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# How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out

**Joseph Kerman**

As a matter of general usage, the term “criticism” is applied to music in an anomalous and notably shallow way. This is regrettable but not easy to change so long as the usage has the consent of musicians and non-musicians alike. When people say “music criticism,” they almost invariably mean daily or weekly journalistic writing, writing which is prohibited from the extended, detailed, and complex mulling over of the matter at hand that is taken for granted in the criticism of art and especially of literature. Journalistic writing about music is posited on and formed by this prohibition. The music critic may accept it grudgingly, keeping a higher end in view, or he may depend on it to hide what may gently be called his lack of intellectual rigor; in any case, the prohibition is central to his *métier*. The music critic’s stock-in-trade consists of the aesthetic question begged, the critical aphorism undeveloped, the snap judgment.

In fact a body of less ephemeral, more accountable professional criticism does exist in this country and elsewhere: which is the first thing I wish to argue (or just point out) in this paper. The discipline in question is called by musicians “analysis,” not criticism, and by nonmusicians it is seldom recognized or properly understood—this for a number of reasons, one of which is the simple matter of nomenclature. In conjunction with music theory, musical analysis enjoys a relatively long academic history going back to the nineteenth-century conservatory curricula.

In a slightly different form, this paper was first read as one of the 1978–79 Thalheimer Lectures in Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University. It will be published with the four other lectures in a forthcoming volume by Johns Hopkins University Press.

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Today all university as well as conservatory musicians are into analysis. They all have to study it and generally do so with much respect. Many practice it, either formally or, more often, informally. They do not, however, like to call it criticism—and one reason for *that* may be traceable to phobias in the profession at large caused by prolonged exposure to journalistic critics.

Thus even those who have dealt most thoughtfully with music criticism in recent years have shown a marked reluctance to affiliate criticism and analysis. I am thinking of such commentators as Arthur Berger, Edward T. Cone, David Lewin, Leonard B. Meyer, Robert P. Morgan, and Leo Treitler. Indeed, some words of my own, written about fifteen years ago, can perhaps be taken as representative:

Criticism does not exist yet on the American music-academic scene, but something does exist which may feel rather like it, theory and analysis. . . . Analysis seems too occupied with its own inner techniques, too fascinated by its own “logic,” and too sorely tempted by its own private pedantries, to confront the work of art in its proper aesthetic terms. Theory and analysis are not equivalent to criticism, then, but they are pursuing techniques of vital importance to criticism. They represent a force and a positive one in the academic climate of music. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen years later, I can only regard this as waffling. According to the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, the true focus of analysis, once it gets past the taxonomic stage, is “the synthetic element and the functional significance of the musical detail.” Analysis sets out to discern and demonstrate the functional coherence of individual works of art, their “organic unity,” as is often said, and that is one of the things—one of the main things—that people outside of music mean by criticism. If in a typical musical analysis the work of art is studied in its own self-defined terms, that too is a characteristic strategy of some major strains of twentieth-century criticism. We might like criticism to meet broader criteria, but there it is. Perhaps musical analysis, as an eminently professional process, fails to open access between the artist and his audience,

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1. Kerman, “A Profile for American Musicology,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 18 (Spring 1965): 65.

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and perhaps it does indeed fail “to confront the work of art in its proper aesthetic terms”—such failures, too, are not unknown in the criticism of literature and the other arts. Many tasks are ritually urged on criticism that cannot be incorporated into the concept of criticism itself. In other words, I do not see that the criteria suggested above can be included in a definition of criticism that corresponds to the practice of modern critics. We may consider it very desirable that criticism meet these criteria, but we cannot reasonably insist on it. What we have here is a matter for adjustment between music critics of different persuasions rather than some sort of stand-off between adherents of distinct disciplines.

It may be objected that musical analysts claim to be working with objective methodologies which leave no place for aesthetic criteria, for the consideration of value. If that were the case, the reluctance of so many writers to subsume analysis under criticism might be understandable. But are these claims true? Are they, indeed, even seriously entered?

Certainly the original masters of analysis left no doubt that for them analysis was an essential adjunct to a fully articulated aesthetic value system. Heinrich Schenker always insisted on the superiority of the towering products of the German musical genius. Sir Donald Tovey pontificated about “the main stream of music” and on occasion developed this metaphor in considerable detail. It is only in more recent times that analysts have avoided value judgments and adapted their work to a format of strictly corrigible propositions, mathematical equations, set-theory formulations, and the like—all this, apparently, in an effort to achieve the objective status and hence the authority of scientific inquiry. Articles on music composed after 1950, in particular, appear sometimes to mimic scientific papers in the way that South American bugs and flies will mimic the dreaded carpenter wasp. In a somewhat different adaptation, the distinguished analyst Allen Forte wrote an entire small book, *The Compositional Matrix*, from which all affective or valuational terms (such as “nice” or “good”) are meticulously excluded. The same tendency is evident in much recent periodical literature.

But it scarcely goes unnoticed that the subject of Forte’s monograph is not a symphony by Giovanni Battista Sammartini or a quartet by Adalbert Gyrowetz but a late sonata by Beethoven, the Sonata in E Major opus 109, a work that Forte accepts without question as a masterpiece—without question, and also without discussion. Indeed, this monograph sheds a particularly pure light on the archetypal procedure of musical analysis. This branch of criticism takes the masterpiece status of its subject matter as a *donnée* and then proceeds to lavish its whole attention on the demonstration of its inner coherence. Aesthetic judgment is concentrated tacitly on the initial choice of material to be analyzed; then the analysis itself, which may be conducted with the greatest subtlety and rigor, can treat of artistic value only casually or, as in the extreme case of

Forte's monograph, not at all. Another way of putting it is that the question of artistic value is at the same time absolutely basic and begged, begged consistently and programmatically.

