

WHAT EXACTLY DID JOHANNES ORDER?:
AN ANALYSIS OF BRAHMS'S OP. 118

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What exactly did Johannes order? – An analysis of Brahms's op. 118.

In his edition of Schubert's Ländler Brahms demonstrated the power of editing by creating a group that David Brodbeck describes as 'rich in tonal and motivic relationships.' Given the care taken arranging Schubert's compositions we can assume that Brahms also gave some thought to the order of the individual pieces within his own collections of piano miniatures.

Jonathan Dunsby introduced the concept of the more structurally integrated "multi-piece" as opposed to the collection in his analysis of op. 116. In my analysis I will explore the effects of Brahms's ordering through harmonic, gestural and registral resonances within the group and extend Dunsby's pseudo-cyclic model beyond tonally closed forms within the context of Brahms's late style.

What exactly did Johannes order? – An analysis of Brahms's op. 118.

'In any examination of Brahms's music, matters of structure attract attention and one naturally looks to eight pieces for piano for an internal pattern or organisation'.¹

In this statement concerning Brahms's op. 76, Musgrave sums up a musicologist's desire to look at a collection like op. 118 not as groups of individual pieces, but as collections, multi-pieces or cycles. It seems entirely natural, and this is an urge that should not be ignored. The question of ordering, which is integrally linked to the coherence and integration of works which not only have multiple sections but are actually comprised of a number of different discrete parts, is one that has, in a number of guises, interested several analysts already. Jonathan Dunsby was the first to investigate these connections in Brahms's late piano works in his examination of op. 116. In his conclusion Dunsby states that 'the nature of the unity of these collections need not be the same in every case,'² implying that an investigation of the other collections might prove fruitful. However, in this study it is not the 'unity', with all its connotations, that is at issue, but simply the evidence that the work is ordered. In doing so we will discuss the historical evidence for Brahms's interest in the ordering of collections for publication and performance, and explore the musical effects and manifestations of this ordering.

Brahms the Orderer

Over the course of his life Brahms wrote a number of works which comprise groups of smaller pieces arranged into opuses for publication, notably piano miniatures and songs. The output of this nature is significant and a number of writers have already looked at Brahms's compositional and editorial ordering in some of these works.³ This highlights a fundamental distinction as there are two processes at work in the production of an ordered collection, conception and compilation. Often these discussions begin with or include a source study, as much can be inferred about a composer's intentions from the order that pieces appear in manuscripts and sketches. In the case of op. 118 this is rather complicated, as Musgrave says, for instance, that 'we do not know the

¹ Musgrave 1985: 160

² Dunsby 1983: 187

³ In this essay I will consider Brodbeck 1990: 229-250, Brodbeck 1988: 411-438, Fellingner 1990: 331-344 and Van Rij 2006

precise chronology of these pieces'.⁴ Indeed, Brahms, before he died, was particularly scrupulous about destroying many of his old papers and manuscripts, perhaps suggesting that he wanted the final order to be the only visible one. However, we are lucky that many of his letters still survive despite the instruction left in his will that all his correspondence be destroyed. Cai is the only scholar to have conducted a source study of op. 118 finding a common evolution with op. 119 'both in the genesis of their autographs and in the process of publication'.⁵ However, 'the later stages of composition and publication are... tantalizingly incomplete'⁶ making the formation of the order as found in the 1st edition, which saw op. 118 and op. 119 published together as *Clavierstücke* in 1893, difficult to trace. Therefore we have to look to corresponding scenarios to confirm the notion that Brahms took care over the order of his collections of miniatures.

Brodbeck's study of Brahms's edition of Schubert *Ländler* is interesting as it shows Brahms's concern for order and coherence in works that he did not even compose. In this instance Brahms compiled twenty *Ländler* by Schubert from at least five different sources and managed to 'arrange these pieces into a set rich in tonal and motivic relationships'⁷ designed for continuous performance, unlike earlier editions. Brodbeck suggests that Brahms's attitude to his editing in this instance reveals much about his 'compositional and aesthetic preferences'⁸. In particular it is interesting that another collection of *12 Ländler*, op. 171, that Brahms also edited were left in the order they were found in the autograph. He neither reordered nor added to them with Brodbeck suggesting that this is because the autograph demonstrates an awareness of a large-scale tonal scheme which the others do not. Brodbeck goes so far as to say that 'a desire for coherence appears to have governed nearly all of Brahms's ordering decisions.'⁹ Whether this is true is a matter for debate but if Brahms was willing to put so much effort into ensuring an effective order for a work in which he had no compositional influence, we might expect him to have a similar approach in his own compositions.

Imogen Fellingner is not concerned with Brahms's piano music but with his song cycles. However,

⁴ Musgrave 1985: 225

⁵ Cai 1989: 87

⁶ *ibid.* 85

⁷ Brodbeck 1990: 241

⁸ *ibid.* 250

⁹ Brodbeck 1990: 241

the late piano collections and the earlier op. 76 are probably the nearest instrumental parallel. Indeed Musgrave hears them as ‘expanded songs without words’¹⁰ so some of the same arguments may be applicable. Fellingner’s essay is based on a comment Brahms made in conversation with Heinz von Beckerath in which he ‘complained that most male and female singers group his songs together [on their programmes] in a quite arbitrary manner, considering only what suits their voice, and not realizing how much trouble he had always taken to assemble his song compositions like a bouquet.’¹¹ Singers are often pragmatic in their selection of programmes due to the limitation of their vocal range and the desire to assemble popular choices. Fellingner cites a number of instances from Brahms’s correspondence where he discusses the order of songs that are being readied for publication and from this ‘it is clear that he attached great importance to the established succession of songs within each opus’¹². There is even one instance quoted where Brahms changes his mind about the order of two songs in op. 57 and decides that he would rather that they were reversed. Brahms had responsibilities to his publishers and sometimes he found it difficult to reconcile his artistic preferences with the publisher’s requirements. In a letter to Rieter-Bidermann from 1868 Brahms wrote that ‘I have long promised the young Simrock something and, if I take two [songs] out of the centre, I can only order the remaining songs badly.’¹³ A brief exploration of key relationships contains Fellingner’s least convincing observations, but she appreciates that a ‘thorough exploration of the keys schemes of Brahms’s ‘bouquets’ of songs...exceeds the scope of the present paper’¹⁴.

In her extensive work on Brahms’s song collections, Van Rij deals mainly with the unity and resonances of text within the various groups which obviously does not have any parallel with piano miniatures, devoid as they are of any poetic content. To complement her work on the key schemes in the song collections, Van Rij looks briefly at the key schemes in the late piano collections, finding that they show more relatedness by first degree according to Weber’s method, than the song collections as a whole¹⁵. Of course analysing works using systems such as Weber’s is

¹⁰ Musgrave 1985: 160

¹¹ Fellingner 1990: 380 in her translation of Heinz von Beckerath in ‘Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms’ by Josef Viktor Widmann and Einleitung von Samuel Geiser, 1898.

