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## **Metaphorically Mapping Literature onto Music: An Analytical Guide**

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### *Summary*

The idea that music tells a story has recently become a particularly important idea to many music theorists. Music and literature are both inherently narrative structures since they are temporal and consist of events or actions that are connected in some way. In addition, people tend to describe music with adjectives and verbs, just like they describe characters in literature. (For example, music can be happy, lamenting, falling, or grumbling, to name a few.) Therefore, when descriptions “match” between literature and music (which I will refer to as mapping), one can imagine that character and/or that action as one listens. At the beginning of a piece of music, the musical character (or action) is connected to a literary character (or action) by matching the descriptions. As the piece progresses and the music changes, the listener continues to connect to different characters or events from the same book.

However, only certain events of a story may have parallels in the music, or the events may even be out of order in a reimagined flashback/memory version of the work. In other words, these mappings act as adaptations of literature instead of translations. Such adaptations may occur through overreading or underreading. In effect, the reader-turned-listener enjoys creative liberty as long as the resulting mapping does not ignore the information given by the music.

Theorists have already laid the foundation for this methodology. For example, Philip Rupprecht describes how the music can sound like an actor and take the form of a story and Lawrence Zbikowski analyzes music’s ability to take on a layer of new meaning when presented by a particular person. Furthermore, this approach can be especially valuable to the non-musician. Because narratives are how we understand the world and because telling a narrative is reliant upon memory of the previous events of the story, using this more concrete method of listening to classical music can allow the listener to remember more and hence understand more of what is heard. Professional musicians and theorists can also benefit from this approach, though, since each mapping provides a new perspective of the music that can provoke revelations in understanding both music *and* literature.

While it could be argued that misinterpretations of a piece are likely to occur with this method, this cannot happen unless the listener disregards the musical itself. Like any mode of analysis, one must always listen conscientiously in order to have a viable interpretation.

Robert Schumann’s “Verrufene Stelle” is a useful example for how mappings may work in practice. The piece’s themes can be connected to Claudius’s sinful nature, Hamlet’s grief for his dead father, and fate. Why is it, then, that the theme of Hamlet’s grief interrupts the music of Claudius’s sinful nature? Why, also, does that latter theme become overwhelmed and even join Hamlet’s grief? This leads to a realization of the potential that Claudius was trying to appease his own guilt as much as he was trying to assuage Hamlet’s sorrow when he speaks to him towards the beginning of the play.

When comparing this mapping with the poem that appears before the piece (the meaning of which was not known before or during the mapping process), the two stories are incredibly similar. The translation of the title itself, “Haunted Place,” fits Claudius’s haunted feelings and struggle to find forgiveness throughout the piece and play.

The downward-moving motive in “Verrufene Stelle” can be compared to a similar motive in Maurice Ravel’s “Oiseaux Tristes.” By comparing the function of Schumann’s theme in the context of the Shakespeare mapping to the function of Ravel’s theme, it is discovered that the same elision of Claudius’s and Hamlet’s themes already discussed provokes a reinterpretation of the previous music and storyline, whereas the tragedy of Ravel’s theme lies in its own reinterpretation by the changing harmonies that support it.

Finally, it can be fruitful to take into consideration multiple mappings of the same piece. Since there is never one “right” mapping, hearing Ophelia’s death and Anna Karenina’s social despair in the same recording of Grieg’s Violin Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 8 introduces a comparison of these two female characters that may never have occurred without the music’s inspiration.

There are many possible applications of mappings, with each one giving something new to our understanding of music and literature.

In addition, because these ideas are so applicable for non-musicians, I have written an approximately one hundred page book titled, “Dickens and the Cheshire Cat: The Book-Lover’s Guide to Classical Music.” Written with a much more informal tone, this book explores how music tells stories and encourages readers to come up with their own individual and creative stories. Included in this paper are the book’s table of contents and several excerpts discussing how one might hear specific literary techniques in music and providing a number of possible interpretations for pieces to varying degrees of specificity for the reader-turned-listener to use for further inspiration and creative listening.

*Abstract*

Music and literature are both inherently narrative structures. Because of this, when the paraphrase of a musical aspect is similar to the paraphrase of a literary aspect, that literary aspect, whether it is a character or action, can be metaphorically mapped onto the music at that point. Like any mode of interpretation the theorist must be careful to remain true to the music, but conscientious metaphorical mappings provide a creatively stimulating approach to both literature and music that can engender an even deeper understanding of the music itself.

There are many precedents to this approach. Renowned theorists including Lawrence Kramer, Joshua Banks Mailman, and Lawrence Zbikowski have already set the framework for this methodology through various discussions of musical narrative and cognition.

To demonstrate its practical applicability, an in-depth metaphorical mapping of “Verrufene Stelle” from Robert Schumann’s *Waldszenen* with Shakespeare’s Hamlet is offered—both from an absolute and programmatic standpoint. Further application into the topics of cross-musical and cross-literary analyses will also be briefly addressed.

## Narrative and Literary Mapping

### *Recent History of Musical Narrative*

In recent years, the idea of musical narrativity has gained considerable recognition and support. In particular, Byron Almén and Michael L. Klein alongside Nicholas Reyland published extensive books on musical narrative in 2008 and 2013, respectively. In his book *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, Almén proposes that Northrop Frye's four literary archetypes (romance, comedy, tragedy, and irony) can also be applied to music, where each archetype is a different transvaluative result of an initial hierarchy. He maintains that although these archetypes are separate from each other, a piece of music can be a combination of more than one in the same way that there are an infinite number of directions between the compass points of North, South, East, and West.<sup>1</sup> An offspring discussion of the topic is included in *Music and Narrative Since 1900*, an extensive compilation of essays edited by Klein and Reyland that provides a plethora of views on more current musical narratives, ranging from discussions of violence to *jouissance*.<sup>2</sup> The sheer variety of narrative ideas and interpretations boggles the mind—this field truly presents the musician with untold depths to explore. Nevertheless, there is an ever-present hesitation among scholars to greater and lesser degrees to describe *all* music as narrative. While it is generally acknowledged now that tonality is not a requirement for a narrative's presence (although a tonal backbone helps because of its longstanding history and clear semiotic capabilities), other limiting qualifications have been retained in musical narrative studies.

### *Instrumental Classical Music*

While it is certainly possible that other instrumental genres such as jazz and electronic music could be analyzed with this methodology, classical music, because of its immense, eclectic nature and the level of research and preexisting theoretical work, is a good place to start. Additionally, I am focusing on instrumental instead of vocal music because of the more extensive freedoms instrumental music allows, since there are no words to further constrain musical interpretation. Of course, vocal music could be analyzed with this approach, as well, and with equally valuable results.

As far as the methodology itself goes, all listeners come to instrumental classical music (which will henceforth be referred to as simply “music” to be concise) with baggage in our preconceptions, past experiences, and emotional states—some good and some bad. But instead of hopelessly trying to sanitize the listening experience, why not purposefully connect with the music, using knowledge of literature to help better understand the music *and* literature while creatively and enjoyably interacting with both?