In fact, it seems to me that the true intellectual milieu of analysis is not science but ideology. I do not think we will understand analysis and the important role it plays in today's music-academic scene on logical, intellectual, or purely technical grounds. We will need to understand something of its underlying ideology, and this in turn will require some consideration of its historical context. Robert P. Morgan is an analyst who has reminded us on a number of occasions that his discipline must be viewed as a product of its time—a corollary to his conviction that it must also change with the times. The following historical analysis owes something to Morgan's but is, I think, framed more radically or at any rate more polemically.

## 2

By ideology, I mean a fairly coherent set of ideas brought together not for strictly intellectual purposes but in the service of some strongly held communal belief. Fundamental here is the orthodox belief, still held over from the late nineteenth century, in the overriding aesthetic value of the instrumental music of the great German tradition. Of this, the central monuments are the fugues and some other instrumental compositions of Bach and the sonatas, string quartets, and symphonies of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms.

Viennese or Pan-German in origin, and certainly profoundly guided by nationalistic passions, this ideology took hold in other countries depending on the strength or weakness of their native musical traditions. It took no hold in Italy, some hold in France, strong hold in Britain and especially in America. The ideology drew to itself many familiar currents of nineteenth-century thought about art and music. Among these were an essentially mystical notion of spontaneity and authenticity in musical performance, a romantic myth (owing much to the example of Beethoven) which cast the artist as sage and suffering hero, and—most important for the present purpose—a strain of Hegelian aesthetic philosophy, which now runs from Schopenhauer to Susanne K. Langer with an important backtrack by way of Eduard Hanslick.

For Hanslick, instrumental music was the only "pure" form of the art, and words, librettos, titles, and programs which seem to link music to the feelings of ordinary, impure life were to be disregarded or deplored. Music, in Hanslick's famous phrase, is "sounding form in motion." Later aestheticians such as Langer have labored to preserve this central insight without denying, as Hanslick did, that music was anything more than that. The concept is an important one for the essential criterion of value

that is built into the ideology. For if music is only "sounding form," the only meaningful study of music is formalistic; and while Hanslick was not an analyst, later critics took it on themselves to analyze music's sounding form in the conviction that this was equivalent to its content. To these analyst-critics, needless to say, content (however they defined it) was not a matter of indifference. The music they analyzed was that of the great German tradition.

The vision of these analyst-critics was and is of a perfect, organic relation among all the analyzable parts of a musical masterpiece. Increasingly sophisticated techniques of analysis attempt to show how all aspects or "parameters" or "domains" of the masterpiece perform their function for the total structure. Critics who differ vastly from one another in their methods, styles, and emphases still view the work of art ultimately as an organism in this sense. From the standpoint of the ruling ideology, analysis exists for the purpose of demonstrating organicism, and organicism exists for the purpose of validating a certain body of works of art.

I do not, of course, ignore that broader philosophical movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which focused on organicism and which some musicologists have recently been trying to relate to the development of musical style. But together with this historical process went an ideological one, in the service of which the concept of organicism began to lead a charmed existence. Organicism can be seen not only as a historical force which played into the great German tradition but also as the principle which seemed essential to validate that tradition. The ideological resonance of organicism continued long past the time of its historical impetus.

The origins of the ideology can be traced back to the famous biography of Bach published in 1802 by J. N. Forkel, director of music at the University of Göttingen and the first real German musicologist. "Bach united with his great and lofty style the most refined elegance and the greatest precision in the single parts that compose the great whole, . . ." wrote Forkel in his exordium to this work. ". . . He thought the whole could not be perfect if anything were wanting to the perfect precision of the single parts; . . . And this man, the greatest musical poet and the greatest musical orator that ever existed, and probably ever will exist, was a German. Let his country be proud of him; let it be proud, but, at the same time, worthy of him!"<sup>2</sup> We can see the concept of the musical organism taking form with the new attention given to fugue in the early nineteenth century. There was a swift Viennese co-option only a few years later, when E. T. A. Hoffmann began to view Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven with much the same reverence we do today and began to

2. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, "On Johann Sebastian Bach's Life, Genius, and Works," in *The Bach Reader*, ed. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel (New York, 1945), pp. 352-53.

marvel at the way works such as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony seem to grow from a single theme as though from a Goethean *Urpflanz*. The first great ideological crisis was precipitated by Richard Wagner—Wagner, who could not launch a paper boat without making waves, let alone a revolutionary theory of opera. As Wagner asserted his claim to the Beethovenian succession, the youthful Brahms and his imperious friend Joseph Joachim proclaimed their opposition to symphonic poems, music-dramas, and other such novelties. Hanslick had already closed ranks around the concept of purely instrumental music. He soon came to support Brahms, the most instrumental-minded as well as the most traditional-minded of all the great nineteenth-century composers.

But the ideology did not receive its full articulation until the music in which it was rooted came under serious attack. This occurred around 1900 when tonality, the seeming linchpin of the entire system, began to slip in Germany as well as elsewhere. Lines of defense were formed at what Virgil Thomson used to call "the Brahms line," first in opposition to Richard Strauss and then to Arnold Schoenberg. The situation was exacerbated after 1920 when Schoenberg, in an astonishing new co-option, presented himself and his music as the true continuation of the Viennese tradition. It is against the background of this new crisis that we must see the work of the founding fathers of analysis.