¹² Fellingner 1990: 382

¹³ Original in *Brahms Briefwechsel*, 14: 157, trans. Fellingner 1990: 383

¹⁴ Fellingner 1990: 387-8

¹⁵ Van Rij 2001: 182. Van Rij uses Gottfried Weber’s system of first, second and third-degree relationships. Weber’s treatise *Versuch einer geordneten Theorie der Tonsetzkunst* is the only one of a number of such works

rather limited and needs to be supplemented by a more sympathetic and sophisticated tonal analysis which Van Rij does not really attempt. However, the system does have one interesting feature with respect to op. 118. Along with dominant, subdominant and relative major/minor, the tonic major/minor is also considered a first-degree relationship. Van Rij dismisses the greater relatedness of the piano miniatures on the grounds that songs can be dictated in their tonal trajectory by their texts. However, this seems to miss the prospect of effective ordering and perhaps even cyclic procedures in these works.

In preparing his *Liebeslieder Walzer* op. 52 for publication, Brahms collated and ordered eighteen dances which he did not write in sequence, and which were conceived, it would appear, without a particular plan already in mind. Brodbeck suggests that Brahms must have drawn upon the experience he had gained in editing the Schubert *Ländler*, as the process of arranging an unordered group is similar in both cases.¹⁶ Before publication Brahms asked his friend, Hermann Levi, to have the dances copied out on separate sheets of paper, which Brahms appreciates is a waste of time and paper, presumably as he was not decided on the order and wanted to be able to rearrange the dances quickly and easily. In correspondence with the publisher Franz Simrock, Brahms again shows his concern for the order of his miniatures.

I am a little uncertain about the title and the volume ordering...I should think two volumes with nine each?...Or do you want to make three volumes of six each? In that case, I would ask that numbers 7-12 be numbered as follows: 10, 11, 12, 7, 8, 9.¹⁷

Brahms is willing to be flexible in negotiations and is not totally insistent on having just two volumes, which is obviously his preferred option. We could understand this willingness to accommodate a number of ordering options as evidence that the order of a collection is of little consequence, or conversely we could see that by altering the order, Brahms believes that a number of different and successful musical outcomes are possible. In fact, Brahms confirms that both ordering options have their merits as after seeing the proofcopy that Simrock had assembled with the order we now recognise of 1-18, he wrote to Levi that '3 volumes with 6 each would certainly

that was in Brahms's personal library, which Van Rij's uses to justify her choice of this particular system.

¹⁶ Brodbeck 1988: 415

¹⁷ Original in *Johannes Brahms: Briefe an P. J. Simrock und Fritz Simrock*, ed. Kalbeck, vol. 9, trans Brodbeck 1988: 422

be preferable, but it also works well in 2 with 9'.¹⁸ Brodbeck shows 'the evident care with which the final dance in each of the subgroups was chosen' by effectively demonstrating the closural qualities of the potential 'final numbers'.¹⁹ However, the more Brahms thought about the situation the more confused he seemed to become in exactly what he wanted. In the same letter to Levi, Brahms asks for the waltzes to be numbered in two groups of nine, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12 and 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, but then immediately states that three volumes would be preferable.²⁰

After indicating that three groups would be preferable, when performing the work with Clara Schumann in Vienna just a few months later Brahms went back to his initial preference for two groups of nine²¹. Given the composer's inconsistency, it is not surprising that in performance it was quite rare for the Waltzes to be played in the orders that he preferred. However, this same inconsistency does tell us something about the process Brahms was trying to realise. His compositional style quite often led him to create large numbers of similar works whether they were songs, piano miniatures or dances for mixed ensembles. The order in which these small works were published and performed did matter to the composer, even though sometimes he was unsure or inconsistent in his choices. This inconsistency and willingness to accept a number of possibilities reaffirm what was clear already: that these works are not necessarily bound together by any abstract sense of conceptual, compositional or textual unity. On the contrary, the ordering of miniatures was more of an expressive process, where the choice and order of a given group profoundly affects our musical experience.

So there is significant evidence that Brahms was unlikely to have assembled his six piano pieces that make up op. 118 arbitrarily regardless of the circumstances of composition. It was first published in 1893 as *Clavierstücke* together with the four pieces that make up op. 119 and although they are given a generic title, *Clavierstücke*, the title page sees each group headed by the opus number and then numbered individually.²² Interestingly, op. 116 was originally published as a group of seven Fantasias, but divided into an *Erstes* and *Zweites Heft*²³. When Brahms first entertained the

¹⁸ Original found in *Briefwechsel*, 7:50-51. Trans. Brodbeck 1988: 426

¹⁹ *ibid.* 436

²⁰ For the original correspondence with Levi please see *Briefwechsel*, 7:50-51.

²¹ Although we do not know in what order the two groups of nine were performed.

²² To see a reproduction of the title page of the 1st editions of op. 116 and op 118 please see Appendix 1.

²³ First and second book.

possibility of different groupings of the *Liebeslieder Waltzer* he was aware that his preferred publishing option might be impossible. However in this case the seven Fantasias are divided into a first and second book despite being published together, which might encourage us to think that the division, rather than being practical, has some artistic importance. However, the division we find in op. 116 does not necessarily imply that the intention was for separation in performance. Brahms asked Levi to perform the *Liebeslieder* waltzes in two sets of nine, preserving the order across the two sets of dances 7-12 that he suggested to Simrock given a tripartite grouping (10, 11, 12, 7, 8, 9). This could mean that, although grouped, it was still envisaged that the dances would be performed continuously, preserving Brahms's preferred order of the middle six dances. Obviously op. 118 is not grouped but it has to be considered an oversight in Dunsby's work that he fails to mention this feature of the first publication of op. 116.

Dunsby's analysis of op. 116 had little precedent when it was written, but it now serves as a fruitful model for this investigation. For Dunsby, the questions surrounding new formal distinctions, more subtle than the multi-movement piece and the collection, apply to all the late piano works. However he chooses op. 116 as he sees it as 'the collection most obviously unified by the kinds of structural process found in multi-movement pieces or, indeed, in single pieces.'²⁴ His analysis is a reaction against the general view that all the late piano works belong together as much as they belong in their respective groups²⁵. There has been little work since Dunsby's on this subject although his view has gained some acceptance – Musgrave writes two years after Dunsby's article was published that 'only the first [op. 116] can really be regarded as a planned structural whole'²⁶. Therefore one aim here is to encourage a more sophisticated understanding of Brahms's late piano forms, showing perhaps that they are more than just a generic pool of works whilst also suggesting the limitations in Dunsby's argument. We must realise initially that although he never states it explicitly, Dunsby is interested not just in the general unity within op. 116 but specifically in the order of the works. The Schenker graph that he draws for the tonal progression across the seven Fantasias is obviously dependent on the sequence 1-7 and he also suggests that the 'formal centre of the *Fantasien*, [No. 4] seems to offer an example of lack of wholeness'²⁷.