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<sup>1</sup> Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Michael L. Klein and Nicholas Reyland, eds., *Music and Narrative Since 1900* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013).

*Music and Literature as Necessarily Narrative*

Like Bence Nanay in his article *Narrative Pictures*, I am less concerned with pinpointing a detailed, theoretical definition of the term “narrative” than with exploring how we as readers and listeners connect with narratives on a personal level.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, a modest definition is not out of place here:

*Narrative is a temporal succession of events that are connected in some way.*

Admittedly, what it means for events to be “connected” can be hard to pin down (as well as the actual definition of an “event”). Yet even with the most conservative of interpretations, classical music and literature both comfortably qualify as narrative structures:

First, music is temporal. In other words, we listen to music from beginning to end in that order. Literature is also temporal—usually—since we read from the first to last page and from left to right.<sup>4</sup>

Second, music consists of events or actions. There are micro-events, such as individual movements from one note to another, and macro-events, which are my primary concern. These macro-events are large-scale shifts that may be a result of changes in timbre, volume, rhythm, tempo, cadences, etc., which result in the feeling of movement between sections of a piece. In essence, macro-events are what music theorists talk about when they discuss form. Though the idea of large-scale changes may again be hard to pin down with an exact definition, the fact that theorists have used such means of classification for centuries speaks to how intuitive such an understanding of music is. Of course, literature also consists of events. Most books have an exposition, rising action, climax, and falling action. But even if sections are not so clearly defined, a book virtually always contains actions of some sort.

Third, these events are connected. The term “classical music” carries with it the acknowledgment of a composer. The composer orders notes, rhythms, and more on the page to create the music—he or she *orders* the notes, hand-picks them, arranges them. There is no getting around the fact that music written by a composer must consist of connected material on some level. The same is true for the concept of an author. Like in music, the author presents events in order to communicate some meaning or to serve some purpose. Sometimes, as is often the case in modern music, that meaning is that music or literature has no meaning, but ironically this is a meaning in and of itself.

Therefore, music and literature must both necessarily bring in their very natures the assumption of narrative.

The word assumption, though, brings up an interesting point: what if there existed a piece of music where the composer completely determined every aspect of the music by

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<sup>3</sup> Bence Nanay, “Narrative Pictures,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67 no. 1 (Wiley, 2009): 119–29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40206395> (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Choose-your-own-adventure narratives have a less rigid temporality since the reader does not read every single page in a row from beginning to end. However, they remain inherently temporal since there are still various restrictions on what to read when.

chance, much like some of John Cage's work? Or what if there was a literary work in existence that did not make use of actions at all but instead used sentence fragments or identity verbs alone ("it is," "she has," etc.)? Here, it makes sense to return to the beginning of this discussion: I am primarily concerned with how readers and listeners engage with a narrative, *whether or not one is actually there*. There may well be rare pieces that are not a result of the composer's choice though they bears that composer's name, or a literary work that does not use any action verbs whatsoever. But the fact that the vast majority of pieces do have clear narrative properties has conditioned us as readers and listeners to connect these types of works with narratives. As *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* asserts, we will try to position the work in a narrative form from sheer habit.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we can powerfully and somewhat startlingly conclude that whether or not the rare literary or musical work is, by strict definition, a narrative, it can and most probably will be read or listened to in that way.

### *Metaphorically Mapping Literature onto Music*

Literature can be metaphorically mapped onto music by the use of paraphrases. The concept of *metaphorical* mapping is important here. A metaphor occurs when one thing is said to be the same as another while implicitly acknowledging the fact that it is not actually the same. Juliet is not *literally* the sun, though Romeo says she is. Nor does he in fact believe her to be the same as the sun. Instead, Shakespeare is using this equation of Juliet and the sun to tell us something deeper about their similarities in Romeo's mind. Romeo could have said Juliet is *like* the sun; but instead, he says she *is* the sun, stressing for the audience member or reader the extent of the comparison. Metaphor is a heightened version of simile that preserves in the mind of the reader the underlying acknowledgement of its hyperbolic function. Hence, when I speak of metaphorically mapping a literary character onto music, I recognize that they are not the same thing, just as Juliet is not, actually, the sun. But when we allow ourselves to get caught up in their similarities to the point where we imagine them to be the same, we enter into a deeper experience of the two as one, which is an extremely useful point of view as will be made clear.

Adjectives are the typical paraphrases for characters while verbs are the typical paraphrases for action. If you describe someone as "exuberant" and "bubbly," you are describing his or her character. So if you describe *music* as "exuberant" and "bubbly," you are describing *musical* character. Similarly, if someone is skipping, that describes an action; if the music invokes a feeling of skipping, then there is a musical action. When the paraphrases "match" between literature and music, the corresponding character or action can be metaphorically mapped onto the music at that point. (It is important to keep in mind that the musical narrative does not have to move in exactly the same time frame as the literary narrative—see the following discussion on adaptation.) Only certain events may have parallels in the music, or the events may even be out of order in a

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<sup>5</sup> H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (*Cambridge Introductions to Literature*) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.



reimagined flashback/memory version of the work.<sup>6</sup> This is essentially a method for listening to musical “plot” as Peter Brooks describes it.<sup>7</sup>

Lawrence Kramer has perhaps come closest to this approach—his use of literature, particularly poems, to engage the reader with his descriptions of musical characteristics is more extensive than in most theorists’ work.<sup>8</sup> Yet the difference between my concept and that of Kramer is that Kramer uses literature more as historical commentary. Literary comparisons and parallels are not explored in detail, but simply support his analysis and show the pervasive ideas of the historical time period when the composers and authors were writing. This approach is certainly viable and illuminating in its own right, but I wish to take this approach a step further and really focus on these connections between literature and music from multiple time periods. His literary comparisons are also more occasional and are not carried through for an entire piece, whereas I am advocating a close, continual analysis between one or more pieces of music and one or more pieces of literature. For example, since, according to Kramer, the slow movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, no. 2, contains a moment of “transferred ambivalence” analogous to that in Percy Shelley’s poem “To Jane: The Recollection,” how does the ever-changing harmony in the opening chorale support or subvert this effect?<sup>9</sup> In other words, where do the similarities between Beethoven and Shelley end, and how is that significant? Committing to such a one-to-one analysis allows for a comparison of musical and narrative plots in a sort of choose-your-own-adventure approach. For example, if both works start with a similar character, how do the author and composer develop that character or take different paths of action? Kramer’s isolated approach by comparison disrupts the direct narrative flow. Instead of analytical seasoning, then, the methodology I am advocating causes literature and narrative to become a direct part of the analytical meat.

The mapping process starts when the listener makes the first connection between a literary and musical paraphrase at the beginning of a piece of music. In an essentially reader-response style, as the piece progresses and the musical paraphrases change, the listener continues to connect to different paraphrase pairings within the same literary work. Hence, a listener must know a book well in order for this method to be as meaningful as possible.

