Reviews

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Review Article

New Paths to Understanding Brahms's Music: Recent Analytic Studies

In his 1853 proclamation of Johannes Brahms's talent, 'Neue Bahnen', Robert Schumann prophesied that the young man's compositions would chart new paths.[1] This article attracted so much attention that subsequent reviewers, both friends and foes alike, measured Brahms's compositions against its intimidating prediction. Not surprisingly, this theme even appeared in a number of the obituaries marking the composer's death in 1897. Although this tradition continued, to some degree, throughout the twentieth century, new angles and methodologies gradually emerged. While some scholars developed techniques to analyse Brahms's music, others pursued increasingly sophisticated understandings of the relationships between his compositions and the culture in which they were conceived and first performed. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholars were also tackling questions of performance practices in Brahms's day and considering such topics as orchestral balance and elastic tempo.[2] The resulting rich diversity in recent Brahms studies was demonstrated by the American Brahms Society's study session at the 2008 AMS/SMT conference entitled 'Brahms at 175'.[3] A number of the participants described studies of Brahms's milieu and they acknowledged the influence of Margaret Notley's path-breaking work on the intersection of Viennese politics and Brahms's compositions.[4] The work of music analysts, however, was given somewhat less attention, and as a result, the following review article will concentrate on the latest ideas theorists have pursued in their attempts to explain the complexities of Brahms's music.

To be sure, Brahms's compositions have always captured the attention of analysts, but, as late as 1983, Allen Forte was somewhat justified in stating:

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[1] Robert Schumann, 'Neue Bahnen', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 39/18 (1853): 185–6. A number of studies track the influence of Schumann's article, including: Norbert Meurs, *Neue Bahnen? Aspekte der Brahms-Rezeption 1853–1868* (Köln: Studio, 1996) and Ingrid Fuchs, 'Der Versuch musikhistorischer Einordnung Brahms' und Bruckners in den Wiener Nachrufen', in *Bruckner-Symposion: Bruckner – Vorbilder und Traditionen im Rahmen des Internationalen Brucknerfestes Linz 1997 24–28 September 1997: Bericht*, ed. Uwe Harten, Elisabeth Maier, Andrea Harrandt and Erich Wolfgang Partsch (Linz: Anton Bruckner Institut, 1999): 221–31.

[2] *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performing Style*, ed. Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman, CD prod. Eric Wen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[3] Daniel Beller-McKenna chaired this session. The participants included Paul Berry, Jacquelyn Sholes, Ryan Minor, Marcia Citron, Roger Moseley, Brent Auerbach and Daniel Stevens. J. Peter Burkholder served as respondent.

[4] See, for example, Margaret Notley, 'Brahms as Liberal: Genre, Style, and Politics in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 17/2 (1993): 107–23. Notley's most recent work on this topic is *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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> With the exception of a few recent studies, little analytical work of any depth has been published on the music of Brahms … . It is not difficult to ascertain the reason for this: Brahms's music, even when ostensibly simple, is full of complications and projects unusual structures which have no counterparts in the music of the Classical masters generally regarded as his model repertory.[5]

Forte's comments were originally part of a presentation at one of the many conferences marking the 150th anniversary of Brahms's birth. Today, some twenty-five years later, the state of Brahms research is quite different, with numerous scholars from across Europe and North America probing the complexities to which Forte refers. In the years immediately following Forte's remarks, scholars tended to emphasize Brahms's harmonic, motivic and formal structures, and the ways in which they intersect. Their diverse analytical techniques often derived from the theories of Schoenberg or Schenker, and in some cases combinations of these techniques. More recent explorations also employ transformational theories to probe Brahms's rhythm, as this survey will show.

Readers probably will be familiar with Walter Frisch's elucidation of the ways in which Brahms's technique of developing variation impacts form, rhythm, phrase structure and texture.[6] As Frisch acknowledges, a number of German publications had already attempted this type of analysis in studies of such works as Brahms's string quartets. Not surprisingly, a number of these studies (along with many other analyses) riff on the title of Schoenberg's essay 'Brahms the Progressive'.[7] One of the difficulties with developing variation is that analysts can differ on their assessment of what constitutes a motive. For example, Christian Martin Schmidt's analysis of the Clarinet Sonata op. 120, no. 1 has been criticized for promoting common musical figures to the level of important structural motives. As a result, not everyone is persuaded by the motivic connections that he describes.[8] Notwithstanding the influence of Frisch and other publications using Schoenbergian techniques, some scholars have argued that too much emphasis has been accorded Brahms's motivic structures, and as a result Brahms's formal structures have not been fully explored.[9]

Followers of Schoenberg are not, however, the only ones to examine Brahms's motivic structures. In their studies of Brahms's complex harmony and voice

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[5] Allen Forte, 'Motivic Design and Structural Levels in the First Movement of Brahms's String Quartet in C Minor', *The Musical Quarterly* 69/4 (1983): 471.

[6] Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[7] Arnold Schoenberg, 'Brahms the Progressive' (originally given as a radio address in 1933) in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (1975; reprint: Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 398–441. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn collected a number of analyses of Brahms's music under the title *Aimez-vous Brahms 'the Progressive'?* Musik-Konzepte 65 (München: text+kritik, 1989).

