If considered as part of the sonata paradigm, *Schicksalslied* is even more highly deformed than the model they reject on account of the tonal anomalies and lack of resolution. See James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 383.

⁸³ The first of Daverio's sonata forms fits into Hepokoski and Darcy's category of a Type 1 Sonata, that is, a sonata 'lacking a development' which is a 'double-rotational structure—an expositional rotation followed by a recapitulatory rotation'. Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 407.

⁸⁴ Daverio refers to a 'gap that separates verbal utterance from musical elaboration'. See his 'The "Wechsel der Töne"', 91–2.

⁸⁵ Adler and Louth, 'Introduction' to *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, xxx.

Table 1 Summary of Jackson's formal outline of *Schicksalslied*

Bar	1–28	29–68	69–84	85–101	102–103	104–	112–	163–	274–	380–409	
Poem		Verse 1	Verse 2				Verse 3				
FF		Exposition						Development	Recapitulation		
LSF		First Group/ A		B			Second Group		Second Group		
Structural tonality	E-flat major				Dim. Triads	C minor				C major	
Passing tonality		E flat B→ flat (52)	→B flat	→E flat			C minor→G	C minor→ V/c→	V/c →Pedal on C		

Table 2 Summary of Daverio's formal outline of *Schicksalslied*

Bar	1–22	23–28	29–40	41–51	52–68	69–95	96–101	102–103	104–	112–194	194–284	284–380	380–409
Poem			Verse 1			Verse 2			Verse 3				
FF	Intro	Frame	Sonata form I				Frame	Axis	Sonata Form II				Coda
LSF			Expo/A	TR	B	Recap				Expo	Dev	Recap	
Tonality	E flat					B flat→E flat		Dim Triads	C minor				C major

Note for all tables: After William Caplin: I:PAC denotes a perfect authentic cadence on the tonic. Cadences occur at the end of the span of bars indicated. FF = Formal function; LSF = Large-Scale Function.

fundamental tone of Hölderlin's text, closing as it does with suffering humanity's blind plunge into the abyss'.⁸⁶

Accordingly, not only are attempts to make *Schicksalslied* fit the sonata mould problematic, they also hinder hermeneutic analysis. Brahms's op. 54 is distant from this formal paradigm for two fundamental reasons. First, the dominant is never firmly established in the first half of the piece; second, the material heard on (as opposed to in) the dominant in the first half of the work is never later heard in the tonic. Thus, Brahms's *Schicksalslied* does not establish the polarization or opposition that Charles Rosen sees as fundamental to the sonata-form paradigm, nor does it meet the 'obligation for tonal resolution' that Hepokoski and Darcy deem to be the defining feature of a sonata.⁸⁷

If we think of *Schicksalslied* as a setting of the poetic nucleus of Hölderlin's novel as articulated in this poem, charges of the violation of aesthetic principles and of arbitrary interpretations that contradict the poet's statement no longer stand. A nuanced and sophisticated reading of Hölderlin's poem in its narrative context opens a window onto a more compelling reading of Brahms's composition, particularly given that Brahms was conversant with the spiritual journey of the *Bildungsroman* and was evidently quite taken with the philosophy of consciousness in its literary guise.⁸⁸

By way of a new interpretation of this work, I propose that Brahms's *Schicksalslied* evinces a hybrid form singularly placed to accommodate its directional tonality: a large binary structure contained within a cyclic frame. Table 3 summarizes these findings. The introduction and the coda serve framing functions within Brahms's setting. They are not designated with letters or numbers by which to denote their formal sections and subsections, because they stand outside the binary form.

At a cursory level, this binary form corresponds to the potent *Götter/Menschen* antithesis of Hölderlin's novel. The A section can profitably be conceived of as a setting of the first and second verses of the poem. Brahms's A1 music has a close affinity to Hölderlin's concept of the 'aorgic' – an unattainable state of innocence. Following the establishment of the tonic at bar 39, the optimistic mediant rise at bar 41 reflects Hölderlin's mention of the 'mild breezes' of the 'radiant gods' that 'gently play on you'. This is shortly followed by a further mediant rise to B \flat at bar 52. The dominant is never firmly established here, however (as is shown in the structural tonality, passing tonality and cadential structure rows of Table 3). A return to the realm of the tonic is implied in the A2 material beginning at bar 69, which contemplates the heavenly life of the gods, before the B section addresses the human condition, the 'organic'. It is in this latter section, as we shall see below, that the music is at its most dissonant, perhaps expressive of all the division and conflict experienced in the eccentric orbit of human life. Encapsulating this binary opposition is the cyclic frame of the introduction and orchestral postlude, a framework that gives musical expression to the process of recollection fundamental to the genre of the *Bildungsroman*.

⁸⁶ Daverio, 'The "Wechsel der Töne"', 96.