Additionally, character is typically easier to map onto the beginning of a musical work than action.<sup>10</sup> While narratives consist of both characters and actions on a virtual continuum where more of one or the other may be present in a given work at a given moment, the identity of a character is the reason for his, her, or its action. For this reason, when metaphorically mapping literature onto music it tends to be easier to start with a character instead of an event or action, since actions may be understood in

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<sup>6</sup> For why literary mappings are valuable, see *Reasons and Applications*.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Brooks, “Reading for the Plot,” in *Reading For the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 3-36.

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> I will use the word “character” to refer to any person, animal, or object that is personified to the point that it thinks for itself.

different ways based on who the character is and what that character has done in the past or future of the story that you are connecting with.

It is also possible to map some moving object or natural phenomenon within a particular setting at the start of a piece. For example, one could hear thunder *in Jane Eyre*, or perhaps a fluttering kite *in Mary Poppins*. But again, such an initial mapping is theoretically more complicated and disorienting than starting with a character because of the necessary duality of the connection and the potentially decreased connection to the plot as a whole.

### *Translation vs. Adaptation*

A narrative will never present more than *some* of the total events. We do not read or see Ophelia eat a single thing throughout Shakespeare's entire play, but we must assume she has been eating. Likewise, we never see Ophelia receive the news that her father is dead—we only hear that she has gone mad after being told. There are virtually an infinite number of angles that a literary work cannot possibly address but that the reader-turned-listener can explore in music. After all, realistic characters are dynamic—they change their minds and experience a world of emotions just as actual human beings do. Even if all emotions or actions cannot be understood in the context of one character, then, the musical “scene” may pan over to another character and explore the world from his or her (or its) angle.

What this amounts to is that mapping literature onto music produces literary *adaptations* as opposed to exact recreations of the literary works themselves. Just as “reviewers who complain that a film or play is a poor ‘translation’ of the original, may miss the fact that adaptation across media is not translation in anything but the lowest sense,” musical works are obviously not translations of literary works.<sup>11</sup> They are not even meant to be in most cases. Instead, the reader-turned-listener takes creative liberty within certain boundaries. Admittedly, those boundaries are fuzzy, but determining exactly where they are is not necessary for the point I intend to make.

More specifically, adaptations may consist of overreading and/or underreading. Where overreading consists of filling in those inevitable narrative gaps, underreading consists of ignoring (whether consciously or subconsciously) certain narrative aspects.<sup>12</sup> In Hatten's collection, Joshua Banks Mailman proposes an overreading of minimalist music (a genre normally refused narrative citizenship):

the narrative interest...emerges from the interaction between deterministic processes and the undetermined choices we make before, after, or in the midst of them—think of Faust dreading the toll of midnight. We may imagine our protagonist in bed being awakened slowly by the rays of the sun through the venetian blinds on the morning of his execution, his last experience of a

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<sup>11</sup> Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 105.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-83.

sunrise, after having made some inconvenient choices in the past. Or, more optimistically, it is the morning of an Olympic figure-skating competition or chess championship match.<sup>13</sup>

In this case, overreading takes the form of imagining a narrative context outside of the one explicitly presented in the music itself (i.e. the subtle phase shifting).

Despite the more obvious adaptations formed by under- and overreading, we necessarily produce adaptations when we use paraphrases at all, since musical and literary paraphrases are never perfect:

In offering descriptions of pieces of music, we highlight qualities in them that other pieces of music might share (qualities such as being blithe, or in D major, or jig-worthy). We do not suppose that such descriptions can capture or exhaust what we have understood internally, any more than we ought to suppose that a paraphrase of a poem can exhaust or capture that. But we do suppose that our descriptions, the ones we are happy with at least, say something apt and true about the music in question; and in supposing this, we acknowledge both the fact of our external understanding and its role in our understanding of the pieces of music we say we understand...what we understand internally is almost always more significant than anything we can nail in a paraphrase.<sup>14</sup>

These paraphrases, despite being inadequate, are quite useful. They are what humans rely on to express the inexpressible. We must have some rudimentary way of expressing our experiences and we do so with adjectives, verbs, and paraphrasing language in general.

### *Support*

Many music theorists have gotten tantalizingly close to employing literary mappings. Philip Rupprecht writes, “when listeners can imagine human actors within musical textures, the sounding actions of performers assume a motivated quality and generate plot sequences analogous to those in literature or drama.”<sup>15</sup> This concept is also related to Lawrence M. Zbikowski’s discussion of “double-voiced discourse,” where “the author takes the direct discourse of someone else and infuses it with the author’s own intentions and consciousness while still retaining the original speaker’s intentions. Thus two discourses and two consciousnesses are present at the same moment.”<sup>16</sup> In my methodology, the author is similar to the listener who “infuses” literary characters and actions onto music, while fully retaining the authenticity of both literature and music.

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<sup>13</sup> Joshua Banks Mailman, *Music and Narrative Since 1900*, eds. Michael L. Klein and Nicholas Reyland (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2013), 139.

<sup>14</sup> Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice*, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Rupprecht, “Agency Effects in the Instrumental Drama of Musgrave and Birtwhistle” in *Music and Narrative Since 1900*, eds. Michael L. Klein and Nicholas Reyland (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2013), 189.

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence M. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory and Analysis* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2002), 225.

Zbikowski also discusses conceptual blending between text and music, such as in songs, where

the mental spaces set up by the text and music must have a shared topography, reflected in part in commonalities between the syntactic structures of the two media. This shared topography does not exhaust the resources of the input spaces. Indeed, the difference in syntax important to Nicholas Cook's conception of multimedia...is no less important in conceptual blending, for it ensures that the stories told by both music and text are compelling in themselves. Nevertheless, common structural features (which may obtain at a different level of structure than those that lead to contest between media) are necessary for conceptual blending to take place.<sup>17</sup>

Blending literature and music is not so different from blending text and music. Like Zbikowski's conceptual blending, there must be "common structural features" between the two for blending to occur (an incredibly light-hearted and delicate piece would not normally be blended with *All Quiet on the Western Front*) and does not detract from either input space's worth. True, "the conceptual blend...emphasizes certain aspects of the topography of the text space at the expense of others...yet the gains are considerable, for the conceptual world that emerges...is one rich in detail and striking in its immediacy."<sup>18</sup> Blending is valuable, then, in that it produces a new and vivid perspective. When we can understand a piece from multiple perspectives, our understanding of that piece as a whole is amplified.

### *Reasons and Applications*

Picking up the thread of this last Zbikowski excerpt, why focus on narrative views of music and literature at all, especially if every single one might not technically fit a more thorough or complex definition of narrative than originally provided? In a nutshell, the answer is because "narrative is the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time."<sup>19</sup> In fact, some believe that "memory itself is dependent on the capacity for narrative."<sup>20</sup> Time and memory: two closely related and certainly important entities. If we want to understand something that happens in time, like music and literature, we must necessarily remember what came before. If an alien teleported to Earth and happened to land in an elderly home, it would have no way of knowing that these people were, in fact, old. The understanding of the appearance of age comes with knowledge of what people look like when they are young. Yet memory is, of course, also inseparably linked with an understanding of time—if our alien watched a child grow up but could not remember the fact that he or she used to look differently, we would be right back where we started in the first scenario. Hence, narrative analyses are powerful tools to explore music and literature.