Schenker was born in 1868, Tovey in 1875. The first significant writings of both men, which appeared shortly after 1900, are peppered with polemics and were obviously conceived as a defense against the new modernism. Tovey was no Viennese, of course—Balliol was his beat, and before that Eton—but over and above the general reliance of Victorian England on German music and musical thought, he himself was deeply influenced by the aging Joachim. Concentration on the sphere of harmony and the larger harmony, namely, tonality, led Tovey ultimately to the organicist position, though he was never as dogmatic in this regard as the Germans. In his major essays on the Schubert Quintet and the Beethoven Quartet in C-sharp Minor opus 131, he went beyond his usual terminus, the individual movement, and saw tonality inspiring the whole work, with each "key area" conceived of as a functional element in the total structure. And in what he called the "superb rhetoric" of Bach's F-sharp-minor setting of *Aus tiefer Noth* in the *Clavierübung*, part 3—a chorale in which the melodic and rhythmic substance of the given cantus firmus is drawn into all of the polyphonic voice parts according to a rigorous system, so that every note is practically predetermined by an external scheme—Tovey found unshakable evidence that form in art is equivalent to content. "The process miscalled by Horace the concealment of art," wrote Tovey, "is the sublimation of technique into aesthetic results."

In many ways Tovey was a typical product of the *litterae humaniores*

at the Oxford of Benjamin Jowett and F. H. Bradley. He came by his neo-Hegelianism honestly. Schenker, on the other hand, was a typical product of the Vienna Conservatory, where the great systematic theorist Simon Sechter had been the teacher of Bruckner, himself the teacher of Schenker. Slowly, stage by stage throughout his career, Schenker labored to construct a grandiose general theory to account for all the music of the great tradition. Tovey's analytical method may be said to involve a reduction of the melodic surface of music to the level of the articulated system of tonality. Schenker's method involved a much more systematic reduction to the level of a single triad, the tonic triad. In his famous series of formalized reductions, he analyzed music on "foreground," "middleground," and "background" levels—the latter comprising the *Urlinie* and the *Ursatz*, a drastically simple horizontalization of the vertical sonority of the tonic triad. (We shall see an example of such an *Ursatz* later.) The concept of hierarchies or levels and the technique of their manipulation constituted Schenker's most powerful legacy to the structuralist future.

Beethoven occupied the dead center of both Schenker's and Tovey's value systems. Schenker's most exhaustive studies concern Beethoven's Third, Fifth, and Ninth Symphonies and the late piano sonatas. Indeed, the list of some fifty compositions which Schenker discussed formally and at full length presents a striking picture of musical orthodoxy. With a few exceptions (including most honorably those late sonatas), they are drawn from the stable of symphony orchestra war-horses and from the piano teachers' rabbit hutch. In his tacit acceptance of received opinion as to the canon of music's masterpieces, Schenker exemplifies more clearly than any of its other practitioners one aspect of the discipline of analysis.

His work looms so large in academic music criticism of the recent past that analysis is sometimes equated with "Schenkerism," as it is called. The movement is much broader, however, and therefore more significant than any intellectual current which was the province of just one man and his followers could be. Schenker is not the only impressive and influential figure among the older analysts. I have already mentioned Tovey. Rudolph Réti, a disciple at one time of Schoenberg and later an emigré to America, developed a nineteenth-century strain of analysis based not on tonality, line, or triad but on motif. Réti's demonstrations of the hidden identity of all themes in a musical composition—a sort of poor man's organicism—has had a particular impact in Britain. Alfred Lorenz, also originally from Vienna, extended organic analysis over a larger span than had been thought possible and into forbidden territory, the four great music-dramas of Wagner. While modern Wagner scholars seem not to tire of disproving and rejecting Lorenz's work, it receives sympathetic attention from the

Verdians, among others. It is possible that both Réti and Lorenz have been written off a little too hastily by modern American academics.

More important—indeed, crucial—is the role of Schoenberg himself in our story. In his relatively limited body of writings on music, Schoenberg showed himself to be a brilliant theorist and critic, and, justly enough, the fact that he was the composer he was gave those writings immense authority.

Schoenberg's really decisive insight, I think, was to conceive of a way of continuing the great tradition while negating what everyone else felt to be at its very core, namely, tonality. He grasped the fact that what was central to the ideology was not the triad and tonality, as Schenker and Tovey believed, but organicism. In his atonal, preserial works written just before World War I, Schoenberg worked out a music in which functional relations were established more and more subtly on the motivic, rhythmic, textural, and indeed the pitch level, with less and less reliance on the traditional configurations of tonality. So for Schoenberg, Brahms was the true "progressive" of the late nineteenth century—Brahms, who had refined the art of motivic variation, rather than Wagner, who had refined and attenuated tonality to the breaking point. Twelve-tone serialism was not far off, and indeed in retrospect one can see implicit from the start the ideal of "total organization" which was to be formulated by the new serialists after World War II.

Schoenberg himself was never interested in developing the sort of analysis that has subsequently been practiced on his own and on other serial music. But once he had entered his formidable claim for inclusion within the great tradition, it was inevitable that a branch of analysis would spring up to validate that claim. For analysis, I believe, as I have already said, exists to articulate the concept of organicism, which in turn exists as the value system of the ideology; and while the validation provided by analysis was not really necessary for the Viennese classics, it became more and more necessary for the music of each succeeding generation. What Schenker did for Beethoven and Lorenz did for Wagner, Milton Babbitt and others did later for Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern.

The universal impetus behind analysis was expressed with particular innocence by Réti when he recalled asking himself as a young student why every note in a Beethoven sonata should be exactly *that* note rather than some other. Réti dedicated his career as an analyst to finding an objective answer to this question. And questions of the sort can indeed be answered in respect to the totally organized serial music of the 1950s. Every pitch, rhythm, timbre, dynamic, envelope, and so on can be derived from the work's "precompositional assumptions" by means of simple or slightly less simple mathematics. Whether this derivation provides the *right* answer—that, to be sure, is another question. But the answer provided by serial analysis is, undeniably, objective.