²⁴ Dunsby 1983: 174

²⁵ Which he finds in the work of Kalbeck, Denis Matthew and Siegmund-Schultze

²⁶ Musgrave 1985: 256

²⁷ Dunsby 1983: 176

A large part of Dunsby's analysis revolves around generic thematic and motivic links between the pieces which he cites as being the omnipresent rather than merely prominent unifying elements. A few of the thematic resonances and similarities he finds show some striking similarities, but Dunsby's insistence on finding transformations of his two motivic patterns in all seven of the *Fantasiën* shows the usual limitations of such goal-oriented analysis, with some of the pieces being forced to fit into his thematic designs. However, this is not the most significant problem with Dunsby's work. At no point does he state why he chose op. 116 for his analysis, as opposed to any of other piano collections, merely stating that it is 'the collection most obviously unified by the kinds of structural process found in multi-movement pieces'.²⁸ Nowhere does he explain why it is so obviously unified in comparison with the other late opuses. Fellingner observes in her essay that 'the opening and closing songs of Brahms's "bouquets" often seem linked by size and/or tonality.'²⁹ Although apparently common in the song collections, the linking of opening and closing miniatures by tonality is a feature unique to op. 116 in the piano collections and may explain Dunsby's choice. In his analysis Dunsby promotes qualities for his "multi-piece" which are similar to those of a normal multi-movement work such as a symphony or sonata, including the fact that it starts and ends in the same key, (D minor in the case of op. 116). Brahms would never have considered ending a symphony in a different key from the one he started in³⁰ and therefore showing similar constructions in a "multi-piece" might be understood to lend it some of the unity that we could expect to find in Brahms's strict multi-movement forms. However, given that we have established that ordering is essentially an expressive process, there are a number of possible, expressive outcomes that may not involve returning to the key in which we started, and there could be an ordered scheme that does not begin and end in the same place. There is something fundamentally satisfying to the ear about returning to the "home key" but there is no reason that these new forms that Dunsby would like us to consider, such as the multi-piece, should exhibit the same external features as fully integrated multi-movement works. In his conclusion Dunsby does appreciate that 'the nature of the unity of these collections need not be the same in each case'³¹ and an analysis of op. 118 should contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of the effect

²⁸ *ibid.* 174

²⁹ Fellingner 1990: 386

³⁰ The third symphony might be seen not to satisfy this statement as the first movement starts in F major while the final movement opens in F minor. However, Brahms does provide an apotheosis into F major to close, and the opposition between tonic major and minor is not really at issue here.

³¹ Dunsby 1983: 187

of ordering in these collections.

Marston has considered the unity of a collection that does not begin and end in the same key in his essay on the Beethoven bagatelles³². He begins with Dunsby but offers an analysis that is fundamentally different, concentrating not on a whole opus but on a subgroup, nos. 7-11, within Beethoven's op. 119, which forms the "multi-trifle" of the title. Marston also highlights Beethoven's op. 126 as an example of a group that is more than a 'nice collection that will sell well'³³ because it has a key scheme which consists of a series of descending major thirds, 'suggestive internal evidence'³⁴ that this group maybe qualify as a "multi-piece". However, op. 126, from the point of conception, was intended to be a set of six, something which we cannot know about Brahms's op. 118. The Bagatelles are not directly comparable with Brahms's late piano works in terms of scale. Marston highlights the tenth Bagatelle in particular, which, depending on the performance, lasts somewhere between ten and twenty seconds, and questions whether or not it can really be considered as a piece in its own right. Although the same question does not apply to op. 118 perhaps we could wonder if you might ever perform op. 118 no. 1, which at approximately a minute and a half is the shortest of the six pieces, on its own.

Although Brahms's op. 118 and Beethoven's op. 119 are not strictly analogous, it is good that another analyst has seen the potential in exploring the "multi-piece" beyond the boundaries of closed tonal forms. Marston appreciates that it is more difficult to assign a tonic key to a set of pieces which does not begin and end in the same key³⁵, but perhaps this is not actually essential. The observation that sonatas and symphonies always end in the tonic key does not necessarily mean that a "multi-piece" should, or that the final key must be the tonic key. Dunsby observes that 'it is not obvious how a tonal scheme should be expressed for a multi-piece'³⁶ and selecting the final key as the tonic, which is Marston's solution, may not always be entirely satisfactory. Neither Dunsby or Marston provide a definition of the "multi-piece", it is merely differentiated from the

³² MARSTON, Nicholas: 'Trifles or a Multi-Trifle? Beethoven's Bagatelles, Op. 119, Nos 7-11', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 5, No. 2/3 (Jul. - Oct., 1986), pp. 193-206

³³ Dunsby 1983: 187

³⁴ Marston 1986: 195

³⁵ Although perhaps, the ease with which Dunsby can assign a tonic key to op. 116 is part of the problem in his analysis.

³⁶ Dunsby 1983: 184

collection as there are ‘elements of more and less hierarchically structured unity’³⁷ that we would not expect to find in a collection. However, their approaches seem to suggest that a tonic that connects the whole work is in some way necessary in order for the groups to function as “multi-pieces”. Here another possibility will be explored.

Ultimately this investigation is not one about “multi-pieces”, it is specifically about ordering, but obviously the two are related. I will not be attempting to show that the op. 118 is a “multi-piece” or that it is has a single tonic but rather that it shows evidence of having been ordered specifically by Brahms, rather than grouped arbitrarily. I have shown that Brahms was a composer who valued the order of groups of works and that, given the value he attached to them, an investigation may well tell us something about the man himself in some of his last compositions, as well as about the compositions themselves.

An analysis of op. 118

When analysing no. 6 of this set Miller writes that ‘it is a piece that does not easily give up its secrets.’³⁸ The same can be said of the opus as a whole and this feeling of impenetrability has preserved interest in these late piano collections among Brahms scholars. Up to this point there has been no detailed analysis of op. 118 as a whole, although a number of authors have looked at a variety of the late piano works.³⁹ As mentioned above, the order in which the pieces were composed is unknown but it seems most likely that Brahms was working on both opp. 118 and 119 concurrently while staying at Ischl in 1892-3, and therefore, when assessing whether links between the pieces in op. 118 are extraordinary, op. 119 should provide a useful comparison.

