

«COME, RISE TO HIGHER SPHERES!»  
TRADITION TRANSCENDED IN BRAHMS'S VIOLIN  
SONATA NO. I IN G MAJOR, OP. 78

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THIS ESSAY OPENS A WINDOW ONTO A SINGLE, and singular, instance of reception in the music of Brahms. The instance revolves around his Violin Sonata in G Major No. 1 (Op. 78) and its putative relationship to two other violin sonatas in the same key, one by Mozart, the other by Beethoven. The relationship, it is proposed, is supposed to emerge only to those playing from a specific edition of the Brahms sonata in the privacy of their home whilst recalling the other two sonatas. Since documentary evidence shedding light on this modality of reception tends, even at best, to be incomplete, the assertions made herein about such a relationship — assuming that there even is one in the first place — are admittedly speculative and subject to revision pending any substantive documentary evidence that comes to light. The primary claim is, simply, that Brahms *may* have wanted at least one player to construct a connection between the three sonatas in terms defined by a specific literary quotation from Goethe's *Faust*. The connection depends on this player not only correctly identifying the Mozart and Beethoven sonatas as direct antecedents for Brahms's own, but also — as suggested by the comparative analysis of form, key, and cyclical elements in the three works in this article — recognizing that Brahms's sonata transcends the tradition embodied in its two predecessors in terms defined by the Faustian quotation.

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The reader will have immediately noticed that this claim is formulated weakly instead of strongly — in the subjunctive rather than the indicative. This is because the whole argument hinges on a singular primary source that

may in fact not be extant. The source in question is a single copy of the first edition of Brahms's sonata, issued by Simrock in November of 1879<sup>1</sup>. Brahms apparently gave this copy as a gift to his friend Heinrich Groeber, a graphics designer active in Vienna in the late nineteenth century and known for a number of sketches of composers, most notably of Bruckner<sup>2</sup>. Although Max Kalbeck, Brahms's first principal biographer, mentions Groeber twice in his biography, it is not known precisely when the designer received this gift from Brahms<sup>3</sup>. What is known, or at least what can be believed, is that Brahms signed a most peculiar dedication on the back of its title page. Kalbeck has described the inscription as follows:

[Brahms] wrote on the reverse side of the title page:

«Come, rise to higher spheres!

If he senses, he will follow.»

Underneath this in notes [Brahms] wrote, on the left-hand side, the first four bars of Mozart's Violin Sonata in G Major, and on the right-hand side, the beginning of Beethoven's [Violin Sonata in] G Major, the so called 'Spring' Sonata Op. 96, with the dedication: «Herr Dr. Heinrich Groeber as a fond memory, Joh. Brahms.»

FIGURE 1 reproduces a hypothetical reconstruction of this source as described in full by Kalbeck (see below).

At this time, we have been unable to verify the contents of this source because neither we, nor anybody else since Kalbeck's biography first appeared — as far as we have been able to ascertain — has been able to find it<sup>4</sup>. As such, any inquiry into the significance of this alleged inscription should

<sup>1</sup>. This violin sonata was by no means Brahms's first attempt in the genre. Schumann mentions an early sonata (now lost) in his 'Neue Bahnen' in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, XXVIII/39 (1853), pp. 185-186. For an overview of such lost compositions, see BOZARTH, George S. 'Paths Not Taken: The Lost Works of Johannes Brahms', in: *The Music Review*, III-IV/50 (August-November 1989), pp. 185-205.

<sup>2</sup>. One of his drawings of Brahms, sketched in 1888 after a photograph taken in 1853, is reproduced in *Johannes Brahms: Leben und Werk*, edited by Christiane Jacobsen, Wiesbaden, Breitkopf & Härtle, 1983, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>. Kalbeck discusses the Groeber edition in the context of events in Brahms's life in 1885.

<sup>4</sup>. Among those we have contacted are Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna; Dr. Michael Struck in the *Brahms Gesamtausgabe*, Kiel; Prof. Kurt Hofmann in the Brahms-Institut, Lübeck; Prof. George S. Bozarth, University of Washington; Prof. Margit McCorkle, Musiksammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek; Archiv der Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Vienna. Unfortunately, none of the people contacted was aware of the Groeber copy or able to name anyone who could locate it.

«COME, RISE TO HIGHER SPHERES!»