Pursuing the idea that memory is necessary to understand events that occur in a temporal order, it is a scientific fact that concrete thought is more easily remembered than

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>18</sup> Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*, 272.

<sup>19</sup> Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

abstract thought.<sup>21</sup> It follows, then, that understanding music in more concrete terms makes it easier for the listener to distinguish present musical characteristics from past musical characteristics within a given piece. If a piece becomes loud and raucous but I have forgotten that it was quiet and peaceful a moment ago, I will have missed part of what the composer is trying to communicate. This is an extreme example, of course; it is fairly easy to remember that the music was not always loud and raucous. But when a piece is particularly long, and/or changes more subtly, it becomes harder to remember what came before and how it relates to what is being performed now. There are, of course, subconscious levels of memory, but these levels are more generalized and limited and therefore limit the listener's or reader's connection to and understanding of the work.

Literature, however, is more concrete than music. This is not to say that music is concrete, of course, but that by alluding to specific subjects and specific actions (albeit subjects and actions that may be interpreted in a variety of ways), it lives in a more concrete realm than the potential emotions and general motions of music. In other words, we are presented with a specific scenario with a specific character performing specific actions. Oedipus solves the riddle in Ancient Greece before unknowingly marrying his mother (and after unknowingly killing his father). There is virtually never so much specificity in music. Therefore, metaphorically mapping literature onto music can provide a familiar, more easily remembered context, allowing the listener to grasp the narrative more than he or she might normally, which may lead to greater understanding and enjoyment of classical music. Following an entire piece in the context of one literary work provides the listener with a more coherent musical understanding as opposed to listening in a primarily abstract way or even making more haphazard connections between various parts of the work and various unrelated literary fragments.

Finally, I am not saying that music should only be listened to in relation to literature. Rather, I agree with the many music theorists who acknowledge the wide variety of interpretive possibilities, such as Hatten ("narrative approach is not the only, nor necessarily the best, way to interpret" some music)<sup>22</sup> and Kramer ("an interpretation can never exclude rival, incompatible accounts. For any given interpretation, an alternative always exists").<sup>23</sup> But through literary mappings, like narrative readings in general, "one can access ideas that cannot be revealed in other ways and that therefore have the potential to make a unique contribution to criticism and scholarship, productive for creators, critics, performers, and audiences alike".<sup>24</sup> Metaphorically mapping literature onto music is only one of many ways that music can be understood, connected to, and analyzed, and may actually allow less experienced listeners to understand and enjoy the music more than they might otherwise. But literary analysts can also use this

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<sup>21</sup> Alice J. Corkill, Roger H. Bruning and John A. Glover, "Advance Organizers: Concrete versus Abstract," *The Journal of Educational Research* 82, no. 2 (1988): 76-81, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40539573> (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Reyland, "Negation and Negotiation: Plotting Narrative through Literature and Music from Modernism to Postmodernism" in *Music and Narrative Since 1900*, eds. Michael L. Klein and Nicholas Reyland (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2013), 52.

<sup>23</sup> Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice*, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Reyland, "Negation and Negotiation," 52.

method to explore the different endings and possibilities of literature in that choose-your-own-adventure style that can provide a deeper understanding of both the composer's and author's choices.

### *Degrees of Flexibility In the Method*

Paraphrases that result from mappings, whether strictly musical, strictly literary, or otherwise, will necessarily fall short of the object itself, just as describing something as blue does not completely explain its shade and/or its meaning for each individual. As long as the paraphraser honestly sees and/or hears a connection between a musical and literary passage, though, such a paraphrase and connection is as accurate as the abstract statement that the music sounds innocent or that Heathcliff is murderous.

Mappings are never arbitrary. Just as in Zbikowski's concept of cross-domain mapping, "these correspondences are not haphazard, but instead preserve the image-schematic structure latent in each domain."<sup>25</sup> In other words, both music and literature constrain the mapping. Having said that, there are fewer restraints on the side of literature than there are on music. This is simply because all mappings, as discussed previously, will be adaptations of literary works—whether through over- or underreading. Nevertheless, over- and underreading must always be done with caution and awareness on the part of the reader/listener. Because music is what we are mapping *onto* and not vice versa, it must be the main constraining force. Mappings may, however, be more or less nuanced depending on the goal.

It remains that the music must always instigate the story just as the story must instigate the music in the reader's mind; one without the other is no longer literary mapping. Discovering where the music departs from the literature or vice versa while forming your own adaptation of the story based on those differences is what allows the music and literature to be analyzed together at all (remember that a literary work will not be a "match" of a musical work; see *Translation vs. Adaptation*). In a nutshell, literary paraphrases must be analogous to musical paraphrases. Furthermore, a music theorist employing this technique must analyze the music formally, as well, which I will show in the following Schumann analysis.

Yet we often forget how subjective music is. Different people will home in on different aspects of the music. If I hear how a theme changes over time but you focus on the changes in dynamics, it is possible that our literary mappings will be different. As a general rule of thumb, then, as long as a literary mapping and/or narrative paraphrase can be supported, then it is a valid interpretation. Whether it engages in overreading or underreading, it still uncovers an important aspect of the work. The process of literary mapping does not forfeit accuracy for enjoyment, but rather may enhance both.

In addition, I do not claim that there is a biographical basis for these mappings. In the example of analysis that follows, I have no intent of proving or even suggesting that Schumann was familiar with Shakespeare or based "Verrufene Stelle" on *Hamlet*. The process of mapping is not historically restrained, but rather creative. Different mappings may be useful for different things—understanding plots or characters, comparing novels,

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<sup>25</sup> Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*, 70.

exploring ideologies of works from different time periods, or simply enjoyed as entertainment.

For analytical purposes, mappings are most fruitful when they involve or shed light on a major character, event, or idea. But as it is virtually impossible to discover if a mapping will be analytically powerful until it is engaged, as mappings about seemingly insignificant aspects of a work may reveal surprising truths about the work as a whole when studied, I do not propose any modifications for what is or is not profitable "mapping material." By leaving the field open, I hope to prevent unnecessary obstructions limited by my own ways of thinking and allow diverse applications of this method that will stretch our minds in ways they have never been stretched before (which after all, is the very point).