Both Dunsby and Musgrave notice that the six pieces of op. 118 fall in three successive tones through a tritone. Musgrave even goes so far as to suggest that this may be related to the initial descent of the opening of the first intermezzo but fails to elaborate on this point.⁴⁰ According to Dunsby, ‘the mere patterning of keys is not a structural function with which we would expect

³⁷ Dunsby 1983: 184

³⁸ Miller 1988: 215

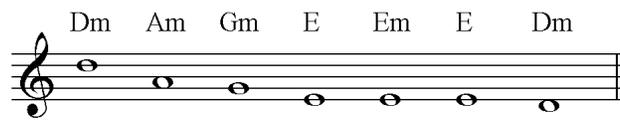
³⁹ Including Cai, Miller, Cone

⁴⁰ Musgrave 1985: 261

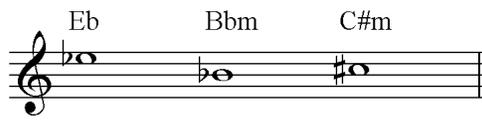
Brahms to have taken much trouble⁴¹ but he does allow ‘the possibility of some tonal cohesion’.⁴² Tonal cohesion aside, if we look at the ordering of keys in op. 118 compared to the other three late piano opuses it definitely appears to be rather neat. Dunsby draws a table of the number of keys used in all of Brahms’s late piano collections and discovers that op. 116 uses only four keys in its seven *Fantasien*. However, op. 118 also only uses four keys in its six parts and the order shows a strict pattern of falling tones, without parallel in any other group as seen in Ex. 1.

Ex 1: The keys used in Brahms’s collections of late piano miniatures.⁴³

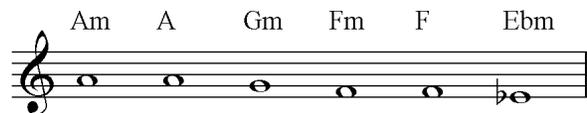
a: op. 116



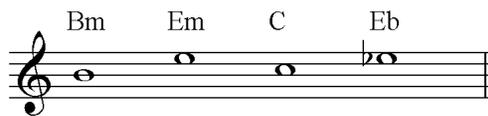
b: op. 117



c: op. 118



d: op. 119



We can complicate the graph for op. 118 by adding all the related keys that Brahms uses. Apart from the first Intermezzo all the remaining pieces are in straightforward ternary forms, and they all

⁴¹ Dunsby 1983: 186

⁴² *ibid.* 186

⁴³ The graphs that I have drawn are not supposed to be Schenkerian reductions showing any kind of harmonic function, like the one produced by Dunsby relating to op. 116. Instead, they are merely meant to show the extent to which the groups seem ordered into some kind of pattern.

use tertiary relationships in their respective B sections.

Ex. 2: Primary and secondary keys used in the A and B sections of nos. 1-6.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

C Am A F#m A Gm B Gm Fm Ab Fm F D F Ebm Gb Ebm

9 28 1 49 76 1 41 77 1 51 99 1 17 48 1 41 63

Ternary forms are common in the twenty late piano pieces as a whole, but that not a single one in op. 118 deviates from the use of tertiary relationships is striking. If we compare this to op. 119 where only one of the four pieces uses a tertiary secondary tonal group it may appear that Brahms deliberately grouped such pieces together. These tertiary keys do not relate to each, but they do all appear together in the same opus. Dunsby states that ‘one should be cautious in exposing consistent and continuous elements in a multi-piece’⁴⁴ as we would not necessarily expect this in a multi-movement work, but this must depend on the nature of the consistent and continuous elements. For instance, we might expect multi-movement works to have continuous registral elements or thematic transformations. Obviously Dunsby agrees, as he has no problem “exposing” that, as he sees it, ‘nearly all the thematic material [in op. 116] is related to two figures in various transformations’⁴⁵, which is supposed to be a significant part of his argument for op. 116 being a “multi-piece”.

If we return to Ex. 1a and look a little further, the patterning of the group seems even more explicit. By dividing the set of six in two we see that the set is made up of two symmetrical halves, both of which see a move from major to minor, with the same tonic, and then a move down a tone to another minor key. If we add the B section modulations we also see a strict alternation between major and minor keys, also symmetrical through a central axis, with the D major B section in no. 5 the only exception. Not only are the two halves symmetrical in terms of process, they are realised in a similar way, particularly the emergence of A major from A minor and F major from F minor. These two pairings, as we might expect, are picked out by Dunsby⁴⁶ but dismissed much as the pattern of descending tones was. Not only do the two intermezzi of each pair share the same tonic

⁴⁴ Dunsby 1983: 180

⁴⁵ *ibid.* 181

⁴⁶ *ibid.* 186

basis, the minor Intermezzo in both cases cadences in the major, providing an instant sense of continuity into the following piece. In both examples the modality is altered for the final chord through a tierce de picadie, in preparation for the major key to come. Rushton states that the purpose of the tierce de picadie in general is ‘to give the ending a greater sense of finality’⁴⁷ but here it is the exact opposite, with the major key providing a seamless link between pieces. If we compare the endings of nos. 1 and 4 the similarities become more obvious.

Ex. 3a: No. 1, bb. 39-43

Ex. 3b: No. 4, bb. 127-133

It is very much a case of dissolution with climatic moments collapsing into the major chords in a low tessitura which are reiterated further up the keyboard. As we can see, both reach dissonant bars before resolving downwards. In no. 4, bb. 127 and 128, with the opposition of the rising appoggiaturas on both E \flat and F \sharp , sound deliberately jumbled with the F major then arriving almost out of nowhere. The situation is similar but not identical in no. 1 with the appoggiatura octave C in b. 39, which resolves into b. 40, being the most striking dissonance in the intermezzo, created mainly by of the sparseness and awkward spacing of the rippling tritones in the left hand.

⁴⁷ Rushton 2001: 469

There is none of the richness we might usually associate with an appoggiatura within a diminished seventh chord. In both cases the final major chord is stated more than once, rising up the keyboard, with this rising gesture in no. 1 supported by an arpeggio rising from the bottom note on the piano.

These rising endings are something of a feature in the opus with no. 2 the only example not to exhibit this characteristic. They come in very different shapes and forms, the final few bars of the G minor Ballade rise plaintively with an echo of the B section whereas in no. 6 the rising E \flat minor arpeggio sounds almost like a closing afterthought. This is not to say that rising endings are in any way unusual. It is, in fact the natural thing to do, as the strings of the piano decrease in resonance as you go up the keyboard. However, a quick glance at the endings in op. 119 might suggest that we can assign some significance, in terms of grouping, to the predominance of the rising ending with no. 1 of this set providing the perfect example of a falling ending, no. 2 coming to rest lower down in the piano's tessitura and the final few chords of no. 3 falling emphatically.