⁸⁷ See Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York and London: Norton, 1988): Chapter VIII, 'Motif and Function', and Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 243.

⁸⁸ Evidence for this is found not only in Brahms's sensitive musical setting of Hölderlin's *Hyperion* and his appropriation of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (in the Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, op. 60), but also in many of the annotations he made to the Goethe-Schiller correspondence, as noted throughout this article.

Table 3 Formal outline of Brahms, *Schicksalslied*, op. 54*

Bars	1–22	23–28	29–68	69–84	85–96	96–101	102–103	104–	112–	194–	274–	380–402	403–409	
Poem			Verse 1	Verse 2			Dim. triads	Verse 3						
Tempo	Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll							Allegro						Adagio
Structural tonality	E flat							c Minor						C Major
Passing tonality				B flat → E flat				c minor	→V/V/c minor	c minor → V/c minor →	V/c minor →	Pedal on C		
Form	Introduction (Cyclic Form)						Binary Form					Coda (Cyclic Form)		
			A				B							
			A1		A2		B1		B2	B1				
Cadential structure	⇒I:PAC	Post-cadential	⇒I:PAC		⇒I:PAC	Post-cadential						⇒I:PAC	Post-cadential	

*After William Caplin, I:PAC indicates a perfect authentic cadence in the tonic. All cadences occur at the end of the given span of bars.

Elaborating on the work of Hepokoski,⁸⁹ Benedict Taylor recently theorized a 'Romantic conception of cyclic form' in his work on Mendelssohn's cyclic designs.⁹⁰ There he speaks in the plural of 'cyclic forms', his categorization dealing predominantly with multi-movement works. The cyclic principle, Taylor argues, 'involves musical recall above the level of the individual movement', with the exception of 'a single-movement structure whose coda corresponds to the introduction', as is the case with *Schicksalslied*. Yet, unlike Brahms's other essays in cyclic form, including the Symphony No. 3 in F major, op. 90, and the String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat major, op. 67, the *Song of Destiny* does not evince a tonal unity.⁹¹

Although shifting tonality was nothing new by 1871, the tonal design of *Schicksalslied* with its directional tonality is highly innovative in Brahms's oeuvre. A late-nineteenth century trajectory from E-flat major to C minor within this binary structure will elicit few remarks. It is the fact that Brahms framed this structure with the correspondence yet simultaneous alienation of the introduction and coda (by turns E-flat major and C major) that marks this work apart, and vexes Heinrich Schenker's theory of monotonicity,⁹² for the implied symmetry of the thematic recollection is not mirrored in the tonal plan. An exploration of the significance each of these tonalities held for Brahms will give a further dimension to this analysis.

I am inclined, with Michael C. Tusa, to dismiss scepticism at 'prior associations of key with character', instead thinking of such associations as 'part of the background of expectations, conventions, traditions, and individual works that informed the creation and reception of new works in the nineteenth century', even if within the oeuvre of a single composer.⁹³ The E-flat major in which *Schicksalslied* begins is a key Brahms had used on only three occasions in his compositional output before op. 54. Each of these works is elegiac in nature. The Variations in E-flat on a Theme by Schumann (variations based on a theme that Schumann composed shortly before his suicide attempt in February 1854) end with a ceremonial funeral march;⁹⁴ the Trio for Piano, Violin and Horn,

⁸⁹ On single-movement cyclic frames, see James Hepokoski, *Sibelius, Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 6–8.

⁹⁰ Benedict Taylor, *Mendelssohn, Time and Memory: The Romantic Conception of Cyclic Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁹¹ Taylor's examples, including the overtures to Mendelssohn's *Die Heimkehr aus der Fremde* and *St Paul*, and that to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, likewise show tonal unity. Taylor, *Mendelssohn, Time and Memory*, 10.

⁹² A possible model for the tonal trajectory of Brahms's *Schicksalslied* is Schumann's *Requiem für Mignon*, op. 98(b). The relationship between this work and Brahms's *Schicksalslied* exceeds the scope of this article, and is a topic that I will pursue elsewhere. For a cogent exploration of the unique tonal design of Schumann's *Requiem*, see Julian Horton, 'Schumann's *Requiem für Mignon* and the Concept of Music as Literature', in *Goethe: Musical Poet, Musical Catalyst*, ed. Lorraine Byrne (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2004): 242–71. Regarding the issue of directional tonality, see also Kevin Korsyn, 'Directional Tonality and Intertextuality: Brahms's Quintet Op. 88 and Chopin's Ballade Op. 38', and Harald Krebs, 'Alternatives to Monotonicity in Early Nineteenth-Century Music', *Journal of Music Theory* 25/1 (Spring 1981): 1–16.

⁹³ Michael C. Tusa, 'Beethoven's "C-Minor Mood": Some Thoughts on the Structural Implications of Key Choice', in *Beethoven Forum*, 2 (1993): 1–27.