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The remainder of this paper will be devoted to showing the variety of analytical possibilities this methodology introduces, starting with a metaphorical mapping of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* onto Robert Schumann's "Verrufene Stelle" from *Waldszenen* (as performed by Sviatoslav Richter).<sup>26</sup>

### **Schumann's "Verrufene Stelle" and Shakespeare's *Hamlet***

M. 1-2<sup>27</sup>

*The curtain is drawn. The music begins in silence. A double dotted eighth rest imperceptibly sets the stage for the opening motive, played pp in a low register.*

Even as the piece's prominent rhythm is handed to us on a silver platter (32<sup>nd</sup> note pickup into a double dotted eighth note), the movement from D to B<sup>b</sup> is harmonically elusive and disconcerting, especially since the longer B<sup>b</sup> prolongs our suspense before the clarifying G to E motion. Though G and E do, upon retrospection, explain the first two notes as part of a half diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord on E—followed by an (implied) A major and D minor chord in a [ii half diminished 7<sup>th</sup> – V – i] progression in D minor—the key is still not comfortably settled due to the lack of conventional voice leading at the cadence (all voices resolve from V to i by leap). The repetition of the chord progression in m. 2, now transposed, settles somewhat more confidently in G minor due to the "corrected" introduction of leading tone motion from F# to G. But by the end of the piece, further

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Schumann, "Verrufene Stelle," from *Waldszenen, Op. 82*; Sviatoslav Richter (piano), Supraphon Music, a.s. SU 3795-2. 2008, compact disc.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Schumann, "Verrufene Stelle," from *Waldszenen Op. 82*, ed. Clara Schumann (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887), accessed November 26, 2015, International Scores Music Library Project, <http://imslp.nl/imglinks/usimg/b/be/IMSLP51559-PMLP02930-RS70.pdf>. See Appendix 1 for the complete score.

retrospection reveals that Schumann is actually throwing us a “red hearing” here, since the piece is actually in D minor.

This opening is creepy, foreboding, and generally unsettling. It starts in silence, produces ambiguity, and then gradually moves to a more settled, but still very dark, state. The theme (T1) seems to be created out of sheer nothingness, with its sparse texture setting it up as an original, germinal idea. It is as though Schumann is orchestrating the entrance of sin into an otherwise pure agent. As the theme gets slightly more confident and settled, then, sin has tiptoed into the agent’s heart, careful to keep the agent unaware of his or her growing degradation as it gradually tightens its grip.

Now let us leave the music for a moment. How can we understand Claudius’s character in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*? He has obviously committed the horrendous crime of killing his royal brother as well as the highly questionable act of marrying that brother’s wife shortly thereafter. We do not explicitly know what his character was like before the murder, but it is nevertheless reasonable to infer that the murder and marriage were his first “large” sins because of the torturous guilt and echoes of remorse he experiences later on in the play. A repeat criminal would perhaps be hardened, but a first-time criminal may struggle with the emotional aftermath of his actions. Such a character transformation also occurs in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*: the man whose name titles the play does not originally want to murder King Duncan.<sup>28</sup> It is his wife that incites him with the deprecatory lines:

I have given suck, and know  
How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dash’d the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this<sup>29</sup>

And:

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we’ll not fail.<sup>30</sup>

These speeches make it clear that Macbeth had never committed such a horrendous deed as murdering a royal before, and in fact does not originally want to do so.

Following the murder he has extreme feelings of guilt:

Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red,<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> While *Macbeth* was in fact written after *Hamlet*, the similarity between the two in this instance implies a similarity and continuity of thought on Shakespeare’s part.

<sup>29</sup> William Shakespeare, W. G. Clark and Aldis Wright, eds., “Macbeth” in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare: Arranged in their Chronological Order* (Garden City, NY: Nelson Doubleday, Inc.), 797.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



a speech remarkably similar to that of Claudius after he has killed King Hamlet:

... What if this cursèd hand  
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood?  
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To wash it white as snow?<sup>32</sup>

As a result, while the text implies that unlike Macbeth, Claudius's sin was self-instigated (since one would expect his soliloquies to at least partially bestow blame on the instigator if there had been one), it is not unreasonable to assume that the murder is Claudius's first dark deed, growing in his heart out of a nature originally averse to violence.

Such a description of Claudius's character is incredibly like that of Schumann's music. Hence, I propose the possibility of "mapping" Claudius's initial descent into depravity onto these first two measures of "Verrufene Stelle". In other words, we may understand the music to show the introduction of sin into Claudius's heart before he actually commits those horrendous crimes, imagining his descent to be both gradual and virtually imperceptible (at least to him).

#### M. 3-6

The G – B<sup>b</sup> minor third in the right hand that concludes the opening gesture becomes a pedal point sandwiched between a new theme (T2) in the upper and lower voices. This theme consists of a tragic, downward-moving *lamento* line in the same predominant rhythm of T1. Octave doubling gives it even more prevalence and pathos, since instead of one, we hear *two* voices lamenting, increasing the sense of loss, as does the elision that turns the spotlighted G minor third into an underlying pedal point, as G minor's status as "home" is undermined by the absence of the grounding bass note.

In m. 4, T1 begins again, this time setting up a cadence in D minor for a return to the initial (though uncertain) key. But where we "should" hear the right hand enter with harmonic support like in m. 1-2, we hear instead an abrupt return of T2 in the inner voice with an A4 pedal above it in an approximate switch of voicing (m. 5). Not only does T2 change the supporting material of m. 1-2, it changes T1 itself, transforming it to become an augmented version of the *lamento* pattern in the bass voice. In effect, T2 has interrupted and taken over T1, stealing the aural spotlight through the element of surprise and retaining it through the emphatic altered rhythm of straight eighth notes in the second beat of m. 5. As the lowest voice continues to descend in m. 6, a harmonically altered T1 reaches above the A pedal point and winds back around to an authentic cadence in A major (supported by cadential motion in the bass).

There is a latent atmosphere of tragedy from the very first scene of *Hamlet*, which takes place on a dark, wintry night. There is also a blatant atmosphere of sorrow and mourning for the recently deceased king, at least on Hamlet's part—a sorrow that is not

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 799.

<sup>32</sup> William Shakespeare, Robert S. Miola, ed., *Hamlet (New Edition)* (Norton Critical Editions) (New York, NY: Norton, W.W. & Company, Inc., 2010), 75.

assuaged by the attempted comfort of Claudius and his mother. If anything, it becomes more piquant from their detached efforts as he bursts out in extended speech:

‘Seems,’ madam, nay, it is. I know not ‘seems.’  
 ‘Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
 Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
 ...  
 Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
 That can denote me truly. These indeed ‘seem,’  
 For they are actions that a man might play;  
 But I have that within which passes show,  
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe.<sup>33</sup>

T2, then, can be representative of Hamlet’s mourning for his father. Nothing Claudius can do or say can overcome his sorrow, shown by how it covers up Claudius’s sinful theme (T1) when it returns.

Pursuing these mappings, Hamlet’s sorrow overpowers Claudius’s evil-based calm since T2 overpowers T1. This brings about an intriguing question: could Claudius be feeling guilt and remorse for what he has done in the face of Hamlet’s extreme despair? After all, he does exhibit several signs of remorse later on in the play.