I come at last, after this lengthy historical digression, to the current state of music criticism in the American academy. Analysis, as I have already indicated, is the main, almost the exclusive, type of criticism practiced in music departments today. I believe also that analysis supplies the chief mental spark that can be detected in those departments. Musicology, a field considerably larger and better organized than analysis, involving mainly historiography and quasi-scientific scholarly research in music, is also cultivated; but American musicology in its academic phase—which has now lasted about thirty or forty years—seems to me to have produced signally little of intellectual interest. What it has assembled is an impressive mass of facts and figures about music of the past, codified into strictly nonevaluative histories, editions, bibliographies, and the like. One is reminded of the state of literary studies in the 1930s. Musical analysis has also reminded many observers of the New Criticism which arose at that time. This analogy, though it is not one that will survive much scrutiny, does point to one of the constants of intellectual life as this applies to the arts: as intellectual stimulus, positivistic history is always at a disadvantage beside criticism. It is precisely because and only because analysis is a kind of criticism that it has gained its considerable force and authority on the American academic scene.

Still, as the years and the decades go by, the predominant position of analysis grows more and more paradoxical; paradoxical, because the great German tradition of instrumental music, which analysis supports, no longer enjoys the unique status it did for the generation of Schenker and Tovey and Schoenberg. There is no need to enlarge on the various factors that have so drastically changed the climate for the consumption and appreciation of music today: the wide variety of music made available by musicological unearthings on the one hand and recording technology and marketry on the other; the public's seemingly insatiable hunger for opera of all sorts; the growing involvement with non-Western music, popular music, and quasi-popular music; and also a pervasive general disbelief in hierarchies of value. It is not that we see less, now, in the German masters; but they no longer shut out our perspective on great bodies of other music, new and old.

Another factor contributing to this change in our musical climate stems from the crisis in which musical composition has for some time found itself. Heretofore the great tradition had been felt to exist in a permanent condition of organic evolution, moving always onward (if not always upward) into the future, into what Wagner confidently called "Die Musik der Zukunft" and what we were still calling "New Music" with the same upbeat accent in the 1950s. Forkel saw the German tradition originating with Bach; Hoffmann saw Beethoven following

from Haydn and Mozart; and Schumann, when he turned resolutely from songs and piano pieces to fugues and symphonies, tactfully added his own name. Less tactfully, Wagner did the same. Hanslick countered with Brahms, Adorno nominated Mahler and Schoenberg, and it was still possible in the 1960s to think of Karlheinz Stockhausen, followed at a discreet distance even—who could tell?—by some non-German figures. Now that there are no candidates from the 1970s, a void has been discovered very close to the center of the ideology.

The paradox has been working itself out in recent American analysis. True, a newly published anthology of *Readings in Schenker Analysis* holds primly to the traditional core of J. S. Bach, C. P. E. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms. But for more and more analysts it has become a matter of importance—perhaps of supreme importance—to extend the technique to all the music they care deeply about. That is the impetus behind serial analysis, the most impressive American contribution to the discipline at large, which was developed under the general inspiration of Babbitt at Princeton in the late 1940s and '50s. It is the impetus behind efforts such as those of Morgan and others to extend analysis to the so-called nonteleological music of the 1960s and '70s. At the other end of the historical spectrum, analyses of pre-Bach, pretonal music were published as early as the 1950s by Felix Salzer, Schenker's most influential follower in this country. Salzer has also sponsored other such analyses in the current periodical *Music Forum*. More or less Lorenzian methods have been applied to the Verdi operas. Not only opera but also other music with words and programs has been subjected to analytical treatment: the Schumann song cycle *Dichterliebe*, for example, and the Berlioz *Requiem* and *Symphonie fantastique*. The blanket extension of analysis to genres with words and programs has important theoretical implications, of course. For in spite of Hanslick, the verbal messages included with a musical composition have a strong *prima facie* claim to be counted in with its content, along with its analyzable sounding form.

These new analyses are, as always, conducted at different levels of sophistication and insight. Even the best of them leave the reader uneasy. They come up with fascinating data and with undoubtedly relevant data; yet one always has a sinking feeling that something vital has been overlooked. For however heavily we may weight the criterion of organicism in dealing with the masterpieces of German instrumental music, we know that it is less important for other music that we value. This music may really not be "organic" in any useful sense of the word, or its organicism may be a more or less automatic and trivial characteristic. Its aesthetic value must depend on other criteria. Cannot a criticism be developed that will explain, validate, or just plain illuminate these other musical traditions?

The obvious answer would seem to be yes, and indeed one can point

to a number of recent efforts along these lines. These efforts have not been followed up to any significant extent, however—at least not yet. Musicians in the academic orbit have always dragged their feet when it comes to developing alternative modes of criticism. This is as true of the musicologists as of the analysts and of the large, less clearly defined group of musicians whose inclinations may be described as broadly humanistic and who care about musicology and analysis without having made a full commitment to either (one could point, for example, to the constituency of the College Music Society). Among these many people, it is not uncommon to hear criticism invoked, discussed in general terms, sometimes praised, sometimes even practiced, and occasionally even practiced well. But there seems to be a general disinclination or inability to formalize—much less to institutionalize—the discipline on any scale broader than that of analysis.

There is a real problem here which I do not believe can be attributed entirely to some massive failure of imagination or intellectual nerve. I should prefer to believe that at least part of the problem stems from the prestige of analysis—or, to put it more accurately, from the genuine power of analysis which is the source of that prestige. For analysis, taken in its own terms, is one of the most deeply satisfying of all known critical systems. “. . . music has, among the arts, the most, perhaps the only, systematic and precise vocabulary for the description and analysis of its objects”: that is an envious quotation from Stanley Cavell, a philosopher and critic well versed in music, who knows how much more fully one can fix a melodic line as compared to a line in a drawing, or a musical rhythm as compared to a poetic one, or even an ambiguity in harmony as compared to an ambiguity of metaphor. The discipline of analysis has made a very good thing out of the precise, systematic vocabulary which music possesses. But as Cavell goes on to remark, thinking of the nonexistence of what he calls a “humane criticism” of music,

Somehow that possession must itself be a liability; as though one now undertook to criticize a poem or novel armed with complete control of medieval rhetoric but ignorant of the modes of criticism developed in the past two centuries.<sup>3</sup>

The liability must stem from the power of analysis and its consequent seductiveness. Its methods are so straightforward, its results so automatic, and its conclusions so easily tested and communicated that every important American critic at the present time has involved himself or implicated himself centrally with analysis.