⁹⁴ Schumann's original composition was first published in 1939 (with the theme having been brought out by Brahms in 1893 as the final entry in the Collected Edition of

op. 40 has as its second movement an elegy on the death of Brahms's mother in the tonic minor, and the whole work was written in her memory;⁹⁵ and the fourth movement of *Ein deutsches Requiem*, op. 45, 'Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen', is also in the key of E-flat major. Although it was composed later than *Schicksalslied*, the Violin Sonata No. 1 in G major, op. 78, with its central Adagio in E-flat major, also is suggestive in this context. The closing theme from the opening Allegro reappears in the slow second movement, expressively transformed into a funeral march that Brahms explicitly associated with the death of Felix Schumann.⁹⁶ We can therefore designate E-flat major as a tonality to which Brahms repeatedly turned in works associated with loss and bereavement, with each of these works being decidedly wistful and melancholic in nature.⁹⁷

These E-flat major pieces, moreover, tend to transition out of the realm of mourning. The *Requiem* provides a particularly interesting case as, before Brahms added the fifth movement, 'Ihr habt nur Traurigkeit', the tonal trajectory from the fourth movement to the next (now sixth), 'Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt', would have corresponded to that of *Schicksalslied*.⁹⁸ The E-flat that celebrates the dwelling place of the gods would have given way to the tumultuous C minor that gives voice to the woes of humanity, ultimately ending with the triumph of victory over death in C major. In the Violin Sonata, the theme expressively transformed as the funeral march in the second movement reappears one last time

Schumann's works). Brahms's library, however, contained 'an old copy of Schumann's Piano Variations in E-flat major, the famous 'last work,' on which the composer had been working shortly before his suicide attempt in February 1854'. See Karl Geiringer, *On Brahms and His Circle*, rev. and enlarged by George Bozarth (Michigan: Sterling Heights Press, 2006): 16.

⁹⁵ Kalbeck was the first to put forward this interpretation of Op. 40 as being associated with the death of Brahms's mother, and being associated with memories of the composer's youth. Peter Jost takes issue with Kalbeck's reading, which, Jost asserts, relies too heavily on biographical issues and not enough on musical analysis. See Peter Jost, 'Klang, Harmonik, und Form, in Brahms' Horntrio, Op. 40', in *Intentionaler Brahms-Kongress Gmunden 1997: Kongreßbericht*, ed. Ingrid Fuchs (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2001): 59–71.

⁹⁶ See Michael Struck, 'Revisionsbedürftig: Zur gedruckten Korrespondenz von Johannes Brahms und Clara Schumann: Auswirkungen irrtümlicher oder lückenhafter Überlieferung auf werkgenetische Bestimmungen (mit einem unausgewerteten Brahms-Brief zur Violinsonate Op. 78', *Die Musikforschung* 41/3 (1988): 235–241, translated in part by Ben Kohn and George Bozarth in 'New Evidence of the Genesis of Brahms's G major Violin Sonata, Op. 78', *American Brahms Society Newsletter* IX/1 (Spring 1991): 5–6. On the relationship between music and poetry in Brahms's op. 78, see Dillon R. Parmer, 'Brahms. Song Quotation, and Secret Programs', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 19/2 (1995–96): 161–190. For a consideration of the intricate relationship between Schumann's late Violin Concerto in D minor (1853), Brahms's Variations in E-Flat on a Theme by Schumann, and Brahms's op. 78, see David Brodbeck, 'Medium and Meaning: New Aspects of the Chamber Music', *Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 98–132 (especially 117–18).

⁹⁷ Of course, there are a variety of keys that are associated with bereavement and loss in Brahms's output. I do not suggest that E-flat major is the sole key associated with this realm. Rather, I am highlighting an aesthetic quality that these E-flat major works have in common.

⁹⁸ This aspect of Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* is discussed in James Webster, 'The *Alto Rhapsody*', and Christopher Reynolds, 'Brahms Rhapsodizing', 96–7.

in the G minor finale, a movement that ends in the major.⁹⁹ All four works inhabit the same emotional sphere that prompted Adolf Schubring rather candidly to describe Brahms's Schumann Variations, op. 23 in terms of a 'determined pulling oneself together, shared with outbreaks of quivering pain'.¹⁰⁰

The twice-repeated diminished triads heard in the winds and horns that directly precede Brahms's setting of Hölderlin's third verse (as shown in Ex. 1), and delineate the cleft between the human and the divine, could go either to E-flat major or C minor. Brahms's choice of the latter key for this turbulent setting of verse 3 afforded him the opportunity to employ a long-range tonal trajectory from C minor to C major over the second half of the work. This progression is redolent of the characteristically expressive course from sorrow or struggle to comfort and reconciliation that was common currency in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, from Haydn's time on, as James Webster argues, resolutions into C major constituted the most important class of this topos, for this progression 'retained a special character, especially in conjunction with notions of the sublime and of transcendence'.¹⁰¹ Webster categorizes the most meaningful C minor to major progressions since Haydn that must have been highly significant to Brahms, including, but not limited to, Haydn's 'Chaos' from *The Creation*, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the finale of Schubert's String Quintet, and Act I of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.¹⁰² In Brahms own output, we find this progression not only in *Schicksalslied*, but also in the *Alto Rhapsody*, the Symphony No. 1, and the sixth movement of *Ein deutsches Requiem*.