[8] See, for example, Rainer Wilke, *Brahms, Reger, Schönberg, Streichquartette: Motivisch-thematische Prozesse und formale Gestalt* (Hamburg: Wagner, 1980); Rainer Boestfleisch, 'Innovative Techniken in der Klarinettensonate op. 120 nr. 1 von Johannes Brahms', *Ostinato rigore: Revue internationale d'études musicales* 13 (1999): 169–92; and Christian Martin Schmidt, *Verfahren der motivisch-thematischen Vermittlung in der Musik von Johannes Brahms, dargestellt an der Klarinettensonate f-Moll op. 120, 1* (München: Emil Katzbichler, 1971). Hellmut Federhofer is just one of Schmidt's critics, see 'Johannes Brahms – Arnold Schönberg und der Fortschritt', *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 34 (1983): 111–30.

[9] See, for example, Elisabeth Reiter, *Der Sonatensatz in der späten Kammermusik von Brahms: Einheit und Zusammenhang in variativen Verfahren* (Tutzing: Schneider, 2000).

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leading, Schenkerians examine the ways in which surface-level motives are developed as well as the ways they are expanded in middle-ground structural levels. For example, Carl Schachter demonstrates how the well-known neighbour motion that opens the first movement of Brahms's Symphony No. 2 is expanded through the dominant prolongation in bars 14–43.[10] These types of expanded motives are intimately connected to the respective passages' harmonies and may even be bound up with their rhythmic structures. Allen Cadwallader has revealed these types of concealed motivic repetitions, and their relations to harmony and rhythm, in Brahms's late Intermezzi (op. 117, no. 2; op. 118, no. 2; and op. 119, no. 2), and two of his articles that discuss Schenker's own analyses of these pieces have been translated into French.[11]

In addition to the Schoenbergian and Schenkerian publications, there have been a number of studies focusing on Brahms's harmonies. Some authors, including Walter Gieseler, attempt to codify Brahms's chords while others focus on a specific chord, as for instance Christopher Wintle's seminal article on Brahms's use of Neapolitan-related harmonies. Authors employ a variety of analytical techniques, with some, including Loris Azzaroni, drawing on Riemann's theories.[12]

As each of Brahms's works was premiered, nineteenth-century critics were quick to comment on his reliance on Classical forms. Twentieth-century analysts studied the ways Brahms manipulated these forms in much greater detail than their earlier counterparts, observing the precise ways in which he departs from eighteenth-century models and in particular his unique blending of sonata and rondo forms.[13] Brahms's treatment of sonata form has attracted numerous scholars with some following James Webster in analysing his employment of the so-called three-key exposition, and others, principally Peter H. Smith, drawing on both Schoenbergian and Schenkerian techniques to scrutinize his overlapping

[10] Carl Schachter, 'The First Movement of Brahms's Second Symphony: The Opening Theme and Its Consequences', *Music Analysis* 2/1 (Mar. 1983): 55–68. This article appeared in Spanish, along with ones by well-known Brahms scholars Walter Frisch and Siegfried Kross, in *Quodlibet: Revista de especialización musical* 20 (Jun. 2001). The entire issue was devoted to Brahms's symphonies.

[11] Allen Cadwallader, 'Foreground Motivic Ambiguity: Its Clarification at the Middleground Levels in Selected Late Piano Pieces of Johannes Brahms', *Music Analysis* 7/1 (1988): 59–91. Translations of other related articles by Cadwallader appear in *Ostinato rigore: Revue internationale d'études musicales* 10 (1997) and 13 (1999). Both of these issues provide French editions of analyses of Brahms's music that had already been published in other languages. They include articles by such scholars as Michael Musgrave, John Rink, Rainer Boestfleisch and Walter Frisch. In addition there are original articles that analyse Brahms's music from a variety of perspectives. For example, Jean-Claude Teboul views Brahms's ambiguous harmonies (in issue 13), Mark Delaere considers the function of his codas (in issue 13) and Françoise Escande uses a Schoenbergian approach to discuss the *Alto Rhapsody* (in issue 10).

[12] Walter Gieseler, *Die Harmonik bei Johannes Brahms* (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1997). Christopher Wintle, 'The "Sceptred Pall": Brahms's Progressive Harmony', in *Brahms 2: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 197–222. Loris Azzaroni, 'Elusività dei processi cadenzali in Brahms: Il ruolo della sottodominante', *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 24/1 (1989): 74–94.

[13] Robert Pascall was one of the first to outline the types of difficulties these blended movements pose for analysts. 'Some Special Uses of Sonata Form by Brahms', *Soundings* 4 (1974): 58–63.