Not all these critics would consider themselves primarily analysts,

3. Stanley Cavell, “Music Discomposed,” *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York, 1969), p. 186.

and some would probably be begrudged that epithet by the analysts themselves.<sup>4</sup> Charles Rosen, for example, prefaces *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* with a critique of analytical systems en masse: the limitations of Schenker, Tovey, Réti, and others are cataloged incisively. Nevertheless, Rosen's procedure in the book is basically analytical, if by analysis we mean the technical demonstration of the coherence of individual pieces of music. He also presents a trenchant, controversial, historical interpretation and a steady stream of brilliant aperçus on all aspects of music. But at heart his book is a wonderfully readable and original essay in musical analysis. Rosen speaks not of organicism but of "balance" and "coherence," and it is his sensitivity to the harmonic and melodic determinants of these criteria that provides *The Classical Style* with its greatest power.

Leonard B. Meyer, in his impressive first book *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, proposed a comprehensive theory of musical aesthetics. A wide-ranging scholar, he moves on in his fourth book, *Explaining Music*, to spell out his recipe for criticism. Again there are telling arguments against Réti and Schenker, and again the proof of the pudding turns out to be analysis—a detailed exemplary study of the first twenty-one bars of a Beethoven sonata according to the author's own analytical principles. (An even more detailed analysis of another German masterpiece has since appeared in *Critical Inquiry*.)<sup>5</sup> Meyer sees musical events as embodying multiple implications for other events that will ensue, implications which are realized or not in various ways. This follows perfectly the model of an overriding system of relationships between all musical elements which has always animated analytical thinking.

To turn now from the sublime to the confessional, my own criticism has returned repeatedly and, as I now think, immoderately to the manner and method of Tovey. There have been digressions to the left and to the right, but in its biggest manifestations, my work, too, has been centered in a kind of analysis.

Finally, I cannot resist mentioning the recent *Beyond Schenkerism: The Need for Alternatives in Music Analysis* by a new young writer, Eugene Narmour. This is probably the sharpest, most comprehensive attack on Schenker that has ever appeared; and it culminates in the modest proposal of a new analytical system developed by the attacker. The musician's instinctive tendency is always to choose among rival analytical sys-

4. "Work . . . by 'one-off' analysts like Rosen or Kerman [is] frequently held to be suspect in its theoretical focus," writes Jonathan M. Dunsby. "They seem to embed the most penetrating and original insight about specific musical objects in an all-embracing cultural critique that can be ultimately confusing, without the deep-rooted convictions—often hard to live with but always comprehensible—of the Schoenbergian analytical tradition" (review of David Epstein's *Beyond Orpheus: Studies in Musical Structure* [Cambridge, Mass., 1979], *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 3 [October 1979]: 195).

5. See Leonard B. Meyer, "Grammatical Simplicity and Relational Richness: The Trio of Mozart's G Minor Symphony," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (Summer 1976): 693–761.

tems or principles rather than to look for a broader alternative to analysis itself. Where we should be looking is not only Beyond Schenkerism but also Beyond Narmourism.<sup>6</sup>

## 4

I dislike seeming to preach in the abstract, especially when I seem to be preaching against, so I shall now sketch out some conceivable alternatives to analysis in reference to the criticism of one particular short piece of music. I have chosen a familiar, standard German-masterpiece-type example, hoping to show how much can and should be done even in the area where analytical methods traditionally work best.

The piece is from Schumann's song cycle *Dichterliebe*, the second number, "Aus meinen Thränen spriessen" (fig. 1). The poem is from Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo* in the *Buch der Lieder*. I have chosen it partly because, in the somewhat overheated words of the analyst Arthur Komar, "In recent years, the song has aroused an extraordinary amount of interest, much of which can be attributed to its selection as the principal illustration of Schenker's analytic technique in Allen Forte's important introductory article on Schenker's theories."<sup>7</sup> In my view, Schenker's analysis of this song, which bids fair to attain exemplary status, shows up the limitations of the discipline as a whole with exemplary clarity. It constitutes a strong argument for alternatives.

Those unacquainted with the Schenker system will be interested to see his analysis of the song (fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> From the "foreground sketch," on the bottom line, more than seventy-five percent of the notes in the actual

6. Another widely discussed new analyst, David Epstein, prefaces his *Beyond Orpheus* (see n. 4 above) with this statement about "the limitations imposed on the [analytical] studies that follow": "First, they are concerned with music written within the era commonly known as classic-romantic, in effect from Haydn and Mozart through the middle nineteenth century, as delimited by Brahms. Secondly, these studies are restricted to music written in what might be called the German-Viennese tradition—the most seminal body of music that emerged during this broad period. Third, they are confined to absolute music. . . . A fourth and final limitation: the matter of 'expression' in music is beyond the confines of these studies" (p. 11). One hears the sound of windows closing.

7. Arthur Komar, "The Music of *Dichterliebe*: The Whole and Its Parts," in *Dichterliebe*, ed. Komar (New York, 1971), pp. 70–71. "Schenker's Conception of Musical Structure," one of Forte's earlier articles, first appeared in *Journal of Music Theory* 3 (April 1959): 1–30, and has since been reprinted in Komar's casebook (*Dichterliebe*, pp. 96–106) and as the first item in *Readings in Schenker Analysis and Other Approaches*, ed. Maury Yeston (New Haven, Conn., 1977), pp. 3–37. In a graded list of "Initial Readings in Schenker" prepared by another leading analyst, Richmond Browne, for *In Theory Only* 1 (April 1975): 4, Forte's article appears as the second item from the top.