Brahms's extraordinary and intricately linked choices of form and tonality – from the elegiac E-flat major, via the turbulent C minor, to the transcendent C major – resonate closely with three characteristics that are central to Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, each of which has far-reaching implications for this musical setting: first, the three temporalities within the poem explored above, which can be further understood in terms of 'torrential time' (*reifende Zeit*, a term Hölderlin associated with revolutionary turmoil¹⁰³) and a 'time of maturity' (*reifenden Zeit*);¹⁰⁴ second, the 'resolution of dissonance' within the novel; and, third, the manner in which the articulation of this dissonance – the caesura or rupture – is the agent of its own resolution. It is to the manner in which we can discern such resonance in the details of Brahms's musical setting that we now turn.

⁹⁹ For a more in-depth discussion of this theme and its various manifestations in Brahms's op. 78, see Nicole Grimes, 'The Sense of an Ending: Adorno, Brahms, and Music's Return to the Land of Childhood', *Irish Musical Analysis*, Irish Musical Studies, 11, ed. Gareth Cox and Julian Horton (Dublin: Four Court's Press, 2014): 104–124.

¹⁰⁰ Adolf Schubring, 'Die Schumann'sche Schule: Schumann und Brahms: Brahms's vierhändige Variationen', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 3 (February 1868): 41–2 and 49–51.

¹⁰¹ Webster, 'The *Alto Rhapsody*', 23.

¹⁰² The use of this C minor to C major topic in Brahms has been explored in detail by James Webster and Peter Smith amongst others. Webster traces its influence, particularly to Act I of *Tristan und Isolde*, which also has a psychological progression from C minor to C major. See James Webster, 'The *Alto Rhapsody*', 19–46. See also Peter H. Smith, *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in His Werther Quartet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). Later instances of this same tonal trajectory include the Piano Trio in C minor, op. 101, and the Lied 'Auf dem Kirchhofe', op. 105 no. 4.

¹⁰³ Robert Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ryan, *Holderlins Lehre vom Wechsel der Töne*, 22.

The Caesura in *Schicksalslied* and Brahms's Ascending Circle

With deep artistic affinity to Hölderlin's poetry, and in keeping with the rebirth of a new identity at the end of a secular *Bildungsroman*, Brahms's circle is incomplete. The beginning of *Schicksalslied*, as Christopher Reynolds astutely notes, 'sounds like a culmination, like a well-prepared conclusion',¹⁰⁵ whereas, because the final bars do not employ all of the instrumental and vocal forces heard up to this point, the ending evades a full sense of closure. This is entirely appropriate for a composition written in the spirit of the *Bildungsroman* whose journey is circuitous by necessity. As Hegel explains, 'it is a circle that returns into itself, that presupposes its beginning, and reaches its beginning only in its end'.¹⁰⁶

The work opens with an arrestingly beautiful melody on muted violins supported harmonically by strings and winds, with pulsating timpani ostinato on the tonic. Brahms gives new meaning to this music upon its return in the coda with the use of a number of subtly sensitive alterations. When the opening melody reappears (as shown in Exx. 2a and 2b), the restless timpani ostinato has ceased. The composer intended the erstwhile violin melody, now heard on the flute, to be played upon its return with 'passion and beauty', its ethereal tones transcending the 'large section of violins'.¹⁰⁷ The strings, now *dolce*, play an undulating arpeggio figure, serving to enhance the 'Er-Innerung'¹⁰⁸ of this ending, that is, the manner in which it remembers, internalizes, and re-participates in its evolving consciousness.

The Allegro C minor section that lies between this E-flat major opening and its ethereal C major return has a furious energy not found elsewhere in the piece. This is brought about by a number of factors. As Jackson observes, Brahms does not, in fact, establish the tonic of C minor, but rather suggests it by prolonging its dominant.¹⁰⁹ The unfulfilled nature of the music is intensified by the relentless quaver motion in the strings, reminiscent of the sixth movement of the *German Requiem*, combined with the oppressive four-part choir singing here for the first time in strict unison. All this characterizes the music that flanks the B2 section (that is, the music from bars 104–178 and 274–332, as outlined on Table 3). What lies between is music with developmental tendencies: it is the most harmonically free music within the piece, yet it is also tonally directed, as it establishes the unique tonal trajectory of the ending.