Words always have the power to mean different things when pronounced in different ways or in different contexts, especially in a play where the characters can be presented in a variety of ways depending on how the performers interpret the text. In Claudius’s first long speech, then, as he reproaches Hamlet’s sorrow (T2), might he not be partially reproaching his own guilt and sorrow for what he has done? Consider these lines:

But you must know your father lost a father,  
 That father lost, lost his...  
 ...But to persever  
 In obstinate condolement is a course  
 of impious stubbornness: ‘tis unmanly grief.  
 ...  
 ...Fie, ‘tis a fault to heaven,  
 A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,  
 To reason most absurd, whose common theme  
 Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried  
 From the first corpse till he that died today,  
 ‘This must be so.’<sup>34</sup>

It is certainly plausible that as Claudius inwardly grieves for the King (out of a sense of both love and guilt), he censures his own grief when addressing Hamlet. Perhaps he tries to overcome his guilt by reminding both Hamlet and himself that death is common and hence should not be lamented. In fact, based on this interpretation,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 14.

Claudius's *reductio ad absurdum* argument is impeccably ironic, since it would be “a fault to heaven” to feel sorry for murdering King Hamlet.

Hence, when T1 turns into a prolonged *lamento* bass pattern as Hamlet grieves (T2), it can be indicative of Claudius's own repentance and grief, however temporary and shallow. The following major cadence in m. 6—which is surprising and feels slightly contrived due to the added filigree of the E and F in beat 1 and the generally meandering melodic motion—represents Claudius trying to ignore these unwelcome feelings by pretending to be content and calm as he outwardly condemns Hamlet's (and secretly his own) grief.

#### M. 7-8

This (unconvincing) major resolution does not last long, though. In a pickup to m. 7, a dark and foreboding register similar to that of T1 returns to present the final and third theme, which immediately brings the music back to D minor. This theme is extremely different than the first two. For one thing, it is both rhythmically steady with constant sixteenth notes and harmonically simpler with a  $i - V^7 - i$  progression in D minor (accompanied by simple chords in the right hand and a confirming A – D cadential motion in the bass for harmonic support). Additionally, the theme moves almost exclusively by step and features a new, marked articulation.

A fragment of T1 inserts itself after this theme (end of m. 7), but instead of continuing and taking over, it only leads smoothly back to the second part of the new theme which concludes in expectation on A major (the V of D minor in a half cadence).

The idea of fate is a significant motif in *Hamlet*. Hamlet himself muses quite morbidly in the graveyard:

To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why  
may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till ‘a  
find it stopping a bunghole?’<sup>35</sup>

Fate is again invoked shortly thereafter when Hamlet tells Horatio how he discovered Claudius's attempt to have him killed in England:

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will—  
*Horatio:* That is most certain.<sup>36</sup>

Claudius himself grapples with a more religious fate. In his mind, his actions have definitively shut him out of heaven since he cannot repent of the sins that are still rewarding him—namely, “my crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.”<sup>37</sup>

Schumann's third theme (FT) also invokes the idea of fate. The extreme rhythmic regularity, which occurs after the highly skewed rhythm of the first two themes, gives it

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 76.

an unstoppable, unshakeable aura. The marked articulation and simple harmonic motion also combine to produce a feeling of inevitability.

It is powerful then that FT occurs right when Claudius has attempted to soothe his conscience at the major cadence in m. 6. There is never an opportunity for the listener to forget that no matter what Claudius does, at this point he is unalterably moving forward to face the consequences of his actions. The sense of inevitability is presented even more strongly by Schumann's use of a T1 fragment to transition into the second part of FT. The resulting message is that all of Claudius's actions are ultimately not under his control, but are simply being manipulated by Fate (or God, as the text suggests) to produce its ultimate design. Finally, the sense of expectation set up by the virtual half cadence in m. 8 seals this idea by implying an ultimate resolution. While it does not come immediately, the idea is lurking nevertheless...

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Now that the three major themes of the piece have been explored in detail with literary mappings, my remaining analysis of Claudius's struggle for redemption is summarized in Appendix 2.

The following is a closer look at the end of the piece:

#### M. 23-35 (end)

Claudius's moral battle has been completed as m. 23 begins. He has failed in his struggle to repent and has become hardened to his foul deeds. In the style of a Greek chorus for a tragic play, m. 23 laments his fate through a repetition of the opening material, a.k.a. the first introduction of his sin. This measure's bittersweet nature only serves to heighten the sense of tragedy. What this section somewhat surprisingly reveals is that the tragedy is *not* that Hamlet's father was murdered or that death abounds without any resolution at the end. Rather, *the tragedy is that Claudius is unable to accept God's forgiveness and escape the evil growing inside of him.*

The continuation of the opening by way of the mourning theme shows a hardened Claudius. This time, the relentlessness of the theme in m. 27 is the chorus's inability to cease lamenting his fate, even as we are reminded of Hamlet's (by comparison, perhaps less tragic) sorrow through flashback. The higher, soaring notes of m. 27 present this change in point of view: now we hear the chorus who as a result of its purity is heartbroken for Claudius. Along the same lines, the perpetuation of the double dotted eighth – 32<sup>nd</sup> note rhythm shows the dispirited nature of the chorus's mourning—it even lacks the energy to be emphatic in its sorrow like it was before.

The new entrance of FT in m. 28 reminds the listener (through the chorus's continued commentary) of its role in Claudius's failure. At this reminder, the chorus simply cannot control its utter grief (in the diminished chord), but resigns itself to fate's unmovable nature in m. 30. Through the deceptive cadence in this measure, the chorus effectively states that fate is a mystery. Just because it ruined Claudius does not mean that it might not still work for the good of some of its denizens. This hearkens back to the previous deceptive cadences of the piece, such as when Claudius continues to struggle between accepting forgiveness and retaining callousness. Again, the expectation set up in

m. 31 is in the same style as Claudius's yearning; but in this case, the chorus is yearning for understanding and hope in the face of an unwavering fate. Measure 32 continues in this indecisive manner while ultimately striving for hope, until m. 33 bursts out with the terrifying return of the first part of T1 before enigmatically shifting from D major to D minor and fading out, jolting the listener back to an understanding of the horrors of Claudius's fate and ending without giving a definitive answer to, or moral of, the story. This is, after all, a tragedy.

As a final note, the move from D major to D minor in the last two measures of the piece can have a symbolic meaning. Based on the previous mapping, it easily represents Claudius's entire character development from God-fearing man to Fate-mastered, callous man—from carefree major to tragic minor.

Humanity may be expressed in a variety of ways, and with involuntary parallels, but there are always threads of truth and insight that tie generations of art together, as such comparisons of literature and music so powerfully reveal.

### Programmatic Analysis

Thus far, this piece has been analyzed as though it were “absolute” music. Yet the music actually has a name: “Verrufene Stelle,” which translates to “Haunted Place.” Then, underneath that title is a fragment of a poem by F. Hebbel:

The flowers, so high they grow,  
Are pale here, like death;  
Only one in the middle  
Stands there in dark red.

Its colour is not from the sun:  
Nor from its heat;  
It is from the earth,  
And drank of human blood.<sup>38</sup>

I disregarded these programmatic addendums while conducting the previous analysis in order to show that music does not *have* to be programmatic in order to be mapped with literature. I was not even aware of the translations until after my analysis was complete.<sup>39</sup> But since the music *is* programmatic, there is a whole other level of analysis that can be explored.