[Komm, hebe dich zu höheren Sphären! Wenn er Dich ahnet, folgt er nach ]

Mozart incipit

Beethoven incipit

[Herrn Dr. Heinrich Groeber als freundliche Erinnerung, Joh. Brahms.\*\*]

\* «Come, rise to higher spheres! If he senses, he will follow.»

\*\* «Herrn Dr. Heinrich Groeber as a fond memory, Joh. Brahms.»

FIG. 1: A hypothetical Reconstruction of Brahms's Dedication to Heinrich Groeber on the backside of the latter's copy of the first edition of Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78.

perhaps stop here. Although neither its contents nor its existence can be authenticated, it can nevertheless be verified that these supposed literary and musical components — a poetic motto from the *Verklärung* scene in Goethe's *Faust* (Part II, Act 5 scene 7) and two musical quotations — already have precedents in Brahms's compositional output. A not insignificant number of works, for instance, carry poetic mottos or other such literary adjuncts, some explicitly indicated in published scores (as in the poetic motto atop the second movement Andante of the Op. 5 Piano Sonata), others specified in documentary evidence but suppressed at publication (as in the case of the Op. 60 Piano Quartet which, according to Brahms himself, is supposed to be an illustration of the last chapter of Goethe's *Werther*)<sup>5</sup>. APPENDIX 2 charts the better known cases. Even more works harbor instances of quotation and allusion to other compositions, either Brahms's own or those of other composers. Indeed, Brahms's first opus to his last are replete with such intertextual connections<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>. This aspect of Brahms's music is discussed in, among others, KRAUS, Detlef. *Johannes Brahms als Klavierkomponist: Wege und Hinweise zu seiner Klaviermusik*, Wilhelmshaven, Heinrichshofen-Bücher, 1986, translated by Lillian Lim as *Johannes Brahms: Composer for the Piano*, Wilhelmshaven-New York, Heinrichshofen-Bücher-C. F. Peters, 1988 (Paperbacks on musicology, 9); BOZARTH, George S. 'Brahms's *Lieder ohne Worte*: The "Poetic" Andantes of the Piano Sonatas', in: *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, edited by George S. Bozarth, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 345-378; and PARMER, Dillon R. *Brahms the Programmatic? A Critical Assessment*, Ph.D. Diss., Rochester (NY), University of Rochester, 1995.

<sup>6</sup>. Two studies, in particular, discuss this aspect of Brahms's music at length. See HULL, Kenneth. *Brahms the Allusive: Extra-Compositional Reference in the Instrumental Music of Johannes*

Although Brahms generally leaves the identification of such adjuncts or references, whether literary or musical, to astute listeners, he does sometimes hint at their presence and offers clues to their decryption through verbal riddles. Such clues often appear in correspondence, as when he reveals the literary connection between Op. 60 and *Werther*. An even clearer instance occurs in this case when Brahms consistently connects the Op. 78 Sonata with two of his own *Lieder*, settings of Klaus Groth's «Regenlied» and «Nachklang» (Op. 59 nos. 3 and 4) by making references to rain and plagiarism. To Theodor Billroth (June, 1879), for instance, he writes that the sonata is «worthless and you still need a *soft rainy evening* to create the right mood» (emphasis added)<sup>7</sup>. Another letter, this time to Otto Dessoiff (September 1879), reiterates the same connection: «You must not complain about rain. It has been set to music very well, something I also have attempted in a Violin Sonata in Spring [Op. 78]»<sup>8</sup>. Although a third letter (August 31, 1879) makes no mention of rain, it hints at the origins of the Finale in another work by warning the publisher, Fritz Simrock, about the consequences of plagiarism — a jest, of course, for Brahms could not be charged with stealing his own material: «Beware however, that you don't get drawn into legal proceedings regarding copyright!»<sup>9</sup> Although Brahms himself does not disclose the reasons he makes such riddles, it is conceivable that they function to ensure that his correspondents recognize not only that the finale of the sonata takes its melody from the vocal source, but also that they link the song texts from that source to the instrumental work<sup>10</sup>. Given that Brahms has already implicated both music and literature with this opus, it is entirely possible that he could have inscribed in Groeber's personal copy of Op. 78, for his eyes only, exactly those poetic and musical elements Kalbeck describes.