The overlapping circular figures in the strings, from bar 179, announce the dominant of the dominant whilst providing respite from the frenzied pace. The fugal rendition of the first two lines of verse three has an eddying motion redolent of the transformation and regression as well as growth and progression that characterize Hölderlin's novel (bars 194–251). The swirling arpeggios that ushered in the secondary dominant now introduce the dominant of the ultimate

¹⁰⁵ Reynolds, 'Brahms Rhapsodizing', 222.

¹⁰⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as cited in Abrams, 235.

¹⁰⁷ Brahms to Karl Reintaler, 24 October 1871, in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Karl Reintaler, Max Bruch, Hermann Deiters, Friedr. Heimssoeth, Karl Reinecke, Ernst Rudorff, Bernhard und Luise Scholz*, ed. Wilhelm Altmann (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1974): 42.

¹⁰⁸ Hegel hyphenates the first occurrence of this word in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in order to draw attention to its double-meaning of 'remembering' and 'internalizing', as noted by Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism*, 235.

¹⁰⁹ Jackson, 'The Tragic Reversed Recapitulation', 78.

tonic. The relentless quaver motion and the unison voices of the choir return as the suffering mortals fall headlong into the abyss. The texture is saturated with diminished seventh chords, which are at their most pronounced on the word 'blindlings' (headlong or blindly) before the hemiolas that evoke the symbolism of water thrown from ledge to ledge culminating in the terrifying *fortissimo* 'jahrlang' (for years) of bars 314–316. This takes place over a sustained pedal on C, posed as the dominant of F. Its energy spent, and the dynamic reduced from the *fortissimo* outbursts to a sustained *piano*, the music hovers here for no fewer than 54 bars (bars 326–379). Contemplating the vague abyss, and conscious of the division and conflict between the self and the outside world, Brahms's setting is now at its most dissonant.

Rather than continuing in the tonal direction adumbrated thus far, however, the music turns back, opening onto a new beginning. This is the definitive moment of the caesura in Brahms's composition, the 'pure word', as Hölderlin would have it. It marks the very moment when the subject has been objectified and now recognizes itself. As Hegel formulates it:

On the one hand ... [consciousness] alienates itself and in this alienation sets itself off as object. ... On the other hand there is in this very process the other moment in which [self-consciousness] has equally transcended this alienation and objectification and taken it back into itself, and so is at home with itself in its otherness as such.— This is the movement of consciousness.¹¹⁰

Brahms was certainly conversant with the Romantic plot archetype that underpins the philosophy of consciousness, for he highlights a lengthy passage in letter No. 809 in the Schiller–Goethe *Briefwechsel*, in which Schiller, taking issue with Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, addresses precisely the dichotomies central to Hölderlin's *Hyperion*: between the conscious and the unconscious, between what Hölderlin would later term the 'aorgic' and the 'organic', the two extremes of the 'eccentric orbit of all human life':

I fear, however, that these Gentlemen of Idealism [such as Schelling is] pay too little attention to experience in their ideas, and, in experience, the poet also begins with the Unconscious. Indeed, he may consider himself lucky if, in the completed work, he only comes so far through the clearest Consciousness of his operations as to find once again the first, obscure total-idea of his work unweakened.¹¹¹

The return to the thematic material of the introduction in this altered manner, I propose, transfers the poetic idea to the object of music, thereby giving musical form to the movement of consciousness, so that the listener can now experience the orchestral postlude from a different and much enhanced perspective. When considered in this way, this moment plays out just as Foucault characterizes it in his discussion of Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, as 'the improbable unity of two beings as

¹¹⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as cited in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 197.

¹¹¹ 'Ich fürchte aber daß diese Herren Idealisten ihrer Ideen wegen allzuwenig Notiz von der Erfahrung nehmen, und in der Erfahrung fängt auch der Dichter nur mit dem Bewußtlosen an, ja er hat sich glücklich zu schätzen, wenn er durch das klarste Bewußtsein seiner Operationen nur so weit kommt, um die erste dunkle Totalidee seines Werks in der vollendeten Arbeit ungeschwächt wieder zu finden'. Letter No. 809 from Schiller to Goethe, 27 March 1801, on pages 338–40 of Brahms's copy. This translation is my own.

closely aligned as a figure and its reflection in a mirror'.¹¹² In listening to (and experiencing) the postlude to *Schicksalslied*, we 'arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time'.¹¹³

Taken together, the unique tonal trajectory of this work, the refined alterations in orchestration and expression, and the consummate treatment of form invite the listener to experience the musical material of the introduction anew and with heightened awareness. This ending, therefore, calls to mind a moulding of musical material into the characteristically Romantic shape of an ascending circle or spiral. Brahms's musically 'eccentric path', like Hölderlin's, leads us away from the original unity in order to restore it, in a heightened manner, through ourselves. This postlude prompts reflection and realization on the part of Brahms's listener akin to that of Hölderlin's reader.