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of the development and recapitulation sections.[14] Brahms's theme and variation sets and movements have also attracted attention, with Elaine Sisman placing his handling of this form in its historical context, and (like many other authors) stressing the importance he placed on the bass. By contrast, David Pacun employs an array of analytical techniques, including ones stemming from David Lewin, to analyse the large-scale structure of these movements.[15] Understanding Brahms's forms to some extent involves examining the structure of his themes, and François de Médicis recently applied the analytical techniques developed by William Caplin to study Brahms's ternary-form themes.[16]

In surveying the research on Brahms that has already appeared in the twenty-first century one can discern at least three themes that modern analysts share and that contrast with pre-1980 Brahms scholarship:

- **Text–music relationships in lieder**: Until the last decades of the twentieth century, many writers asserted that the music in Brahms's songs ignored the corresponding texts. This interpretation has now been widely rejected; moreover, analysts of all bents, as well as historians, continue to reveal the rich and subtly expressive qualities of this repertoire. This more positive approach to Brahms's lieder is an international trend, with scholars in Switzerland and Italy exploring these works, in addition to those in German- and English-speaking countries. My own dissertation uses Schenkerian techniques to demonstrate that the expressive function of Brahms's music even extends into its deepest structural levels.[17]
- **Rhythm**: Although Brahms's handling of rhythm, particularly his use of hemiola, was often referenced by scholars of the twentieth-century, only in the last few years have analytical approaches been developed to codify the intricacies of his rhythm and metre, and to begin to explore their expressiveness. Hugo Riemann was among the earliest analysts to attempt to grapple with Brahms's habit of writing music that seemed to contradict the notated metre, and his strategy was to rebar such passages. Although subsequent commentators acknowledge that Riemann was describing an important aspect of Brahms's compositional technique, they usually do not follow his methodology. [18]

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[14] James Webster, 'Schubert's Sonata Form and Brahms's First Maturity' [Part 2], *Nineteenth-Century Music* 3/1 (1979): 52–71. Peter H. Smith, 'Liquidation, Augmentation, and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 17/3 (1994): 237–61.

[15] Elaine R. Sisman, 'Brahms and the Variation Canon', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 14/2 (1990): 132–53. David E. Pacun, 'Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms' (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1998).

[16] François de Médicis, 'L'Adaptation d'une Forme à une Style: Les Thèmes à Retour dans la Musique Instrumentale de Brahms', *Canadian University Music Review/Revue de Musique des Universités Canadiennes* 20/2 (2000): 43–79.

[17] See, for example, Georges Starobinski, 'Brahms et la nostalgie de l'enfance: Volks-Kinderlieder, berceuses et Klaus-Groth-Lieder', *Acta musicologica* 74/2 (2002): 141–94; *Brahms als Liedkomponist: Studien zum Verhältnis von Text und Vertonung*, ed. Peter Jost (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992); *I lieder di Johannes Brahms*, ed. Guido Salvetti (Milano: Unicopli, 1986); Heather Platt, 'Text–Music Relationships in the Lieder of Johannes Brahms' (PhD diss., Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 1992).

[18] The lied 'Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer' (op. 105, no. 2) is one of the pieces that Riemann analysed, and Matthias Schmidt recently assessed his comments on this piece. Hugo Riemann, 'Die Taktfreiheiten in Brahms' Liedern', *Die Musik* 12/1 (1912): 10–21. Matthias

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- **Meaning and expression**: The expressiveness of Brahms's music has become an increasingly important focus, in part because it is a way for theorists to respond to criticisms of formalism from practitioners of the New Musicology and because it refutes the previously widely held, but overly simplistic, view that Brahms was a representative of 'absolute' music. Historians have found this to be a very fertile area for research, and beyond connecting Brahms's compositions to his favourite writers, and especially to E.T.A. Hoffmann's character Kreisler, they use Brahms's well-known allusions to other composer's works (as well as to his own) as hermeneutic windows that open onto the possible extra-musical meaning or significance of a work. Paul Berry has perhaps taken this approach the furthest by arguing that these types of meaningful allusions were a type of communication between Brahms and his closest friends. These types of studies, however, rely more on creative connections of sources (such as letters) rather than deep music analysis.[19]

These three themes recur in the studies that I describe below, regardless of whether the analytical techniques are derived from Schoenberg, Schenker, or transformational principles. In order to highlight the most recent trends, I will take the somewhat unusual approach of discussing dissertations and articles, rather than monographs. Most of the dissertations are so promising that they will no doubt spawn numerous articles; indeed most of the authors of these works have already published articles or presented conference papers based on their doctoral research.

Despite the numerous scholars who have used Schoenberg's concept of developing variation to analyse Brahms's works, it is only recently that theorists, in particular Brent Auerbach and Samuel Ng, have significantly extended Schoenberg's concepts of the *Grundgestalt* and developing variation. Auerbach proposes a wider understanding of the term *Grundgestalt*. Instead of using it to label a motivic idea, he employs it to denote a polyphonic complex of rhythm, motive, contour, harmony, timbre/orchestration, articulation and special effects.[20] Whereas most Schoenbergians postulate the *Grundgestalt* as first appearing at the beginning of a piece, Auerbach allows that his type of *Grundgestalt* may be introduced anywhere. For example, he persuasively argues that the *Grundgestalt*

Schmidt, 'Syntax und System: Brahms' Taktbehandlung in der Kritik Hugo Riemanns', *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 48 (2002): 413–38.