8. From *Free Composition (Der freie Satz)* by Heinrich Schenker, edited and translated by Ernst Oster. Copyright ©1979 by Longman Inc., New York. Reprinted with permission.

Nicht schnell. II.

Aus meinen Thränen sprissen viel blühende Blumen hervor, und meine Seufzer  
werden ein Nachtigallenchor. Und wenn du mich lieb hast, Kindchen, schenk' ich dir die Blumen  
all' und vor deinem Fenster soll klingen das Lied der Nachtigallen.

U.S. 131.

Fig. 1

b)

Fig. 2

1 — IV (p1) — V-1  
(A1) B A2

Fig. 2

song have already been reduced away. Only those considered structurally most important remain, with their relative structural weight indicated by the presence or absence of stems, by the note values—half-note forms are more important than quarter, and so on—and by the beams connecting certain groups of quarter- and half-notes (in this sketch). Above it, the “middleground sketch” carries the reduction one step further, and above that the “background sketch” completes the process. The basic structure of the song is indicated by the unit at the top right of this *Ursatz*: a simple three-step arpeggiation of the A-major triad, going from the third degree C-sharp to the tonic A by way of B as a

passing note in the middle. The unit at the left shows the original thrust toward this same *Urlinie* interrupted at the midpoint; the motion is then resumed and completed as shown at the right. Every middleground and foreground detail can be seen to play its organic role as subsumed by the *Ursatz*. And indeed the *Ursatz* is indicative of organicism on a higher level yet: for the *Ursätze* of all musical compositions in the great tradition are essentially the same. Although naturally the interruptions differ, and sometimes the tonic triad is arpeggiated  $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$  or  $\hat{8}-\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ , rather than  $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ , as here, in principle the *Urlinie* always consists of a simple downward arpeggiation of the tonic triad, which Schenker took to be the “chord of nature.”

It seems interesting, incidentally, and possibly significant that this apparently simple song still leaves room for debate as to the precise location of the principal structural tones. Schenker put  $\hat{3}$  on the upbeat to bar 1,  $\hat{2}$  on the upbeat to bar 9,  $\hat{3}$  on the upbeat to bar 13,  $\hat{2}$  and  $\hat{1}$  in bar 15. Forte proposed a modification: the second  $\hat{3}$  on the C-sharp in bar 14 (beat 2). Komar accepts this and proposes another modification: the first  $\hat{3}$  on the C-sharp in bar 2. More serious interest might attach to this debate if someone would undertake to show how its outcome affects the way people actually hear, experience, or respond to the music. In the absence of such a demonstration, the whole exercise can seem pretty ridiculous.

As is not infrequently the case with Schenkerian analyses, the fragile artistic content of this song depends quite obviously on features that are skimmed in the analytical treatment. The song's most striking feature—practically its *raison d'être*, one would think—is the series of paired cadences in the voice and then the piano at the conclusion of lines 2, 4, and 8 of the poem. How are these rather haunting, contradictory stops to be understood (or “heard,” as musicians like to say) at the two points within the body of the song? And how are they to be heard at the end? From Schenker's foreground sketch one gathers that in bars 4 and 8 he counted the voice's half-cadences as primary, whereas in bar 17 he counted the piano's full cadence. But there is no explanation for this disappointingly conventional interpretation, nor any appreciation of the whole extremely original and suggestive situation, nor indeed any relic of it on the middle- and background levels. The *Ursatz* confuses the issue, for in bars 4 and 8 the cadences lack status because they are regarded simply as details of prolongation, along with many others, and in bars 16–17 they are trivialized because true closure is conceived as happening a bar earlier.

Forte and Komar, with their *Ursatz* revisions, do nothing to help the situation. Ambiguities such as those set up by Schumann's cadences are likely to strike a critic as a good place to focus his investigation, to begin seeing what is special and fine about the song. The analyst's instinct is to reduce these ambiguities out of existence.

Another prime feature of the music skimmed by Schenker is the climax at the words “Und vor deinem Fenster soll klingen,” in line 7. This Schumann achieved by a classical confluence of thickened piano texture, intensified rhythms, a crescendo, and harmonic enrichment by means of chromaticism; for a moment the emotional temperature spurts up into or nearly into the danger zone. Schenker’s foreground sketch, so far from “explaining” the chromaticism here, barely acknowledges its existence. Once again his very first reduction employs too coarse a sieve to catch something of prime importance. Schenker seems often to have derived a sort of grim pleasure from pretending not even to notice certain blatant foreground details in the music he was analyzing.

In this case, the pretense was too much for Forte, and he draws attention to what he rightly calls a “striking” chromatic line, an inner line, and to its parallelism to others in the song. The emotional temperature, however, does not interest him any more than does the symbolism (of which more later); he is interested only in the fact that the line serves as “an additional means of unification.” Forte finds a particularly vexing problem in the G-natural of bars 12–13. Komar too dwells on this as the “major analytic issue” of the whole song.

Neither of these analysts troubles to say (though they surely must see) that both this chromatic G-natural and also the chromatic F-natural in bar 14 give the word “klingen” a richer emotional coloration than “spriessen” and “werden” at the parallel places earlier in the song. Sooner or later we shall have to retrace the course taken by the composer himself and peek at the words of the poem:

Aus meinen Thränen spriessen  
Viel blühende Blumen hervor,  
Und meine Seufzer werden  
Ein Nachtigallenchor.

Und wenn du mich lieb hast, Kindchen,  
Schenk’ ich dir die Blumen all’,  
Und vor deinem Fenster soll klingen  
Das Lied der Nachtigall.