Epilogue: Brahms and the Literature of Humanity

The composer's well-known indecision, throughout 1871, regarding this ending has undoubtedly vexed the question as to the work's hermeneutic meaning. Brahms addressed this subject in a number of letters to his friend Karl Reintaler that year, in the elusive manner that characterizes his enigmatic correspondence. Writing in October, he confessed that, where his setting of Hyperion's song is concerned, 'I certainly say something that the poet does not say and, to be sure, it would be better if what's missing were in fact his main concern'.¹¹⁴

Commentators have taken this as an indication that Brahms granted himself poetic license to 'overstep the structural bounds of [Hölderlin's] text'.¹¹⁵ His comment can be interpreted differently, however, in light of our recognition of the structural significance of the caesura in Hölderlin's writings. Ian Balfour clarifies that at this pivotal juncture in much of Hölderlin's output 'the one truth ... must not be written or spoken, only "circumscribed", literally written around'.¹¹⁶ Might Brahms, therefore, have been paying tribute to this very quality in Hölderlin's writings – that which Carola Nielinger-Vakil eloquently terms the poet's characteristic 'art of leaving things unsaid'?¹¹⁷ If so, we might more usefully interpret his comment as 'I simply say something that the poet does not *explicitly* say and, to be sure, it would be better if what's missing were in fact his main concern'.

Furthermore, throughout Brahms's deliberations, there is no evidence to suggest the slightest uncertainty regarding either the tonal trajectory or the formal structure of the ending of this work. He initially composed a coda that included the choir singing excerpts from the first two lines of the poem, 'Ihr

¹¹² Michel Foucault, 'The Father's "No"', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. and with an introduction by Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1977): 68–86 (79).

¹¹³ The reference is to T.S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', from *The Four Quartets*.

¹¹⁴ 'Ich sage ja eben etwas, was der Dichter nicht sagt, und freilich wäre es besser, wenn ihm das Fehlende die Hauptsache gewesen wäre.' Johannes Brahms to Karl Reintaler, 24 October 1871, in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Karl Reintaler*, 42. This translation slightly amended from Michael Steinberg, *Choral Masterworks*, 80.

¹¹⁵ I borrow the phrase from Daverio, 'The "Wechsel der Töne"', 96.

¹¹⁶ Balfour, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy*, 242.

¹¹⁷ Carola Nielinger-Vakil, 'Quiet Revolutions: Hölderlin Fragments by Luigi Nono and Wolfgang Rihm', *Music and Letters* 81/2 (2000): 245–74 (247).

- Ex. 3 Hermann Levi's transcription of Brahms's proposed ending for *Schicksalslied*, in May 1871 in piano reduction, transcribed from the original held at the Brahms Institut an der Musikhochschule, Lübeck. This would have followed on from bar 380

Adagio

389 *pp* Ihr wan-delt dro-ben im Licht auf weich-em Bo-den se-li-gen Ge-

395 ni-en!

wandelt droben im Licht auf weichem Boden' in homophonic chords from what would have been bars 390–395, and a polyphonic interweaving of voices on the words 'selige Genien' from bars 402–406. It was this ending that Brahms shared with Hermann Levi in May 1871, and that Levi copied in piano reduction (reproduced as Fig. 2, and transcribed as Ex. 3). The composer subsequently thought better of including these words, and wondered if the solution might not be to let the choir instead hum 'ah' in the specified bars. Max Kalbeck reports that following his discussion with Levi, Brahms took a pencil and scratched the choir out of the postlude altogether.¹¹⁸

The question of the extent of Levi's influence on the final composition has never been fully addressed. A newly discovered letter from the conductor to Brahms, which is found on the reverse of the piano reduction in Figure 2 (housed at the Brahms-Institut, Lübeck), seems to indicate that Levi's input concerned

¹¹⁸ Max Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 4 Vols (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1909): 2: 365.

Ex. 3 Continued

402 *pp* Se - li - gen Ge - ni -

pp Se - li - gen Ge - ni - en, se - li - gen Ge - ni -

pp Se - li - gen Ge - ni - en!

Se - li - gen, Se - li - gen Gen - - nie - - -

406 en!

en!

en

The musical score consists of four systems. The first system (measures 402-405) features vocal lines in soprano, alto, and bass clefs, and a piano accompaniment in grand staff. The lyrics are: "Se - li - gen Ge - ni -", "Se - li - gen Ge - ni - en, se - li - gen Ge - ni -", "Se - li - gen Ge - ni - en!", and "Se - li - gen, Se - li - gen Gen - - nie - - -". The piano part includes a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 406-409) shows the vocal lines continuing with the word "en!" and the piano accompaniment. The piano part features a prominent melodic line in the right hand with a long slur, and a bass line with a long slur.