[19] Constantin Floros addresses the issue of Brahms and absolute music as well as the composer's relation to the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann in *Brahms und Bruckner: Studien zur musikalischen Exegetik* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1980). See also the essays in *Johannes Brahms, oder, die Relativierung der 'absoluten' Musik*, ed. Hanns-Werner Heister (Hamburg: Bockel, 1997). For examples of the connection between intertextual relations and meaning see: Dillon Parmer, 'Brahms and the Poetic Motto: A Hermeneutic Aid?' *The Journal of Musicology* 15/3 (1997): 353–89; and Paul Berry, 'Old Love: Johannes Brahms, Clara Schumann, and the Poetics of Musical Memory', *The Journal of Musicology* 24/1 (2007): 72–111. New Musicologists have also probed the descriptor of Brahms's music as 'absolute', see, for example, Susan McClary, 'Narrative Agendas in "Absolute" Music: Identity and Difference in Brahms's Third Symphony', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 326–44.

[20] Brent Auerbach, 'The Analytical *Grundgestalt*: A New Model and Methodology Based on the Music of Johannes Brahms' (PhD diss., University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 2005).

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for the Adagio of Symphony No. 2 emerges in bars 45–47. In all of his analyses, Auerbach carefully explains his rationale for selecting a particular passage as the *Grundgestalt*. He also scrutinizes each element of this unit by describing even its smallest details, including not only its harmonies, but also the contour of each voice regardless of whether it has a melodic or accompanying function. Like many musicological studies, including David Brodbeck's examination of Brahms's Symphony No. 1,[21] Auerbach deploys his analytical method to uncover a composition's narrative structure. Whereas Brodbeck (and others) rely on narrative archetypes such as the *per aspera ad astra* (a path from stormy darkness to triumphant light), Auerbach develops a system for graphing the progress of a movement. He compresses all the analytical data concerning the *Grundgestalt* and the ways in which it influences each segment of a movement, or piece, into a quantitative spreadsheet analysis. This information is then presented in a graph that Auerbach views as representing the musical narrative. This graph tracks the developments of the *Grundgestalt* (the vertical axis) throughout the entire piece (the horizontal axis).

The graph for 'Mädchenlied' (op. 107, no. 5) is an ascending coiling shape that Auerbach interprets as conveying 'the essence of the poem'. It 'captures both the rising emotion of the girl [depicted in the song], and the gravitational inevitability of her unhappy fate' (p. 341). Although the graph's shape is an exceptionally clear representation of the song's meaning, this conclusion could have been reached without the complex mathematics. In general, this is a limitation of Auerbach's methodology: on the one hand, his new definition of the *Grundgestalt* as a polyphonic complex offers a methodology for thoroughly exploring Brahms's compositions, but on the other, his mathematical manipulations of the resulting analytical data appear to be too complex and abstract to be widely applicable. Moreover, beyond illustrating whether a composition has an onset, terminative, emergent or cyclic *Grundgestalt*, the meaning of the graphs of instrumental pieces is not entirely spelled out. This problem arises in part because Auerbach does not explain how his idea of narrative relates to that of other music scholars or to the recent discussions of the nature of music's meaning.

Scholars employing Schoenbergian theories, including Frisch, have often observed the ways in which developing variation influences phrase structure and contributes to Brahms's custom of negating the notated metre. Samuel Ng goes beyond this approach to create temporal analogies for Schoenberg's concept of the *Grundgestalt*. This enables him to offer a more systematic approach to exploring Brahms's handling of rhythm and metre, including the types of disturbances to temporal norms that have come to be known as metric dissonances.[22] Brahms's compositions often begin with a prominent metric dissonance (the *Grundgestalt*) that forms the basis of the entire movement's metric discourse. Like a conventional motivic *Grundgestalt*, this temporal gesture is subjected to developing variation, spawns other metric ambiguities and influences the hypermetric structure of a piece. These temporal structures interact with the harmonic and formal structures of a work, and Ng draws on Schenkerian techniques to study the harmonies

[21] David Brodbeck, *Brahms: Symphony No. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[22] Samuel Ng, 'A *Grundgestalt* Interpretation of Metric Dissonance in the Music of Johannes Brahms' (PhD diss., University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 2005); 'The Hemiolic Cycle and Metric Dissonance in the First Movement of Brahms's Cello Sonata in F major, Op. 99', *Theory and Practice* 31 (2006): 65–96.

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associated with the metric structures. He demonstrates that juxtapositions of duple and triple units in the piano Rhapsody op. 119, no. 4 appear at all structural levels and even influence the temporal proportions of the large formal sections. Ng also explicates the pervasive hemiolas in the first movement of Brahms's Cello Sonata, op. 99. He posits that the hemiolas operate in a cycle of seven beats in triple metre in which beats 1, 3, 2 and 1 are accentuated. Transformations of this cycle are expanded over extended periods and they are linked to other elements of the movement, including pitch structure and the major subdivisions of the sonata form.

Ng's research is indicative of the recent trend in music theory that has fostered increasingly sophisticated analyses and theories of time in music. Most studies of Brahms's music have adapted the concepts and terminology promulgated by Harald Krebs in his exploration of Schumann's handling of rhythm in *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann*. This book includes an analysis of Brahms's Piano Sonata, op. 5, which Richard Cohn has expanded.[23] Aside from their applicability to Brahms's music, Krebs's ideas are particularly relevant to Brahms scholars because, although it has long been surmised that the composer was influenced by Schumann's rhythmic and metric manipulations, until recently, theorists had not developed analytical techniques to facilitate a full exploration of this hypothesis. Nevertheless, to date, analysts have concentrated more on codifying Brahms's rhythmic practices than on their connections to the composer's great mentor.