“Klingen” is a verb applied by the man in the street to coins, wine glasses and cymbals; poets apply it to the song of nightingales. Was Schumann trying to insist on the poetic credentials of this verb? He certainly declaimed it strangely: the vowel should be short, as of course he knew perfectly well. Also harmonized very richly is the parallel word in the previous couplet—the assonant and no doubt hugely significant word “Kindchen.” So presumably the curious accents in lines 2 and 4 on the words “spriessen” and “werden” (rather than on “Thränen” and “Seufzer”) were planned with “Kindchen” and “klingen” in mind. Schumann’s personal reading of the poem begins to take shape. That

reading may fairly be suspected of having influenced his musical decisions.

A good deal more can be done along these lines. Musico-poetic analysis is not necessarily less insightful than strictly musical analysis, whether of the Schenkerian or some other variety, as is evident from the subtle and exhaustive analyses of Schubert songs by Arnold Feil and the late Professor Thrasybulos Georgiades in Germany. In America, unfortunately, the one serious recent study of the German lied is valuable mainly as shock therapy. In *Poem and Music in the German Lied from Gluck to Hugo Wolf*, the late Jack M. Stein prods all the great nineteenth-century lieder composers for their misreadings of poetry; our song, for example, he dismisses on account of its "mood of naiveté and sentimental innocence." There is often something in what Stein says. But while Schumann certainly comes dangerously close to sentimentality in his setting of the word "klingen," we should also reckon on the clipped and dryly repetitious musical phrase that returns unvaried for "Das Lied der Nachtigall." Does this not effectively undercut the sentimental tendency? On this occasion, at least, Schumann has not smoothed away the celebrated irony of his poet.

Komar's criticism of Schenker and Forte as regards the *Ursatz* stems from his reading of the song in conjunction with the preceding song in the cycle, "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai," the beautiful and well-known opening number. He is right as far as he goes, though he does not go so far as to make the obvious point that since "Aus meinen Thränen" directly follows the famous C-sharp-seventh chord on which that opening song is left hanging, its first few notes do not announce an unambiguous A major, as Schenker so brutally assumed, but rather, for a fleeting moment, the expected resolution in F-sharp minor. So even the first half-prominent gesture in the song, the articulation of "spriesen," sounds more poetic and less naive, less sentimental, than Stein would have us believe.

Komar says that Schumann forged the two songs "virtually into a single entity" from a strictly musical standpoint. If so, that shows that, unlike his analysts, Schumann cared that the two poems also form a unit:

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,  
Als alle Knospen sprangen,  
Da ist in meinem Herzen  
Die Liebe aufgegangen.

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,  
Als alle Vögel sangen,  
Da hab' ich ihr gestanden  
Mein Sehnen und Verlangen.

Aus meinen Thränen spriessen  
 Viel blühende Blumen hervor,  
 Und meine Seufzer werden  
 Ein Nachtigallenchor.

Und wenn du mich lieb hast, Kindchen,  
 Schenk' ich dir die Blumen all',  
 Und vor deinem Fenster soll klingen  
 Das Lied der Nachtigall.<sup>9</sup>

The “Knospen” of the first song open into “blühende Blumen” in the second, the “Vögel” identify themselves as “Nachtigallen,” and so on. In terms of critical methodology, Komar’s emphasis on the cycle’s continuity merely transfers his organicist investigation from the level of the song to the higher level of the cycle. Still, there is some use to his procedure in that it indicates a broadening out, and one may ask what the real subject of the critic’s attention should be—that G-natural which Komar calls the “major analytic issue” of the song, or the total music of the song, or its music taken together with its words, or the full sixteen-song *Dichterliebe* cycle, or perhaps the entire output of Schumann’s so-called song-year, 1840. As is well known, *Dichterliebe* was composed along with about 120 other songs in a single burst of creative energy lasting for eleven months, a period which encompassed the composer’s marriage, after agonizing delays, to Clara Wieck.

All the songs of 1840 were written for Clara, and many of them were written directly to her. *Dichterliebe* begins in the way that Schumann’s earlier Heine song cycle, opus 24, ends: with a song of dedication. The poet-composer offers his work to his beloved, work that is formed out of his love and his longing. Heretofore, however,

9. Heine’s poems appear in *Dichterliebe*, ed. Komar, with translations by Philip L. Miller:

In the lovely month of May,  
 when all the buds were bursting,  
 then within my heart  
 love broke forth.  
 In the lovely month of May,  
 when all the birds were singing,  
 then I confessed to her  
 my longing and desire.  
 From my tears spring up  
 many blooming flowers,  
 and my sighs become  
 a chorus of nightingales.  
 And if you love me, child,  
 I give you all the flowers,  
 and before your window shall sound  
 the song of the nightingale.

[Pp. 15–16]

Schumann had been transforming his longing not into nightingale songs but into piano pieces—which suggests a new irony to the word “klingen,” a double (or by now a triple) irony if one thinks of the shallow virtuoso pieces by Herz and Pixis on which Clara was making her reputation as a pianist while Robert was attacking them angrily in his journalism, crippling his hand in a mechanism designed to strengthen it, and bit by bit relinquishing his own ambitions as a performer. The sixteen songs now dedicated to Clara speak of love’s distress, not of love’s happiness. Clara, incidentally, was twelve years old when Robert first turned up as her father’s student, already a sick man and a rather alarmingly dissolute one. “Aus meinen Thränen” is the only one of Schumann’s love songs which includes the word “Kind” or “Kindchen.”