Manuscript dated: May 1871

only matters of instrumentation and choral and orchestral balance.¹¹⁹ (This letter is reproduced in Fig. 3.) The fact that Brahms had on an earlier occasion paid attention to “some of the remarks that [he] mumbled shyly at the piano,” Levi writes, had given him the courage to offer some further suggestions. Here the conductor proposes, for instance, adjustments to the balance of timpani and bass in the opening, and a reconsideration of a flute entry that he deems to look better on paper than it sounds in practice (at bars 56–57). Nowhere, however, does he make any suggestions regarding matters of large-scale form or tonality. Nor does he give any indication that such matters had arisen in earlier conversations.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ I discovered this letter on the reverse of Levi’s piano reduction at the Brahms Institut, Lübeck in December 2012.

¹²⁰ In the published correspondence of 1871, only two letters mention *Schicksalslied* prior to its premier on 18 October. In the first, without a specific date in September 1871, Brahms writes: ‘should Simrock need the orchestral parts (for *Schicksalslied*) I have referred



Fig. 2 The piano reduction of Brahms's proposed ending for *Schicksalslied* in May 1871 in Levi's hand, housed at the Brahms Institut an der Musikhochschule, Lübeck

Evidence seems to suggest, therefore, that Levi's influence was limited to helping Brahms reach his decision regarding the absence of the choir in the postlude. Indeed, both the piano reduction in Levi's hand and the autograph score of the composition, now housed at the Library of Congress confirm that matters of form and tonality were finalized by May 1871.¹²¹

In Christmas of that same year, Brahms's yuletide greeting to Reinthaler picked up on their earlier exchange when the composer quipped that 'Hyperion's *Schicksalslied*' is 'not the kind of poem to which one can tack something on'.¹²² I venture that this statement indicates Brahms's full appreciation of the completeness [or perfection – *Vollendung*] of Hölderlin's poem. By Christmas 1871, Brahms was happy to allow his wordless and tonally anomalous ending stand on its own merit as a representation of a heightened consciousness, for the ontological implications of his ascending circle were at that point entirely clear to him. We can profitably think of his last utterance to Reinthaler regarding the inappropriateness of words in his *Nachspiel* in the same spirit as the maxim with which Heidegger would later preface his commentaries

him to you.' In the second letter of 27 September 1871, Brahms refers to Levi's 'puzzling correspondence' ('räthselhafte Zuschrift'). There is no way to ascertain whether Brahms was referring to this newly discovered letter.

¹²¹ The autograph score of *Schicksalslied* housed at the Library of Congress, Washington DC, has the shelf mark Music 1178, item 4.

¹²² Johannes Brahms to Karl Reinthaler, 25 December 1871, in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Karl Reinthaler*, 44.

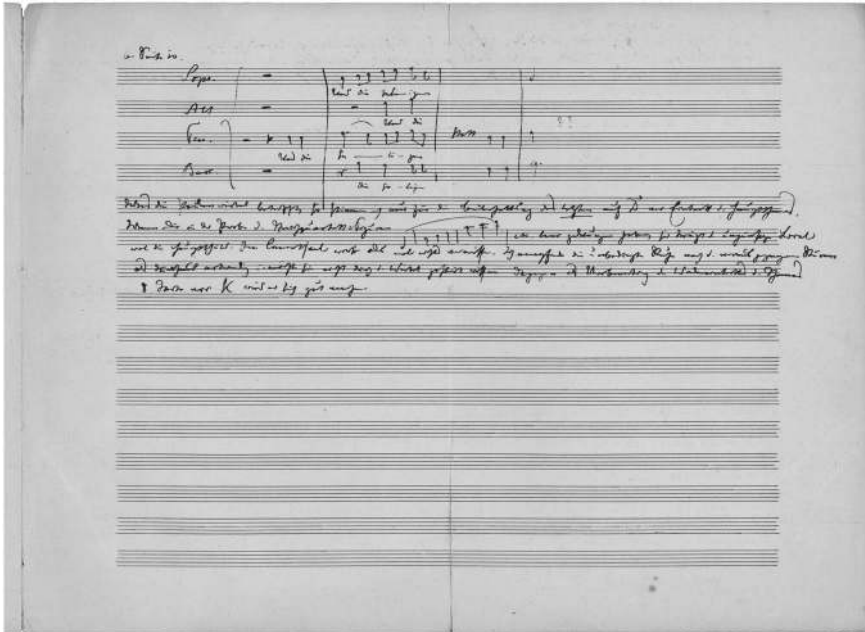
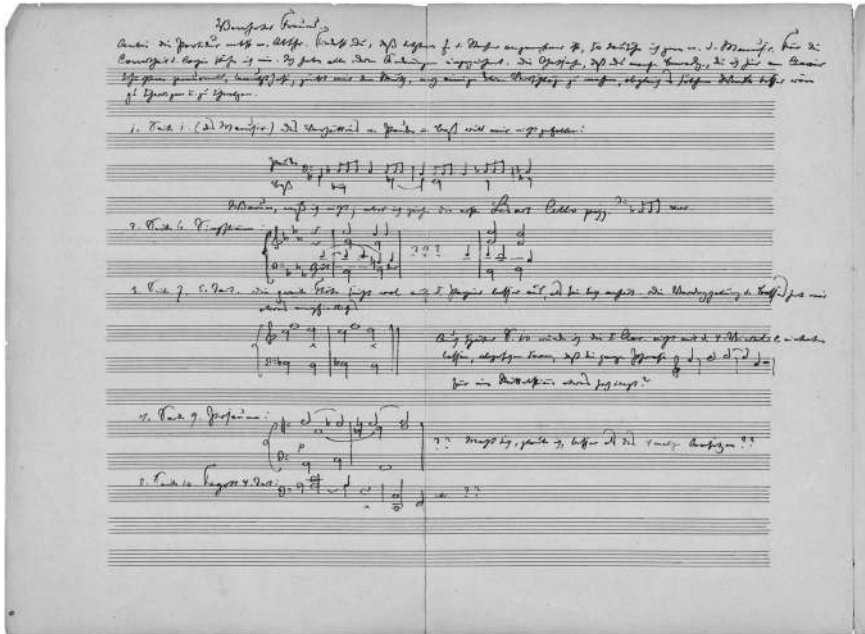