Quite why there seem to be so many rising conclusions in these miniatures is another question. Perhaps you could see them as a response to the parallel predominance of falling melodic patterns.

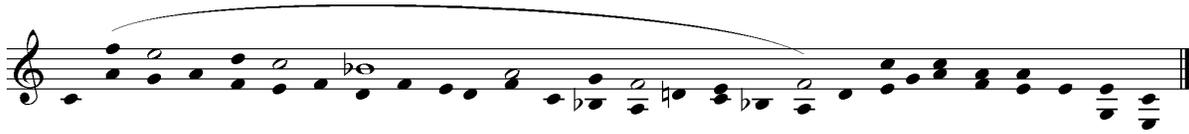
Ex. 4a: No. 1, descent in bb. 1-10.



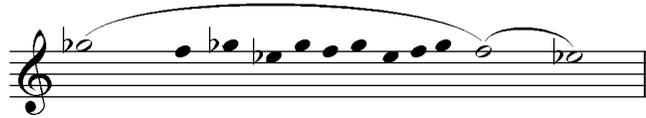
Ex. 4b: No. 3, descent in bb. 1-5



Ex. 4c: No. 5, descent in bb. 1-4



Ex. 4d: No. 6, descent in bb. 1-4



No. 4 opens without any sense of melody at all, but the first melodic material also follows a falling trajectory.

Ex. 4e: No. 4, descent in bb. 7-11



These graphs are not intended to show any strict thematic correlation between the melodic shapes, only a correspondence of gesture. Admittedly, phrases have to ascend, descend or remain static so perhaps this is purely coincidental, especially as no. 2 does not have a significant falling melodic outline. Again a comparison with op. 119 shows that there might be some significance to this finding as the first three intermezzi all have melodic shapes which are very static, with the fourth intermezzo the only exception in this case.

Opening and Closing

Although the pattern of descending tones has a certain neatness, it does not necessarily imply a successful tonal journey in its own right. Dunsby compares the opening and closing pieces of op. 116 and finds them to be related. However, would it not be interesting to see how the opening and closing miniatures satisfy their roles in these two different positions? Op. 118 no.1 is the only piece in the group with an introductory character and it is marked out from the set in a number of ways. In terms of form, Cai supports the merits of a sonata-allegro interpretation of no. 1, which is

certainly the type of form, (or formal reference) that we might expect at the opening of a multi-movement work. The A minor intermezzo is also the only one of the six which is not in a clearly demarcated ternary form and the one with the least sense of tonal grounding at its opening. The ambiguous opening has attracted some comment⁴⁸ but perhaps we could remember the off-tonic opening that Marston finds important with relation to the Beethoven's op. 119 or even Schumann's use of tonal ellipsis in the tonally inconclusive opening song from *Dichterliebe*, which undoubtedly influenced Brahms. In op. 118 no. 1 there is a distinct absence of root position A minor harmony throughout. After a deliberately ambiguous opening confused by the B \flat appoggiatura over a first inversion and then what appears to be a root position chord which is transformed by the F \sharp , C major is tonicised before a ten bar developmental section. There is no significant dominant preparation before the recapitulation, which, in terms of supporting A minor, suffers in exactly the same ways as the opening. It is not until bb. 27-32 that we hear a dominant followed by an A minor chord in root position. However, the A minor only resolves on the fourth crotchet beat of bb. 29, 31 and 32 with the C crotchet in the alto line. In b. 30 the B appoggiatura does resolve on the second minim beat but this is immediately followed by the repeat and the development section for a second time. In the whole intermezzo there is not one perfect cadence onto A minor on the first beat of any bar. Even the final cadence onto A major at b. 41 is not prepared in the conventional way as it is preceded not by chord V or V⁷, but a G \sharp diminished seventh chord.

The avoidance of cadence continues in no. 2 with the opening deliberately presenting chord IV in second inversion on the first two downbeats, further reinforced by the A⁷ – D from b. 4 to b. 5 and the avoidance of dominant harmony. When we do hear E major it is either in the context of an imperfect cadence in the form Ic – V as at bb. 4 and 12, or V⁷/V – V as at bb. 8 and 16. This avoidance of A major is encapsulated in the melodic line in the first two bars, which implies an antecedent and consequent structure, with the opening three notes demanding a response, and ultimately, closure. It would seem that the opening rising figure, C \sharp - B – D, requires a falling one to answer it but Brahms displaces the A in the second bar so it sounds an octave higher than we might presuppose. As we would expect, Brahms explores the possibilities of this motivic fragment, using it in the bass at b. 31 and then inverted in the soprano at b. 34 although neither suggest any closure of the opening figure. It is not until the closing bars of both A sections, (bb.

⁴⁸ In particular in Cone's essay, 'Three ways to read a Detective Story - A Brahms intermezzo'.

47-48 and 115-116) that the cell is finally resolved downwards to the lower A. However, even at this juncture Brahms still includes the upper A that has caused so many problems throughout.

Closure and losing A

Having seen how the opening piece serves its introductory role, perhaps now we can turn to the last movement which also fulfils its role as the closing piece. The concept of returning to a tonic, or coming home, is fundamental in all musical forms small or large with the journey away from and back to the tonic probably the most important musical process at all levels. The return to D minor in op. 116 is of fundamental importance in Dunsby's analysis and is one feature that is obviously absent in op. 118. Instead of any tonic return the group ends in a key far removed from A minor – E♭ minor. With the addition of six flats and positioned a tritone away E♭ minor could not be more remote compared to our starting point of A minor. In terms of the sequence of falling tones that has been constructed, we have travelled through half an octave and are exactly half way from the tonic. Brahms appears to make us especially conscious of this remoteness in the opening of no. 6 which starts quite unlike any other, with a figure which turns around G♭, F and E♭ without an obvious sense of tonal direction. After the cadence in F major in the previous intermezzo the G♭ sounds totally alien. Even in the second and third bars the tonality is unclear with the F - E♭ appoggiatura harmonised with an expansive arpeggiated A♯ diminished 7th.

As Miller suggests, nos. 1 and 6 are connected in having the most tonally ambiguous openings⁴⁹. The almost improvisatory character to the opening of no. 6 might also be reminiscent of the opening bars of the first intermezzo. Although Miller dismisses the F appoggiatura in b. 3 of no. 6 in his Schenkerian reduction as a descending passing-note this is to deny its real importance. If we understand the opening of no. 6 as an elaborated 3 - 2 - 1 descent with the F as a dissonant appoggiatura we can see that the construction is exactly the same as that in the first intermezzo.