Cohn and Ng also develop analytical techniques derived from David Lewin to explain the ways in which Brahms manipulates a rhythmic idea. Lewin himself commented on the hemiola in Brahms's Capriccio for Piano op. 76, no. 8, and Cohn uses these ideas as a starting point for his highly influential article exploring complex hemiolas (multi-level, simultaneous hemiolas). He develops a two-dimensional matrix (which he calls a ski-hill graph) that illustrates the relationships between metric states such as simultaneous hemiolas.[24] Like Lewin, Cohn concludes that changes in metric states synchronize with harmonic structures and are analogous to harmonic functions (p. 305). This particular article includes analyses of the hemiolas in the first movement of Brahms's Violin Sonata op. 78 and 'Von ewiger Liebe' (op. 43, no. 1). Most scholars, including myself, de-emphasize the hemiolas at the end of this song. By contrast, Cohn hears this unsettling conclusion as negating the maiden's preceding declaration of eternal love and as relating to the earlier rhythmic dissonances in the song. Furthermore, he suggests that this ending reflects Brahms's own insecurities about love and relationships with women.

Given the framework of the article, Cohn does not further consider the validity or implications of this hypothesis, but my own survey of Brahms's songs

[23] Harald Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Reviewed by Richard Cohn in 'Harald Krebs on Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Schumann and Brahms', *The American Brahms Society Newsletter* 20/2 (2002): 5–7.

[24] Ng was particularly influenced by Lewin's *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987). David Lewin, 'On Harmony and Meter in Brahms's Opus 76 No. 8', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 4 (1981): 261–5. Richard Cohn, 'Complex Hemiolas, Ski-Hill Graphs and Metric Spaces', *Music Analysis* 20/3 (2001): 295–326. These seminal publications by Lewin and Cohn have influenced numerous theorists, including most recently Scott Murphy in 'On Metre in the Rondo of Brahms's Op. 25', *Music Analysis* 26/3 (2007): 323–53.

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reveals that 'Von ewiger Liebe' is not the only one in which these types of doubts infiltrate settings that otherwise affirm the power of love. This even occurs in the composer's first published song, 'Liebestreu' (op. 3, no. 1). In the last stanza of this song an abandoned maiden tells her mother that her faith in her absent lover endures; however, the motivic manipulations along with the tonal and metric dissonances in the final measures of the piano's postlude clearly confirm the mother's fear that the girl's love is misplaced. Brahms similarly employed disquieting, syncopated, two-note sighing figures in the postlude to 'Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze' (op. 71, no. 1). These motifs are transformations of the steady quaver motif that first appeared in the prelude and then wound its way through the song as the female character wove her stems into a garland. The new sighing versions in the postlude gently echo the ironic ending to Heine's poem, which ridicules the notion of springtime love. More frequently, though, Brahms's settings do not wait until the postlude to negate thoughts concerning the promise of happiness and love. In 'Bitteres zu sagen denkst du' (op. 32, no. 7), for example, the piano part's harmonies and rhythm convey the rejected character's suffering while the voice seems to more closely echo his continuing to devotion to a woman who only causes pain.[25] Along somewhat similar lines, in setting Clemens Bretano's poem for 'O kühler Wald' (op. 72, no. 3), Brahms only used the stanzas portraying intense yearning for a lost love; he omitted those offering a chance of renewed love. The extent to which any of these songs relate to Brahms's own feelings, as Cohn conjectures, can never be definitively proved, though a number of recent articles and conference papers argue in favour of such a connection.[26]

Yonatan Malin further develops Cohn's theories on rhythm in a fascinating study of the expressiveness of nineteenth-century lieder. He scrutinizes Cohn's analysis of 'Von ewiger Liebe' by focusing on the change in metric states between stanzas 2 and 3, and he analyses such other well-known Brahms songs as 'Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer' (op. 105, no. 2).[27] As with Ng's work on Brahms's instrumental music, Malin shows that rhythmic dissonances often coincide with unusual or expressive harmonic progressions. In addition to considering Brahms's manipulation and transformations of rhythmic and metric patterns or groupings, Malin, like Cohn, offers particularly clear and compelling analyses of Brahms's multi-layered metric displacements, an important feature of the composer's works that most analysts do not adequately tease out.

Schenkerian analysts are also deepening our understanding of Brahms's handling of rhythm. Aside from deploying the type of hypermetric analyses that

[25] Natasha Loges, 'The Notion of Personae in Brahms's "Bitteres zu sagen denkst du" op. 32, no. 7: A Literary Key to Musical Performance?' in *Music and Literature in German Romanticism*, ed. Siobhán Donovan and Robin Elliott (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Camden House, 2004): 183–99.

[26] The connection between Brahms's own experiences and the emotions portrayed in his lieder is most clearly documented by the songs from op. 14 that he sent with letters to Agathe von Siebold while their love was still in bloom. For research that extends this type of biographical connection to other songs, see, for example, the article cited above by Loges; John MacAuslan, '"The artist in love" in Brahms's Life and in his German Folksongs', *Music & Letters* 88/1 (2007): 78–106; and my paper 'Brahms and the Burden of his Muses', Conference of the International Musicological Society, Zurich, July 2007.