Fig. 3 Letter from Hermann Levi to Brahms found on the reverse of the ending in Hermann Levi's hand (Fig. 2), and housed at the Brahms Institut an der Musikhochschule, Lübeck

on Hölderlin: 'for the sake of what has been composed, commentary on the poem must strive to make itself superfluous'.¹²³

I bring together here the artistic voices of Brahms and Heidegger not by happenstance, but by way of highlighting the poetic vision with which Brahms chose, interpreted and set Hölderlin's poetry. It took literary critics more than a century to discover the structure of *Hyperion* 'since it is folded into the thematic and philosophical texture of the book'.¹²⁴ Yet, in his setting, Brahms intuited its complex poetic and philosophical meaning with an artistic sensitivity to Hölderlin that was not to be equalled until the late twentieth century. In the intervening years, the poet's reputation suffered, as a consequence of what Robert Savage refers to as his 'state of spiritual benightedness'.¹²⁵ Following his rehabilitation in the early twentieth century, the misappropriation of his poetry by the National Socialists saw a renewed demise of Hölderlin's reputation.¹²⁶ Both Heidegger and Adorno were key figures in the post-war re-evaluation of this poet.¹²⁷ Their writings, in turn, were instrumental in attracting numerous composers to the works of Hölderlin in the late twentieth century including Hanns Eisler, Heinz Holliger, Luigi Nono, Wolfgang Rihm, György Ligeti and Hans Werner Henze.¹²⁸

What these late-twentieth-century composers were undoubtedly drawn to in Hölderlin, as was the case with Brahms in the late 1860s, was 'the literature of humanity'.¹²⁹ This entails 'a belief in the possibility and significance of formation, "Bildung"', which applies equally to the individual human life and to the individual work of art'.¹³⁰ By intricately interweaving compositional process in *Schicksalslied* with intellectual tradition and philosophical thought, Brahms bestowed upon posterity a musical manifestation of *Bildung* in the form of a quintessentially Brahmsian fabric.

¹²³ Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlin's Dichtung* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1951): p. 7f, as quoted in Theodor Adorno, 'Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry', in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholsen, Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992): 109–49 (114).

¹²⁴ Minden, *The German Bildungsroman*, 119. Lawrence Ryan is widely considered to have been the first critic to unlock Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, in his 1965 text on that work. See Ryan, *Hölderlin's 'Hyperion'*.

¹²⁵ Robert Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe*, 6.

¹²⁶ On this subject, see Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe*. On Heidegger's reception of Hölderlin, see in particular Chapter 1, 'Conversation: Heidegger, Das abendländische Gespräch'.

¹²⁷ Particularly influential in this regard was Theodor Adorno's essay 'Parataxis: Zur späten Lyriks Hölderlins', *Neue Rundschau* lxxv (1964), included in the second volume of Adorno's *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974): 447–91, and translated in *Notes to Literature*, 109–49.

¹²⁸ I refer to Hanns Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge* (1962), Heinz Holliger, *Scarandelli-Zyklus* (1978–91), Wolfgang Rihm, *Hölderlin-Fragmente* (1977), Luigi Nono, *Fragmente-Stille, An Diotima* (1979–80), György Ligeti, *Hölderlin Phantasien* (1982), and Hans Werner Henze, *Seventh Symphony* (1983–84).

¹²⁹ I borrow the phrase from Minden, *The German Bildungsroman*, 125.

¹³⁰ Minden, *The German Bildungsroman*, 125.