⁴⁹ As shown above, no. 2 does subvert A major with the constant progressions to D major and endless imperfect cadences, but there is no genuine tonal ambiguity like that in nos. 1 and 6.

Ex. 5: Comparison of no. 1, bb. 1-2 and no. 6 bb. 1-4

The image displays two musical excerpts. The top excerpt shows a 3-2-1 descent in the right hand, with a rising arpeggiated gesture in the left hand. The bottom excerpt shows a similar 3-2-1 descent in the right hand, with a rising arpeggiated gesture in the left hand. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of three flats, and a 3/8 time signature.

As Ex. 5 shows, the rhetoric is very similar with a descent from 3 to a 2 - 1 appoggiatura underpinned by a rising arpeggiated gesture. So can we understand this as a direct reference back to the first intermezzo? To borrow Dunsby's terminology the 'gestural coherence' seems rather good. Of course the 3 - 2 - 1 descent in no. 1 is complicated by the flattening of the 2 which is not present in no. 6. The instability of this descent is resolved internally by descent in octaves from D - C - B - E from b. 28 but perhaps the opening of no. 6 offers another reading in terms of resolution. A closer look at the harmony in no. 6 makes the ties to the opening first intermezzo become even clearer. Within E \flat minor, A \natural , a tritone from the tonic, provides an unusual sonority, and one which we might only expect to hear as a chromatic inflection, or at its most structural, within the secondary dominant F 7 , the dominant of B \flat . It is odd then that the entire opening is dominated by harmony infused with the sonority of A \natural with the harmony being exclusively A \natural diminished 7 $^{\text{th}}$ until the second beat of b. 7.

Miller explores how the increasingly frequent appearance of A \flat and C \flat gradually establishes and reinforces E \flat minor as the tonic. Of course A \flat is central to the tonicisation of E \flat minor as it provides the 7 $^{\text{th}}$ in chord V which does not arrive with any structural significance until the perfect cadence at bb. 19-20. A \flat also plays a key role in the next significant harmonic move providing the link between the dominant at b. 40 and the G \flat in the opening of the B section at b. 41. One

cannot deny A \flat 's significance, but instead of seeing the rise of A \flat , perhaps we are really seeing the gradual demise of A \natural .

In the first arpeggio in b. 3, the A \natural diminished seventh appears unadulterated with only the four notes of the chord, A \natural , C \natural , E \flat and G \flat . With the reprise at b. 21 Brahms adds A \flat as passing notes in bb. 23 and 34. A \natural comes back to the fore when Brahms combines the octaves of the B section at b. 41 with the A \natural diminished 7th at bb. 51-52. The juxtaposition of E \flat and A \natural at b. 54 seems to encapsulate the opposition of the whole group, so prominent in the low register octaves that the perfect cadence that follows immediately is robbed of all impact. In a critical move A \natural is redefined as B double flat at b. 59 and then it is A \flat which emerges, as the 2 - 1 appoggiatura falls over an A \flat ⁷ chord at b. 62 with the juxtaposition now of E \flat and A \flat in the same register as the E \flat - A \natural that we heard previously. The climax of A \flat sonority at b. 61 is marked *sff*, building on the *ff* the bar before providing the loudest moment in the whole group. The sequence of dynamics from the *f* at b. 47 to *cresc. sempre* three bars later, *più f* at b. 55, *ff* at b. 60 and finally the *sff* at b. 61 show (if there was any doubt from listening alone) that Brahms intended this moment as the climax of the piece, and given that the dynamic marking *ff* has only appeared once⁵⁰ and the *sff* articulation is not used at any other point in the group, the climax of the whole group. When the A section returns at b. 63⁵¹ complete with the original texture, the left hand's arpeggios are no longer complete rippling up and down the piano, instead they are just rising fragments which peter out, an effect heightened by the crescendos that Brahms adds that were not present at the opening. Instead of descending to C \natural as in b. 9, it is C \flat that we are taken to in b. 67 and this in turn leads to another A \flat major chord marked, this time by a *fp* at b. 74. Even in the final few bars, A \natural , having disappeared for a while, emerges again, if only fleetingly. At bb. 79-80 we resolve onto A \flat but go then to an A \natural diminished before we get to chord I. B. 81 sounds critical, with the A \flat and C \flat thirds in both hands, but just a bar later an A \natural diminished chord again comes between A \flat and the dominant, before the perfect cadence in b. 83.

So, is the implication that A \natural (and C \natural to a certain extent) have been in our ears throughout the whole group and that structurally we are picking up on the same A minor sonorities and resolving them in E \flat minor? In terms of register, the bottom A which we hear in b. 3 of no. 6 is the same A

⁵⁰ At b. 108 in the G minor Ballade.

⁵¹ As Miller suggests, the third section begins at b. 59 but the return of the original theme combined with the original texture provide a more immediate sense that we are hearing the opening material.

which underpins the bass in both nos. 1 and 2, including the final cadences of both⁵² and the half cadence at b. 28 in the opening intermezzo. However, the fact that the E \flat minor intermezzo is preceded by F major, reintroduces the sonority of both A \natural and F \natural , and the B section in D major, means that A \natural is omnipresent in the intermezzo.

Analytical Conclusions

This investigation could never hope to be exhaustive but we have exposed some gestural resonances within the group, the rising ending and descending theme being the most obvious examples. Although the precise chronology of composition is unknown, we can assume that some of the pieces within the group were conceived in quite close succession and the fact that they have elements in common is not necessarily surprising. However, the evidence is that these gestures are not shared with op. 119 despite their common genesis. It seems that the sequence of descending tones, although obvious at first glance, deserves some credit as evidence of conscious ordering with the internal tonal symmetry providing extra weight for this argument. The sense of tonal journey or cycle is confirmed by the apparent retrospection of the final intermezzo and the way in which it refers, both specifically and generally, to the opening intermezzo, resolving the incongruent A \natural into E \flat minor. Whether we could call op. 118 a directional cycle⁵³ is another matter, but it would seem that explorations of ordered multi-movement works could go far beyond closed tonal forms and single tonics to a case like this, where an obvious dichotomy between two keys seems to be exposed. Obviously, the cycle ends in E \flat minor, with no sense of confusion, but there is no merit in looking back through the cycle in order to understand the first five pieces as preparation for the last, it is more a case of moving from one tonic, through to another, with this tonic recalled and dissolved in the final piece.

⁵² The lowest A on the piano is sounded in b. 41 of no. 1 but because there is a pedalling change on the last crotchet of b. 43, it will not sound in the final chord.