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<sup>38</sup> "About This Recording," Naxos Classical Music, accessed November 27, 2015, [http://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs\\_reviews.asp?item\\_code=8.550401&catNum=550401&filetype=About this Recording&language=English](http://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs_reviews.asp?item_code=8.550401&catNum=550401&filetype=About%20this%20Recording&language=English).

<sup>39</sup> Due to intense curiosity I looked up the title's translation before developing an intricate, detailed literary mapping, but not before choosing the dark, tragic setting of *Hamlet*. I did *not*, however, read the poem's translation until after my analysis was complete.

First, the title: it is remarkable how well it fits with the previous literary mapping. The setting of *Hamlet* is indeed a “Haunted Place”—literally, since the ghost of King Hamlet haunts his son. Yet this particular musical “adaptation” of *Hamlet* reveals another instance of haunting: while it is true that the ghost physically haunts Hamlet in Act I, Hamlet also physically haunts Claudius later in the same Act. The result of the first haunting is Hamlet’s awareness of the foul murder of the king...*and the second results in Claudius’s awareness of the foul murder of the king.* In other words, Claudius realizes the moral horror of his deeds and becomes encased in the knowledge and guilt of what he has done after being confronted with Hamlet’s despair. And even as Hamlet continues to be haunted by the necessity of revenge after the ghost leaves his physical presence, Claudius also continues to be haunted by guilt after Hamlet leaves *him*. As a result, he struggles against his fate, but it is, as we know, inescapable. Haunting and fate, then, are closely linked in both the music and literature.

Second, the poem: when I allowed myself to look up its translation, I was in awe of the parallels between it and my completed analysis. The sheer extent to which the preexisting programmatic material aligns with the mapping analysis only gives further credibility to the mapping technique. There is such a striking similarity between the previous mapping and the content of the poem: Claudius is like the red flower that has “drank of human blood” by killing King Hamlet. Though the murder was not literally bloody, Claudius has still metaphorically stained himself with the king’s blood and feels like a lone red flower surrounded by pale ones—the sole guilty man surrounded by the blameless such as Hamlet. The comparative purity/whiteness of the flowers around him takes on a morbid hue (“pale here, like death”) in his eyes because of his own guilty standing. The innocents, like Hamlet, haunt him and remind him of his sin. In his mind, the guilt marks him, inescapably distancing himself from the rest of humanity. Who can wash such a bloody flower “white as snow?”<sup>40</sup>

When Hebbel says the flower “is not from” the sun, though, there is a potential difference in the previous mapping analysis and the poem’s implications. Namely, one could interpret such a passage as signifying that Claudius was *never* morally upright but always evil and stained. However, the next lines (“it is from the earth, / and drank of human blood”) imply that only *after* the murder did the flower never meet the sun’s glow, just as Claudius feels that he can never receive God’s grace after he commits his sins. The absence of the sun’s glow signifies both his inability to accept Heaven’s forgiveness and the ultimate embrace of his corrupt color—those consequences of his success and joy that come not from Heaven, or the sun, but from a fallen nature here on Earth.

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<sup>40</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 75.

### Cross-Musical Analysis

Melodic similarities between Schumann's "Verrufene Stelle" and other musical works allow for cross-musical analysis.

For example, T2 is reminiscent of the main motif of Maurice Ravel's "Oiseaux Tristes" from *Miroirs* (m. 2).<sup>41</sup> This motif represents the "Sad Birds" the title names—such a fluttering melody is not unlike the fluttering of birds' wings or birdsong. Its opening flutter initiates a downward-moving line, of which the move from B<sup>b</sup> to A<sup>b</sup> is most prominent. All of the five 32<sup>nd</sup> notes are significantly faster and act as trill-like embellishments of the main line. By comparison, Schumann's T2 (m. 3) also begins with a fast pickup note and trill before settling on E<sup>b</sup> and moving to D. Furthermore, the D resolution is anticipated by the D 32<sup>nd</sup> note pickup right before it, not unlike Ravel's tied A<sup>b</sup>. Finally, both Schumann and Ravel use an essentially descending line to indicate an overarching sadness, or tragedy.

Yet the Sad Bird Motif (SM) actually acts as a harbinger of hope to a certain extent, since its quicker movements break the lethargy and listlessness of the majority of the music. Overall, the musical emotion and symbolism become highly dependent on the motif's *context*.

The very first time SM is introduced (m. 2), it is alone without any supporting harmony. It is in limbo, with a wide spectrum of potential emotional capacity that has yet to be exploited. Then, just before its first reoccurrence in m. 7, we are aurally attracted to the downward moving B<sup>b</sup> – G<sup>b</sup> due to the emphasized D – B<sup>b</sup> pattern of the previous measures (m. 4-6), despite the fact that the left hand is also contributing with a repeating, upward leading tone motion (D – E<sup>b</sup>). Yet when m. 25 renews this material, the ear is drawn to the ascending leading tone motion instead of the downward motion. This aural trick is a result of the isolated leading tone motions in the previous measure. Hence, when these overlapping ascending and descending patterns continue in the presence of SM, the first case presents a more tragic, hopeless feel whereas the second creates a more hopeful, positive feel. Later, by drastically decreasing the time between the two successive iterations of SM in the overall faster moving *Lent* section (with arpeggiated major chords in the left hand), it gains an even more exuberant, joyful sound, despite the fact that it is sequencing downwards. The rut-like pattern of the previous measure only serves to increase the sense of released energy when SM enters with its own unique rhythm, this time without the bell-like, rhythmic peals that have preceded it each time before (for example, see m. 1).

Another important contribution to SM's change in mood is the pedal points, or lack thereof. Whenever a pedal point in the bass voice accompanies SM, it takes on a more tragic, hopeless feel, perhaps because it gives such an intransigent stasis to the

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<sup>41</sup> Maurice Ravel, "Oiseaux Tristes" from *Miroirs*, (Paris: E. Demets, 1906), accessed November 26, 2015, International Scores Music Library Project, [http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/e/e2/IMSLP02693-Ravel-Miroirs\\_DemetsEd.pdf](http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/e/e2/IMSLP02693-Ravel-Miroirs_DemetsEd.pdf). See Appendix 3 for the complete score.

fluttering motif that desires to break free (ex: m. 8). However, the alternating pedal in the middle voices is what contributes most directly to the changing moods.

### Comparison:

In “Verrufene Stelle,” T2 enters with a pedal point, which, like the bass pedal point of SM, increases the sense of tragedy and loss. Yet Schumann affects this loss differently than Ravel: the first undermines the “home” key, the second composes an antithesis of motion.