[27] Yonatan Malin, 'Metric Dissonance and Music-Text Relations in the German Lied' (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2003); 'Metric Displacement Dissonance and Romantic Longing in the German Lied', *Music Analysis* 25/3 (2006): 251–88.

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Schachter pioneered (and that he used in his analysis of Brahms's Symphony No. 2), Schenkerians, including Peter Smith and Ryan McClelland, also build on the work of Krebs and to some extent on that of Schoenberg. A number of Smith's articles incorporate the topic of rhythmic or harmonic ambiguity. The term 'ambiguity' has become somewhat of a slogan for analysts, with Cadwallader invoking it in his study of Brahms's late piano works and Jonathan Dunsby titling his highly influential book *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms*.[28] It has become such a popular theme because Brahms's layering of rhythms, harmonies and phrase structures are often so complex and even contradictory that, at least at first glance, a given passage can be interpreted in contrasting ways. Kofi Agawu, however, has questioned whether music can really be ambiguous. In response to Agawu's criticisms, Smith argues that some of Brahms's pieces often open with passages that can be interpreted in different ways, and are therefore ambiguous. Subsequently, Brahms deliberately takes up and works out each aspect of the conflicting structure before resolving to a clearer statement of the opening material at the end of the movement, or piece. Take, for example, the metrically ambiguous two-note motif in bars 25–30 of the first movement of the Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, op. 102. Listeners might hear this motif as beginning on the beat or as being syncopated against the accompaniment. Brahms continues this metric bivalence into the yearning secondary material where it is coupled with harmonic instability. The notated metre is clarified at bar 161 and again at bar 170, where the harmonies are also resolved. Nevertheless, metrical displacements recur during the subsequent solo passages and are only unequivocally resolved in the coda.[29]

Whereas Smith's publications often emphasize Brahms's sonata-form movements, Ryan McClelland concentrates on the equally complex aspects of the fast inner movements (or scherzo-type movements) of Brahms's instrumental cycles.[30] Some of these issues are related to those investigated by Smith, including Brahms's habit of withholding a complete resolution of a movement's initial tonal and metric dissonances until the last possible moment, but others are related to the highly unusual forms of some of these movements. Like the authors discussed above, his probing of Brahms's treatment of time is influenced by Krebs, but he also studies Brahms's hypermetric structures through Schachter's type of durational reductions. In finely nuanced analyses, McClelland argues that the expressive meanings of Brahms's compositions are created through the interaction of form, tonal structure, rhythmic-metric structure and motivic design. He concludes that Brahms's Capriccio, op. 76, no. 8 is characterized by

[28] Jonathan Dunsby, *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms: Analytical Approaches to Four Works* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1981).

[29] Kofi Agawu, 'Ambiguity in Tonal Music: A Preliminary Study', in *Theory, Analysis, and Meaning in Music*, ed. Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 86–107. Peter H. Smith, 'You Reap What You Sow: Some Instances of Rhythmic and Harmonic Ambiguity in Brahms', *Music Theory Spectrum* 28/1 (2006): 57–97.

[30] Ryan McClelland, 'Tonal Structure, Rhythm, Meter, and Motive in the Scherzo-type Movements of Brahms's Chamber Music with Piano' (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2004); 'Discontinuity and Performance: The Allegro appassionato from Brahms's Sonata op. 120, no. 2', *Dutch Journal of Music Theory/Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie* 12/2 (2007): 200–14; 'Tonal and Rhythmic-Metric Process in Brahms's Early C-Minor Scherzos', *Intersections: Canadian Journal of Music* 26/1 (2005): 123–47; 'Metric Dissonance in Brahms's Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 101', *Intégral* 20 (2006): 1–42; 'Form and Hypermeter in Brahms's "Tiny" Scherzo for the Piano Concerto Op. 83', *The American Brahms Society Newsletter* 26/1 (2008): 1–5.

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conflicts in tonal structure, form and metre that intertwine to create a sense of continuous yearning. He also demonstrates the ways in which surface-level phrase structures influence the large-scale form of a movement. For example, he convincingly explains how the discontinuities within and between the phrases of the second movement of the Clarinet Sonata, op. 120, no. 2 are related to the movement's unusual form. Like Smith, he details structural ambiguities and conflicts. Following the tradition of other Schenkerian analysts, including Schachter and William Rothstein, McClelland is quick to note that many of his analyses have important implications for performers. In the case of op. 101, he integrates his insights about the structure and performance of the second movement with Fanny Davies's report of Brahms's own performance.[31] Whereas McClelland's articles often dissect only one or two movements, his dissertation discusses some 15 movements that span Brahms's creative output. This allows him to begin to consider larger issues, such as how Brahms's employment of structural conflicts changed throughout his career, and to offer further insights into the related compositional techniques of Brahms and Beethoven.