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*Brahms*, Ph.D. Diss., Princeton (NJ), Princeton University, 1989; and KNAPP, Raymond. *Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony*, Stuyvesant (NY), Pendragon Press, 1997.

<sup>7</sup>. «Mehr ist sie nicht wert und dazu muß noch eine sanfte Regenabendstunde die nötige Stimmung liefern»; BILLROTH, Theodor. *Billroth und Brahms im Briefwechsel*, edited by Otto Gottlieb-Billroth, Berlin-Vienna, Urban und Schwarzenberg, 1935, p. 283.

<sup>8</sup>. «Über Regen mußst du nicht klagen. Er läßt sich sehr gut in Musik setzen, was ich auch den Frühling in einer Violin-Sonata [Op. 78] versucht habe»; Johannes Brahms to Otto Dessoiff, September 1879, in: *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Philipp Spitta; Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Otto Dessoiff*, edited by Carl Krebs, Tutzing, Schneider, 1974 (Brahms Briefwechsel, 16), p. 218.

<sup>9</sup>. «Hüten Sie sich aber, sie kann Ihnen einen Nachdrucksprozeß zuziehen!»; *Johannes Brahms Briefe an P. J. Simrock und Fritz Simrock*, edited by Max Kalbeck, 4 vols., Tutzing, Schneider, 1974, vol. II (Brahms Briefwechsel, 10), p. 128.

<sup>10</sup>. For discussion, see PARMER, Dillon R. 'Brahms, Song Quotation and Secret Programmes', in: *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XIX/2 (Fall 1995), pp. 161-190: 161-177.

Even if this source were accessible, thereby providing an opportunity to verify its contents, there is no way of ascertaining what Brahms intended by such literary and musical references. Nor can one reconstruct how Groeber himself received them, assuming that he even recognized their referents. Indeed, if the correspondence is taken as revealing of the extent of understanding, it seems that Brahms's intimates *rarely* grasped the meanings behind his verbal and musical clues. In those cases cited above, for instance, only Billroth apprehended the significance of Brahms's references to rain as pointing to the song quotation. Nevertheless, another close friend, the Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick, apprehended the quotation as a clue to Brahms's expressive meaning<sup>11</sup>. In the *Neue Freie Presse* review of Op. 78 (1879), for instance, he remarks that «what we have here is in no way a literal repetition of the song as we had in Schubert's well known instrumental works with their songs: *Der Wanderer*, *Die Forelle*, *Der Tod und das Mädchen*. Brahms leaves himself to work subconsciously from a retrospective projection and creates something new and in the same mood from the main motive»<sup>12</sup>. Hanslick continues: in the Finale «the storm of feeling is held back, in that particular, superior, reflective way... [such that] something undecided, blurred or hazy lies therein»<sup>13</sup>. In the 1886 version of this review, Hanslick is even more explicit, implying in no uncertain terms that he understands the work to have an expressive meaning beyond its surface quotation, a meaning best experienced in the domain of private performance: «it seems to us that the sonata is produced much more for the intimate benefit of the private circle than produced for the effect of the concert hall. A completely sensuous, not to mention secret piece requires a certain frame of mind from the players!»<sup>14</sup> In yet another review Hanslick writes:

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<sup>11</sup>. Eduard Hanslick was among the few of Brahms's contemporaries who consistently grasped such meanings, as evidenced in his critical writings. For a discussion of Hanslick's reception of Brahms, see GRIMES, Nicole. *Brahms's Critics: Continuity and Discontinuity in the Critical Reception of Johannes Brahms*, Ph.D. Diss., Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, 2008, pp. 139-196.

<sup>12</sup>. «Es liegt hier keineswegs eine buchstäbliche Wiederholung des Liedes vor, etwa wie sie Schubert in bekannten Instrumentalwerken mit seinen Liedern: 'Der Wanderer', 'Die Forelle', 'Der Tod und das Mädchen' vorgenommen hat. Brahms überläßt sich gleichsam unbewußt einer in ihm fortarbeitenden Erinnerung und schafft in derselben Stimmung aus dem gleichen Hauptmotivs Neues»; HANSLICK, Eduard, in: *Neue Freie Presse*, 23 November 1879, pp. 1-2.