⁵³ This is to borrow the term 'directional' from the Romantic phenomenon of 'directional tonality' where a piece starts in a different key from the one it starts in. Chopin used the device repeatedly, his Fantasia in F minor, op. 49, Scherzo no.2, op. 31 and Ballade No. 2 in F, op. 38 all come to mind. The 2nd movement of Brahms's String Quintet op. 88 also features a directional move from C# major/minor to a close in A major with Korsyn suggesting in his essay 'Directional Tonality and Intertextuality: Brahms's Quintet op. 88 and Chopin's Ballade op. 38' that Brahms's models his movement on Chopin's op. 38.

Op. 118 in the context of Brahms's Late Style

‘Old people are the best at seeing the large picture’

Brahms jotted this down in a notebook he kept of old German proverbs along with a number of others relating to ageing and the passing of time.⁵⁴ Even as a young man Brahms appears to have had an appreciation of the way in which our outlook changes as we grow older. Op. 118, completed in the summer of 1893, just four years before the composer's death, must qualify as a late work chronologically, which motivates an investigation given recent scholarship and the evidence of ordering shown above. Both Cai and Matthews refer to the last four piano opuses rather casually as ‘late’ works without any appreciation of the significance that ‘lateness’ has acquired in the study of aesthetics, principally through Adorno's studies of Beethoven's Late Style⁵⁵ and Said's book on the subject. Said and Adorno are trying to assess the aesthetic quality of Late Style and achieve some kind of definition. In the forward to Said's book, Driscoll defines Late Style as follows

‘the quality possessed by the puzzlingly beautiful artistic works that are created late in an artist's career, after decades of creative output, yet suggest not closure and resolution but rather intransigence, difficulty, and unresolved contradiction’.

That the six miniatures of op. 118 are profoundly beautiful is indubitable and the puzzles they suggest have spawned this and other investigations. However, Brahms is not mentioned in Said's discussion which includes Wagner, Schoenberg, Strauss, Mozart, Chopin and Schumann. This seems somewhat surprising. Said describes lateness as ‘a kind of self imposed exile from what is generally acceptable’⁵⁶. After the success of the large works of the 1880s, including the third and fourth symphonies, some saw Brahms's return to chamber and solo piano works in the final years as something of a stylistic regression. Theodor Billroth, one of Brahms's great friends, described the miniatures as ‘jokes on the piano’⁵⁷ and in a letter to Professor Engleman of November 1893 he expresses that ‘in these lesser piano pieces he does not display enough variety...Brahms should

⁵⁴ These proverbs have been translated by Bozarth in his essay ‘Johannes Brahms's Collection of Deutsche Sprichworte (German Proverbs)’. 1994. Please see Appendix 2 for the other proverbs in the notebook relating to ageing.

⁵⁵ Adorno 1998

⁵⁶ Said 2006: 16

⁵⁷ Barkan 1957: 227

stay with the great style.’⁵⁸

It is obvious that these late works were not written for large audiences in the concert hall like the symphonies and concertos. Ferdinand Schumann recalls Brahms articulating this very point in a diary entry of 1894. ‘Yesterday Brahms said to grandmother that he no longer composed for the public, but only for himself’⁵⁹ and Brahms specifically asked Simrock to delay the publication, and consequent public exposure of ops. 116 and 117.⁶⁰ Ilona Ebenschütz recalls that when Brahms wanted to play opp. 118 and 119 to her, he would not allow Prof. Wendt or her sisters into the room, making them listen outside from the stairs.⁶¹ This rejection of the public domain and the refusal of ‘many of the rewards offered up by being comfortable inside society, not the least of which was to be read and understood easily by a large group of people’,⁶² is a trait that Said identifies with Late Style. The private nature of Brahms’s piano miniatures is noted by Matthews who draws a parallel with Beethoven’s withdrawal into the chamber world of the string quartet after composing the 9th Symphony and *Missa Solemnis*.⁶³ Of course this perception of Beethoven originated with Adorno for whom the late work ‘sounds as if someone, alone, were gesticulating and mumbling to himself’.⁶⁴ This element of Beethoven’s composition is mirrored by Brahms in his performance of the late piano miniatures, with Specht recalling that he ‘would often play as if to himself and was then capable of muttering the choicest things into his beard and failing to draw the least attention to them.’⁶⁵

Strauss provides one of Said’s most fruitful examples as an exponent of Late Style, in particular his return to eighteenth-century instrumentation and ‘deceptively simple and rarefied chamber expression’⁶⁶. It would seem that Brahms, with his “retirement” from composition in 1890⁶⁷ and his return to writing works for piano after a break of twelve years, would appear to have something in common with Late Style in both Beethoven and Strauss. Despite the example of Strauss, Said

⁵⁸ *ibid*: 227

⁵⁹ Schumann 1916: 515

⁶⁰ Cai 1989: 93

⁶¹ Ebenschütz 1927: 599

⁶² Said 2006: 22

⁶³ Matthews 1978: 59

⁶⁴ Adorno 1998: 156

⁶⁵ Richard Specht quoted in Matthews 1978: 57

⁶⁶ Said 2006: 22

⁶⁷ Swafford 1997: 568

also seeks to reinterpret Adorno's view of Late Style as a regression or looking back⁶⁸ and in doing so suggests that modernism itself, can be viewed as a part of Late Style making it a movement of ageing and ending rather than one of newness, as is conventionally understood.⁶⁹

The traditional image of Brahms, especially in his immediate reception, was one of a classicist and academic composer, in direct opposition to Wagner.⁷⁰ Schoenberg's essay of 1947 was the first to herald Brahms as a progressive composer, looking forwards rather than back or in other words, a modernist. By drawing numerous comparisons with Wagner, Schoenberg attempts to show the importance of Brahms's contribution to the advancement of musical language especially in the areas of unity and invention in the manipulation of ideas. Whether Schoenberg is successful in his goal is debatable but the influence of his ideas is undeniable. Concluding work on Brahms's cycles has proved problematic for other writers before me and Schoenberg's words have provided a convenient source of inspiration. Dunsby concludes that the historical significance of 'the forces of connection which were interesting to Brahms beyond those of the sonata and variation tradition'⁷¹ is to be found in Schoenberg and the early works of the Second Viennese School as Brahms's compositional techniques acted as a catalyst for development. In her work on Brahms's miniature forms,⁷² Cai also turns to Schoenberg in her conclusion comparing Brahms's 'disintegration' to Schoenberg's as they both 'still found it necessary to pay homage to the tattered legacy of formal design'.⁷³ This view of Brahms preparing the way for later composers may be rather attractive, especially given Schoenberg's own writings, but it does bypass some important features of these small piano works.