To be sure, Smith and McClelland draw on theoretical concepts and analytical techniques that were developed by other Schenkerians. Melissa Hoag, by contrast, more freely adapts Schenkerian models in her study of the characteristic gaps or disjunctions that appear in Brahms's melodic lines.[32] These leaps are followed by what she terms 'alternate melodic pathways' in which the melody and its harmonies pursue directions that the preceding segments did not suggest. She recomposes brief passages to demonstrate the more predictable continuations. These disjunctions are often associated with disturbances or ambiguities in other elements, including rhythm, metre, phrase structure, harmony or form and, as a result, she terms such passages 'multiply-directed moments'. Ultimately, these moments impact the unfolding of entire movements, or pieces, and have an expressive function. For example, Hoag concludes that the multiply-directed moments in the Intermezzo, op. 116, no. 6, 'generate drama, pauses, complications, doubt and suspense' (p. 147). Hoag's discussion of these melodic lines is coordinated with voice-leading graphs, but the melodies often relate to the descending structural lines of these graphs in unorthodox ways. The melody of both A sections in op. 116, no. 6 pursues a long-range, rising chromatic path that is not controlled by strict voice-leading. It remains above the *Kopfton* (the first note of the structural line) for the majority of these sections and only descends with the *Urlinie* during the final measures of the piece, as the tensions created by

[31] Davies, a piano student of Clara Schumann, heard Brahms playing during 1884 to 1896. In her recollections, she offers general comments on Brahms's dynamics and rhythm, before concentrating on performing issues of op. 101, which she heard Brahms play with Hausmann and Joachim. Fanny Davies, 'Some Personal Recollections of Brahms as Pianist and Interpreter', *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, vol. 1, compiled and ed. Walter Willson Cobbett (Oxford: Oxford University Press; London: Humphrey Milford, 1929): 182–4.

[32] Melissa Hoag, 'Multiply-Directed Moments in the Music of Brahms' (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2008). Hoag's view that the main melodic line of a piece may depart from a conventional prolongation of the *Urlinie* is somewhat akin to Frank Samarotto's concept of contra-structural melodic impulses, which he promulgated in his paper '"Plays of Opposing Motion": Contra-Structural Melodic Impulses in Voice-leading Analysis', presented at the 2008 AMS/SMT conference, 6–9 November, Nashville, TN. This paper, which will appear in a 2009 issue of *Music Theory Online*, includes an analysis of Brahms's 'Meine Lieder' (op. 106, no. 4).

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this aberrant melody are resolved. In the case of 'Frühlingslied' (op. 85, no. 5) the *Urlinie* is left incomplete, as it ends on scale degree 3 rather than the tonic. This lack of resolution is said to evoke nostalgia for youth and a longing for the innocence that can never be reclaimed.[33] Such equivocal resolutions of the structural issues raised at the start of the work are more often evident in small genres, such as the lied, than large-scale sonata form movements. Hoag's analyses of Brahms's melodic lines represent a significant advance on the traditional description of the melodies in Brahms's lieder as instrumental, or the equally frequent dismissal of his awkward melodic leaps and unexpected octave displacements as oddities (pp. 124–5). Nineteenth-century critics similarly remarked on such ungainly contours, and even one of Brahms's most talented admirers, Elizabet von Herzogenberg, requested he modify the melody of 'Therese' (op. 86, no. 1).[34]

Frank Samarotto's Schenkerian analyses of Brahms's complex structures also reveal the expressive or emotional trajectory of Brahms's works. He concludes that the piano Rhapsody, op. 119, no. 4, is 'a conscious essay in thematising unpredictable and indeterminate continuations'. In another article, he evocatively compares the unusual tonal structure in Brahms's Rhapsody, op. 79, no. 1, to Goethe's poem 'Wanderers Sturmlied'.[35] Goethe uses highly emotional (almost irrational) language to portray the conflict between the natural and artful in his poem. Samarotto's graph of the Rhapsody's central section reveals a startling cycle of thirds descending from F♯ to G♭, before proceeding to F♮ and resolving to F♯ (the dominant). Brahms's deployment of such cycles of thirds are frequently commented upon, with those in Symphony No. 4, the third *Ernste Gesänge* (op. 121), and the late piano miniatures attracting the most attention. Commentators often link these motives to images of death or feelings of melancholy. Although Samarotto clearly demonstrates the extraordinary aspects of the structure of the central cycle in op. 79, no. 1 (and the challenges it poses to analysts), he does not explore the ways in which his interpretation of its meaning relate to the interpretations of Brahms's other cycles. No doubt this is a rather inconsequential criticism of what is otherwise a splendidly insightful article, but nevertheless the larger point is that, despite the number and variety of publications concerning Brahms's use of cycles of thirds, no one has completely codified the different types of cycles, the related contrasting harmonic progressions and their structural functions. Nor have they thoroughly probed these passages to ascertain whether they convey slight differences in meaning or nuance.[36]

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[33] Brahms's songs describing continued yearning often have unusual structures, and I analyse three such pieces in which the expected concluding structural dominant is omitted and the *Urlinie* does not descend to the tonic. 'Unrequited Love and Unrealized Dominants', *Intégral* 7 (1993): 119–48.

[34] Letters between Brahms and Herzogenberg, April 1882. *Johannes Brahms: The Herzogenberg Correspondence*, ed. Max Kalbeck, trans., Hannah Bryant, new intro. by Walter Frisch (New York: Da Capo, 1987): 157–8.