<sup>13</sup>. «Da wird der Sturm der Empfindung in jener eigentümlich überlegenen, reflectieren den Weise zurückgehalten, die wir an ähnlichen Werken von Brahms kennen. Etwas Unentschiedenes, Verschwommenes liegt darin»; *ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>. «Sie scheint uns überdies noch mehr für den intimen Genuß im Privatcirkel, als für den Effect im Concertsaal geschaffen. Ein ganz eigen sinnendes, um nicht zu sagen heimliches

For me the *Regenlied* Sonata is like a dear and true friend whom I would never forsake for anyone else. In its soft, contemplatively dreamy feeling and its wondrously consoling strength, it is one of a kind. It moves me in more or less the same way as Goethe's poem «An den Mond», and like the poem it is incomparable, irreplaceable — rather like our own youth, which indeed seems to peer out at us as from within, as if from the mists of a faraway landscape<sup>15</sup>.

Clearly, Hanslick understands the *Regenlied* Sonata to have a nostalgia for lost youth as its hidden program. This is indicated in his reference to the sonata's «wondrously consoling strength», and his association of it with Goethe's «An den Mond»<sup>16</sup>. There is no way of ascertaining whether Brahms himself wanted the sonata to be understood in precisely this way. Yet an exchange with the Engelmanns in regard to the Third Piano Quartet (Op. 60) shows not only that Brahms wanted his clues to be deciphered properly, but that he also

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Stück verlangt sie auch von den Spielern eine gewisse Gemütsverwandtschaft»; ID. *Concerte, Componisten und Virtuosen der letzten fünfzehn Jahre: 1870-1885*, Berlin, Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur, 1886 (Allg. Verein für Dt. Literatur, x/4), p. 259. Hanslick's contention that the piece is more suited to private performance than public performance is reminiscent of a letter that Billroth had sent the critic in October 1879 in which he wrote of Op. 78: «The feelings are too fine, too true and warm, the inwardness too heartfelt for publicity» («Die Empfindung sind zu fein, zu wahr und warm, die Innerlichkeit zu herzlich für die Öffentlichkeit»); Theodor Billroth to Eduard Hanslick, October 1879, quoted in ID. *Aus meinem Leben*, 2 vols., Berlin, Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur, 1894, vol. II (Allg. Verein für Dt. Literatur, xx/1.3), p. 321.

<sup>15</sup>. «Mir ist die Regenlied-Sonate wie ein lieber bewährter Freund, den ich für keinen andern hergebe. In ihrer weichen, nachdenklich träumenden Empfindung und ihrer wundersam tröstenden Kraft steht sie ganz für sich allein da. Sie wirkt auf mich ungefähr wie Goethe's Gedicht 'An den Mond' und ist, gleich diesem, unvergleichbar, unersetzlich, fast wie die eigene Jugend, die ja wie aus dämmernder Ferne uns daraus anblick»; ID. 'Brahms' neueste Instrumental-Compositionen', in: ID. *Musikalisches und Litterarisches: Kritiken und Schilderungen*, Berlin, Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur 1889 (*Die moderne Oper*, 5 / Allg. Verein für Dt. Literatur, xv/1), pp. 149-156: 153-154; translated by Susan Gillespie as 'Brahms's Newest Compositions', in: *Brahms and His World*, edited by Walter Frisch, Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 145-150: 148.

<sup>16</sup>. Max Kalbeck was prompted by the closing theme of the first movement of the sonata that reappears in the second movement as a funeral march to hypothesize that the sonata may have been composed in mind of the death of Brahms's friend Franz v. Holsteins, and Felix Schumann (news of whose imminent death had just been broken). Kalbeck goes on to point out that the fee Brahms earned for the publication of this sonata (3000 Mk.) was donated anonymously to the 'honorarium' collected by Frau Schumann. See KALBECK, Max. *Johannes Brahms*, 4 vols., Vienna-Leipzig, Wiener Verlag (vol. I), Berlin, Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft (vol. II-IV), 1904-1914, vol. III, p. 192, footnote 2.

wanted them to be applied towards making sense of the expressive content of the work in question. Thus, when he realized that the Engelmanns mistook his riddles regarding Werther as a reference to another literary figure (Faust), he replied in a letter of December 17, 1875: «Your other question, however, told me that you began in the second part of Goethe's *Faust* — otherwise you should have thought of Werther [necessarily]! Now read to your little wife the last chapter [of Goethe's *Werther*] to come to an understanding of the [Piano] Quartet!»<sup>17</sup>.