Elision is also a key aspect in both pieces—in Schumann, the G – B<sup>b</sup> continuation changes our perspective of the previous passage by stripping it of its power. Remember that T2 represented Hamlet’s grief in the face of Claudius’s attempted comfort, while the elision from T1 to T2 (becoming T1 + T2) showed Claudius being overcome by Hamlet’s sorrow. In effect, T1 is changed and partially reinterpreted due to the new and overpowering T2 theme being overlapped on top of it. In contrast, Ravel’s emphasis of the upward or downward motions is not being reinterpreted by SM, but in fact reinterprets *it*. In this opposite realization, the circular, repetitive elision acts as the influential factor on a much more controlled and passive SM (compared to T2). Hence, the listener’s understanding of SM is a direct result of the repetitive theme’s perspective, not vice versa. It is as though the first theme’s powerful character (whoever he/she/it may be) physically enters the presence of the malleable SM, whose passive character is reinforced by the lack of aural surprise (compared to Schumann’s emphatic interruption of T1 with T2).

In summary, where Schumann’s elision provokes a reinterpretation of the previous passage, Ravel’s elision promotes specific interpretations for the current passage. Overall, the characteristics of T2 and SM are incredibly different based on the function of the elision.

T2 and SM also perform different roles in their respective works. SM’s transformation from tragic (aurally downward-moving) to hopeful (aurally upward-moving) to triumphantly joyful (alone and faster) is the source of Ravel’s tragedy. Even before it is interpreted by the pedal points, it has so much potential in m. 2. The fact that it seems to successfully break free in its third large-scale repetition only increases the bitterness of the languishing, despondent cycles that end the piece in a death-like fade-out. By contrast, Schumann’s T2 occurs only twice in the entire piece in a much more subsidiary role, with its sense of tragedy significantly diminished as a result of being surrounded by Claudius’s gradual moral decline. *It* is not the source of tragedy, but rather augments the tragedy of Claudius’s demise in the opposite way of Ravel’s theme.



### Cross-Literary Analysis

One more analytical advantage becomes obvious from literary mappings. In this final section, I will use the first movement of Edvard Grieg's Violin Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 8 (performed by Denes Zsigmondy and Anneliese Nissen) to briefly show the type of literary analysis that can be performed when one piece presents the possibility of multiple literary mappings.<sup>42</sup>

Like "Verrufene Stelle," this piece can also be metaphorically mapped in relation to *Hamlet*, but from a different perspective. We can hear the violin as Ophelia, with the beginning of the piece reflecting her state of mind as she reacts to her father's death and descends into insanity (this interpretation is an example of effective overreading). Such a narrative is suggested by the sudden changes in dynamics and other extreme contrasts such as the difference in mood between the opening solo piano passage followed by the opening violin passage that present a troubled character. Cadences are constantly ignored, or achieved only to recede in the face of another contrasting section. It is as though Ophelia (the violin) tries to convince herself and any others around her that she is staying positive and handling her father's death well, but the sudden musical changes increasingly give her away until she cannot hide her insanity anymore. The piano acts as a voice inside of her head—her inner, sane self, trying to keep from going *insane*. In the end, though, the force of the tragedy dismembers her mind and she moves from despair to obsessive mental repetitions of her initial reaction to the news (in the recapitulation).

Hearing this movement as Ophelia's spiral into insanity is not only quite possible, but also quite rewarding. It opens the mind to consider how Ophelia might actually have felt as she struggled with her father's death and gives us a more concrete connection to the music's exploration and contrast of motives and instruments.

Yet another perfectly plausible literary mapping of this movement can be produced with *Anna Karenina*. The music could be representative of Anna's desperate efforts to pretend that she is happy and unaffected when shunned by society on account of her lover, Vronsky, with the piano representing a similar voice inside her head trying to stay calm and rational while the violin spirals out of control. The recapitulation shows her trapped in the cycle of maintaining her façade without hope of escape.

The intriguing thing about these two possible literary mappings is that they reveal connections between Ophelia and Anna Karenina that otherwise might not have been apparent. For example, I might never have thought to compare the female of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but Grieg's music makes the comparison obvious.

There is something innately fascinating about how the same passage can represent equally well a struggle with insanity and a struggle to maintain a public face. It would suggest that worrying about maintaining a public face is a *kind* of insanity—or at least

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<sup>42</sup> Edvard Grieg, "I. Allegro con brio – Andante – Tempo I," from *Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Major, Op. 8*; Denes Zsigmondy (violin) and Anneliese Nissen (piano), *Grieg & Dvóřak: Violin Sonatas*, Tuxedo Music, 1996, MP3 file, downloaded November 30, 2014, *Freegal*.

that it leads to the same uninviting results. Anna certainly *seems* to be going insane as she struggles with her affection and extreme jealousy for Vronsky.

In a different but connected vein, both death (Ophelia's father) and love (Anna's for Vronsky), when felt in the deepest extremes, lead to suicide...and perhaps the cycle continues. Of course, neither Ophelia's nor Anna's suicides take place in the previous proposed mappings of the sonata, but they are undeniably in the reader-turned-listener's mind as the piece ends, since they occur immediately after where the music's narrative leaves off.

It is also notable that a lack of human society contributes, or in Anna's case is the direct cause of, the ultimate suicide. In regards to Ophelia, where are her friends? In fact, where is the person who imparted the news of her father's death to her? At least in the previous mapping, she is easily imagined to be alone with the struggles of her mind. After all, when she makes her first appearance in the play after her father's death, she is already insane and we are not told of any human interactions she may have had in the interim.<sup>43</sup> Then in regards to Anna, she struggles as a direct result of being shunned by society for her affair. In both cases, human absence or enmity is the highly implicit cause of both personal and public struggles.

### *Conclusion*

The above analyses are certainly not the only possibilities for literary mappings. However, it is hoped that these examples will sufficiently show the variety and value of the overarching technique.

Metaphorically mapping literature onto music has shown itself to be an incredibly useful tool that can benefit theorists and lay-listeners alike. In fact, these mappings can instigate new interpretations of both music *and* literature, begging the question: is there a possibility that these two areas of theory will be more jointly pursued in the future, especially given the current trend in music theory to draw ideas from literary theories? More and more universities are extolling interdisciplinary studies. It seems quite possible, then, that mappings could be incorporated in creative writing, music appreciation, and music theory classes, to name a few. How would this work in practice, though? Could such an approach be applied in high school and other classrooms, as well?

There are many questions to be answered. Yet what remains is that mappings, despite their limitations, can prove to be a powerful tool at an interdisciplinary level. Because literature and music are both so powerful and influential in our day-to-day lives, together they can form a hybrid that is irresistible.

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<sup>43</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 93.

Appendix 1 Robert Schumann, "Verrufene Stelle" from *Waldszenen*, Op. 81**Verrufene Stelle.**

Die Blumen, so hoch sie wachsen,	Die hat es nicht von der Sonne;
Sind blass hier, wie der Tod;	Nie traf sie deren Gluth;
Nur eine in der Mitte	Sie hat es von der Erde,
Steht da im dunkeln Roth.	Und die trank Menschenblut.

E. Hebbel.

Ziemlich langsam.  $\text{♩} = 60$ .

4. *pp*

5. *pp* *markirt*

9. *pp*

12. *pp*

R. S. 70.

00033426

7

15

*p* *sf*

18

*cresc.* *p*

21

*p* *pp*

24

*pp*

28

*p*

32

*p* *pp*

R. S. 70.

Ωω.

✱