The comprehensive study of the Schumann songs published ten years ago by the English critic and cryptographer Eric Sams has not been much noticed in this country. Sams takes a strong antianalytical line and also puts people off by his somewhat brazen pursuit of a special theory about Schumann’s compositional practice. This theory centers on the composer’s use of a complicated network of private musical symbolism; thus Sams identifies several secret “Clara themes” in “Aus meinen Thränen,” among them the expressive descending-scale figure on the word “Kindchen” which was mentioned above. The analysts cannot do anything with data of this kind. As far as they are concerned, the same notes in the same musical context ought always to produce the same sounding form, whether written by Schumann or Schubert or Mendelssohn. But it is not unusual for composers to nurture private musical symbols. Berg is a famous case in point. Schumann is unusual, perhaps, only in the large number of studied clues he left around for future decoders. No doubt Sams goes too far. But if what we value in an artist is his individual vision, rather than the evidence he brings in support of some general analytical system, we shall certainly want to enter as far as possible into his idiosyncratic world of personal association and imagery.

Looking again, more broadly yet, at Schumann’s songs and the tradition from which they sprang, one must come to a consideration of characteristics inherent in the genre itself. An artistic genre has a life of its own in history; criticism cannot proceed as though history did not exist. The nineteenth-century German lied began with a firm alliance to a romantically conceived *Volkswiese*, and while from Schubert on the history of the genre is usually seen in terms of a transcendence of this ideal, composers have never wished to transcend it entirely. Evocations of the *Volkstümlich* were handled excellently, in their different ways, by Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and even Wolf, to say nothing of Mahler. But Stein was right: Schumann’s evocations are always tinged with “sentimental innocence.” Some further examples may be cited: “Volksliedchen” opus 51 no. 2; “Der arme Peter” opus 53 no. 3; “Marienwürmchen” opus 79 no. 14; “Lied eines Schmiedes” opus 90 no. 1;

“Mond, meine Seele Lieblich” opus 104 no. 1; and “Hoch, hoch sind die Berge” opus 138 no. 8.

Sams makes the same point and also stresses that in addition to word cyphers and musical quotations, Schumann was also addicted to disguises, of which the impulsive Florestan and the introspective Eusebius are only the most public—so much so, that in works like *Carnaval* and *Dichterliebe* one sometimes feels impelled to ask the real Robert Schumann to please step forward. In *Dichterliebe*, by contrast with the song cycles of Beethoven and Schubert, not all but very many of the songs seem to assume different personae: think of “Aus meinen Thränen” in contrast with “Ich grolle nicht,” “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh’,” “Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet,” and others. Schumann’s self-consciousness as regards the implications of genre and subgenre must be taken into account for any comprehensive understanding of his artistic intentions.

The term “persona” has been borrowed from literary criticism by a musician whose commitment to analysis has never blinded him to what Cavell calls a “humane criticism of music,” Edward T. Cone. In his latest book *The Composer’s Voice*, Cone’s argument, which ultimately goes much further than the lied repertory, begins with Schubert’s *Erk König*. He first inquires who it is that sings the various “voices” in this well-known song and next invites us to distinguish the vocal persona or personae from that of the piano part which underlies and binds the whole together. This seems a fruitful line to take with “Aus meinen Thränen.” At first the vocal and instrumental parts run closely parallel, but they pull apart at those ambiguous cadences to which attention was drawn earlier. The voice and the piano stop in their own ways and in their own sweet times; how are we to conceive of their coordination? A highly suggestive question that Cone asks about songs is whether the pianist hears the singer and vice versa (more precisely, whether the instrumental persona hears the vocal persona). There is no doubt that the pianist hears the singer in bar 12 of “Aus meinen Thränen.” But I am less sure that he does so in bar 4 and pretty sure he does not in bar 17. At this point, the attention of the instrumental persona is directed elsewhere, toward some arcane and fascinating musical thought process of his own.

Can analysis help us here? Cone always likes to address his musical criticism to musical performance, and I believe that a resolution of this question of the vocal and instrumental personae will also resolve one performance problem with this song, this small, fragile, and haunting song: namely, the treatment of the fermatas in bars 4, 8, and 16.

## 5

The alternatives that I have suggested to traditional musical analysis—in this case, to Schenkerian and post-Schenkerian analysis—are not

intended, of course, to exhaust all the possibilities. They are merely examples of some lines along which a more comprehensive, "humane," and (I would say) practical criticism of music can and should be developed. Nor is the term "alternative" to be taken in an exclusive sense. One cannot envisage any one or any combination of these alternative modes of criticism as supplanting analysis; they should be joined with analysis to provide a less one-dimensional account of the artistic matters at hand. What is important is to find ways of dealing responsibly with other kinds of aesthetic value in music besides organicism. I do not really think we need to get out of analysis, then, only out from under.

As I mentioned above, there are a number of pressures today leading to a new breadth and flexibility in academic music criticism. Of these, one of the most powerful emerges from efforts to come to terms with the newest music. The position of Morgan, for example, seems not far from that outlined in the present paper, though the way he formulates that position is certainly very different. The traditional concept of analysis as "the elucidation of a sort of teleological organism," Morgan feels—the language is derived from Cone—must be made broader; the analysis of new music

must examine the composer's intentions in relation to their compositional realization, must discuss the implications of the compositional system in regard to the music it generates, consider how the resulting music relates to older music and to other present-day music, examine its perceptual properties and problems, etc. There is really no end to the possibilities that could enable this list to be extended.

Indeed, "a pressing responsibility of present-day analysis is to indicate how new music reflects present-day actuality."<sup>10</sup>

Within the narrow confines of the music-academic community, this call for analysis to examine, discuss, and indicate what it never thought of examining, discussing, or indicating before may well prove to be perplexing. Outside the community, the only thing that will perplex is Morgan's clinging to the term "analysis." What he seems clearly to be talking about is criticism, and he is talking about it in a way that must surely enlist sympathy.

10. Robert P. Morgan, "On the Analysis of Recent Music," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (Autumn 1977): 40, 51.