[35] Frank Samarotto, 'Determinism, Prediction, and Inevitability in Brahms's Rhapsody in E-flat Major op. 119, no. 4', *Theory and Practice* 32 (2007): 85. Frank Samarotto, 'Against Nature: Interval Cycles and Prolongational Conflict in Brahms's Rhapsody, Op. 79, No. 1,' in *A Composition as a Problem III: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Music Theory, Tallinn, March 9–10, 2001*, ed. Mart Humal (Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Music, 2003): 93–108.

[36] For one of the more recent articles on this topic see Daniel Beller-McKenna, 'Reminiscence in Brahms's Late Intermezzi', *The American Brahms Society Newsletter* 22/2 (2004): 6–9. The type of study that I am suggesting would expand upon the article by

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Unlike many of the other analysts who study Brahms, Peter Smith directly addresses the proponents of the New Musicology and their criticisms of the discipline of music theory in his monograph on Brahms's C-minor Piano Quartet, op. 60.[37] He combines Schoenbergian and Schenkerian analytical techniques with Robert Hatten's concepts of stylistic correlation, strategic interpretation, and markedness, to probe the interaction of structure and expression in Brahms's music.[38] Brahms himself repeatedly (but elliptically) associated this quartet with Goethe's suicidal character Werther, and Smith, with typically detailed analyses, demonstrates how the highly unusual structures in each movement of op. 60 express the extreme emotional distress of a suicidal person. He also analyses the structural similarities between this composition and those of such earlier composers as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert – making valuable contributions to a topic that has already fuelled much Brahms research.

The recent studies described above suggest that scholars will continue to develop new techniques to better explicate the complexities of Brahms's music, which Forte referenced in his 1983 article.[39] The celebrations of the Brahms anniversary in 1983 included the International Brahms Conference in Washington DC. The essays in the subsequent conference report, which was sponsored by the American Brahms Society, have so influenced the field that they are still frequently cited today.[40] Both musicologists and theorists contributed to this volume, and often their essays blended methodologies and ideas from both disciplines. Despite the impressive achievements of today's scholars, meaningful interactions between historical and analytical approaches are unfortunately rare. Moreover, this does not just apply to scholars working in North America, where theory and musicology departments within universities are often clearly segregated.[41] The increase in European journals devoted to analytical topics

Siegfried Kross, 'Die Terzenkette bei Brahms und ihre Konnotationen', in *Die Sprache der Musik: Festschrift Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller zum 60. Geburtstag am 21. Juli 1989*, ed. Jobst Peter Fricke (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1989): 335–46 . John Daverio suggests that Schumann may have influenced Brahms's use of third cycles. Although he offers a few comparisons between the two composer's techniques, his idea needs much more study, especially as he concentrates only on cycles at the ends of movements. See John Daverio, *Crossing Paths: Schubert, Schumann, & Brahms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 158–9.

[37] Peter H. Smith, *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in his 'Werther' Quartet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). I provide a more detailed review of this monograph in the *Journal of Music Theory* 48/ 2 (2004 and 2007): 337–54. Smith's analysis of the first movement of op. 60 led to a series of exchanges in *Music Theory Online* (2008), with contributions by Samuel Ng, Eric Wen, and Olli Väisälä.

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

[39] Forte, 'Motivic Design and Structural Levels in the First Movement of Brahms's String Quartet in C minor', 471.

[40] *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. George S. Bozarth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

[41] In this review article I have concentrated on the work of theorists, but my call for greater interaction between theorists and musicologists is addressed to both disciplines. Roger Moseley, for example, notes the shortcomings of some of the analysis in Daniel Beller-McKenna's fascinating exploration of the intersection of politics and religion in Brahms's music. See: Daniel Beller-McKenna, *Brahms and the German Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004); Roger Moseley, 'Is There Only Juan Brahms?' *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131/1 (2006): 160–75. (Moseley's article also reviews Peter Smith's *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music*.)

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seems to be encouraging the same sort of split, with many authors of analytical articles not realizing that there are historical details that are directly relevant to their topic, and vice versa.[42] Aside from Smith's study of op. 60, Notley's recent article on plagal harmonies and 'otherness' is one of the few publications to blend the analytical specificity offered by the work of music theorists with a sensitive reading of primary sources connected with Brahms and his milieu.[43] Perhaps by the time another Brahms anniversary is reached this situation will be remedied and our understanding of Brahms's music (in terms of its historical context, structure, and meaning) will be further enhanced.

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[42] Of course, I am not the only person to call for more interaction between analysts and historians, and this issue does not just pertain to Brahms scholarship. Moreover, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that there are topics that do not lend themselves to such interactions. For a somewhat similar assessment of the field in general, see Kofi Agawu, 'Does Music Theory Need Musicology', *Current Musicology* 53 (1993): 89–98.

[43] Notley draws on the work of Hugo Riemann, Robert Hatten, Daniel Harrison and John Daverio to explore the passages in Brahms's music in which plagal harmonies (and their association with the Phrygian and Aeolian modes) markedly contrast with authentic harmonies and create a sense of otherness, otherworldliness or timelessness. Margaret Notley, 'Plagal Harmony as Other: Asymmetrical Dualism and Instrumental Music by Brahms', *The Journal of Musicology* 22/1 (2005): 90–130.

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