There is something about these works that is fundamentally simple, rather than revolutionary. This simplicity resides in a number of different areas, but most noticeably in the lack of range in Brahms's formal vocabulary and the limitation of development. Although Cai wants to understand these miniatures in terms of new structures and formal principles, this appears to complicate the issue unnecessarily. Rather than focusing on the essential simplicity of these forms, Cai is

⁶⁸ *ibid.* 23

⁶⁹ Said 2006: 135

⁷⁰ Schoenberg 1947: 398-9

⁷¹ Dunsby 1983: 188

⁷² Cai 2000

⁷³ *ibid.* 150

dedicated to making them appear more complicated and unusual. The truth is that the last five miniatures depend on only two musical ideas and two keys within clearly demarcated ternary forms. The two areas are normally kept totally separate with the transition sections sounding rather functional, getting us from one place to another. Schoenberg is clear that ‘a transition...should not be considered as a thing in its own end. It should not appear at all if it does not develop, intensify, clarify, or throw light or colour on the idea of a piece’ and rearticulating that ‘no space should be devoted to mere formal purposes’.⁷⁴ Although this concept is just his personal compositional code, it is one, in the context of his essay, that he understands “Brahms the progressive” to fulfill. One only has to look bb. 45-7 in the Romance in F or bb. 32-40 in the G minor Ballade to find transitional material with little apparent function other than that of modulation, to move from one place to another. Many of the transitions such as those into the B sections of nos. 2 and 4 rely on nothing more than the pivot of a common tone, simplicity itself. Definitely the evidence that these ‘are the very places throughout his works that show his most imaginative and unusual devices’⁷⁵, with the lack of a convincing argument from Cai, is scanty. The only work which shows the true integration with a blurring of the formal boundaries is the E \flat minor intermezzo where the return of the A section melody at b. 59 shows a textural continuation from the B section with the texture of the A section only returning in the second phrase. Perhaps then it is no surprising that it was this intermezzo, with its greater levels of structural integration, which was rumored to be a sketch for a symphonic slow movement.⁷⁶

The question has to be asked why a composer who had declared his retirement from public composition⁷⁷, having said that ‘there is no real creating without hard work’⁷⁸ to his friend Henschel, endeavored to write these works as an old man. Combined with the simplicity of some of the works’ elements one detects a certain sense of self-indulgence, which is not to suggest self-gratification, but that Brahms found solace in these works at a very difficult time. Brahms heard of the death of his close friend Elisabet von Herzogenberg in January 1892 and his sister Elise followed later that year.⁷⁹ In addition, Brahms had quarreled with his lifelong friend Clara

⁷⁴ Schoenberg 1947: 408

⁷⁵ Cai 1983: 87

⁷⁶ Matthews 1978: 69

⁷⁷ Swafford 1997: 568-9

⁷⁸ Gal 1963: 157

⁷⁹ Swafford 1997: 577

Schumann, over the publication of Robert Schumann's D Minor Symphony in the complete edition that they had worked on together. The piano miniatures of op. 118 were part of the healing process between the pair as Brahms sent them to her as he completed them, with the E \flat minor intermezzo as a birthday present. There was obviously much for Brahms to reflect upon in these works especially given the bereavements he experienced; the first of a number which were to affect him in his last years.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, Brahms's conviction in his ordering choices is compelling and this asks questions of all the groups of dances, song cycles and miniatures. Fellingner has already suggested that exploring key schemes in these cases may be productive but the evidence from op. 118 extends the scope of these potential projects. Dunsby's work on the "multi-piece" was pioneering but it would seem that an expansion of cyclic processes beyond the boundaries of tonally closed forms is necessary. The sequence of keys used in op. 118 does nothing to suggest random compilation, in contrast with some of the other collections, and the group seems to be distinguished from op. 119 by various gestural resonances unique to op. 118. These connections, though gestural rather than thematic, might provide Reti with the unity that he would expect to find in such a group having written that 'it can in general be assumed that whenever a composer of structural consciousness includes two or more pieces under one opus number, this should, and frequently does, mean that these items constitute an artistic unit, that they represent a higher architectural whole formed from a common thematic material.'⁸⁰ However, in this instance the power of arrangement is not only born out in abstract unity of grouping and separation from op. 119, but the specific order itself, particularly the reference to, and reinvention of the opening intermezzo in the final miniature.

Being chronologically late, op. 118 and the other late piano collections offer a window for exploration of Brahms's Late Style, informed by the evidence of ordering in this op. 118. It would seem that Brahms's withdrawal from the public sphere does seem to have parallels with Said's description of Late Style which appear to have gone unnoticed. Although the personal and private nature of op. 118 can be read in the historical circumstances of its composition and performance through Brahms's behaviour and comments, there seems to be a parallel with the order of the six miniatures; the profound effect of the journey from 1 to 6, which serves as an expression of

⁸⁰ Réti 1951: 70

Brahms's position. If one were to ask why an old man, writing for himself, would take the trouble of arranging a group of miniatures the answer could be that different orders have different expressive potentials and the choice of one particular order offers the desired expressive result. Put simply, the effect of these intermezzos performed 6-1 compared to 1-6 is profoundly different. Only the latter, with the *E♭* minor intermezzo's claustrophobic reinvention of the opening, complements Said's theories of Late Style. In the work above we have seen Brahms's predilection for introspection and simplicity more generally, and his ability to see the 'large picture'. Showing that these characteristics qualify as qualities of Late Style in general is beyond the scope of this investigation, but the findings in this essay suggest some exciting possibilities given that Brahms is underrepresented in current scholarship.

This analysis has uncovered the importance of ordering as an expressive process in op. 118. This picture of Brahms 'the expressive orderer' is in stark contrast to earlier interpretations of Brahms, developed by the Weimar critics⁸¹, of a composer who 'kept expressivity subordinate to technical criteria'⁸². This view has persisted throughout the twentieth century, reinforced by more recent 'portrayal of the composer as an intellectual, antisensual composer of absolute music'⁸³. In establishing Brahms as an alternative to the perceived emotional decadence of contemporary music, the Weimar critics promoted Brahms's work in the "abstract genres" using the symphonies and quartets as examples but ignoring smaller works like the intermezzi.⁸⁴ Dunsby, in tackling the repertoire avoided by earlier critics, fails to challenge this view, offering an analysis which attempts to demonstrate unity in op. 116 through thematic processes, only serving to reinforce the fascination with technical criteria without taking account of the potential for expressivity in the collection's order. It is only since the 1980s that more hermeneutic accounts of Brahms's music have aided the recovery from the suppression of expression in Weimar criticism and this analysis serves to add to this recovery, discovering Brahms's use of ordering as a means of expression.

⁸¹ In his examination of Brahms reception of the Weimar era Linn 2001: cites Paul Bekker, Walter Niemann and Karl Geiringer.

⁸² Linn 2001: 238

⁸³ *ibid.* 247

⁸⁴ *ibid* 2001: 238

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