In light of the evidence surrounding Opp. 78 and 60, therefore, it is clear that Brahms *wanted* his clues, whether literary or musical, to be both deciphered and applied towards making sense of the expressive content of the work in question, and so it is inadvisable to leave the putative Groeber source alone its authenticity notwithstanding. Thus, Kalbeck offers his interpretation: «the words of the Himmelskönigin from Faust's *Verklärung* are significant to the composer as well as the violinist [presumably he is referring to Groeber, who was an amateur violinist] in that Mozart's and Beethoven's models are the higher spheres, and he who senses them in this [Brahms's] G Major Sonata follows them»<sup>18</sup>. This reading is in keeping with the original literary context in which the *Himmelskönigin* addresses Gretchen's wish to lead Faust's soul into the bright light of a new morning. Gretchen will ascend into the higher spheres, and Faust, when he becomes aware of her presence therein, will follow her directly. Although there is no way of ascertaining how Brahms understood Goethe's passage, the alleged presence of the literary quotation in the performance score invites the player to hear a directive from Brahms himself in the words of the Queen. This directive is to detect echoes, if not literal quotations, of the two classical sonatas he has quoted whilst playing through Op. 78. Brahms's inscription functions, therefore, to bring about a particular mode of reception specific to any player playing only from this score, a mode in which that player strives to construct a relationship between Op. 78 and its putative predecessors that might resonate with metaphors of «transcendence» and «higher spheres».

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<sup>17</sup>. «Ihre andere Frage aber sagt mir daß Sie in Goethe von Faust II anfangen — sonst hätten Sie [notwendig] an Werther denken müssen! Nun lesen Sie Ihrer kleinen Frau die letzten Capitel damit Verständniß für das 4tett komme!»; *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Th. Wilhelm Engelmann*, introduction by Julius Röntgen, Tutzing, Schneider, 1974 (Brahms Briefwechsel, 13), pp. 24-25.

<sup>18</sup>. KALBECK, Max. *Op. cit.* (see note 16), vol. III, pp. 383-384. See APPENDIX I for the original in full.

The problem of specifying this, or any other such, relationship is severely compromised by Kalbeck's lack of precision in his identification of the Mozart and Beethoven sonatas in question. He does quote the verse from the Faustian source accurately, but he neglects to transcribe the exact notes from the musical sources and assumes instead that his readers will know precisely the sonatas to which his words refer. Unfortunately, we cannot take Kalbeck at his word. It seems that not even he knew precisely to which sonatas Brahms was referring. Although he gives the exact measures for the Mozart sonata (mm. 1-4), he fails to specify from which of Mozart's two G-major violin sonatas those measures refer, K. 301 (1778) or K. 379 (1781). As to the identity of the Beethoven sonata, Kalbeck seems more forthcoming, for he names it by both opus number and popular title, as if to distinguish it from Beethoven's other G-major Violin Sonata (Op. 30 No. 3) and, perhaps, his Violin Romance (Op. 40). But Kalbeck's attribution confuses two distinct works. The 'Spring Sonata' is not Op. 96 in G major, but Op. 24 in F major. Indeed, there does not seem to be any popular name associated with Op. 96, an absence suggesting that Kalbeck may have been thinking about another sonata with a popular title, or simply misrecognized the identity of Brahms's musical incipit, or correctly identified the incipit as Op. 24.

It is difficult to know why precisely Kalbeck omitted the details that would verify the identity of the sonatas in question. Either he did not see Groeber's copy and came to know about it only through hearsay. Or he did see it but did not recall its contents with sufficient accuracy to transcribe them in his text. Or, since this description occurs in a footnote, he may have come upon the source too late in the publication of the biography to include a complete transcription of it in the main text. Whatever the reasons, this vexing question remains: which sonatas did Brahms quote? The question is not settled by perusing Brahms's music library, which housed two complete editions of the Beethoven sonatas (the *Alte Original Ausgaben* and the Peters edition) as well the complete Simrock edition of Mozart's Sonatas with violin<sup>19</sup>. Kalbeck's incomplete description of this source nevertheless has led Brahms scholars in at least two divergent directions, some leaving the question of the identity of especially the Mozart sonata unanswered, others specifying that identity but without sufficient justification. Imogen Fellinger, for instance, speaks about 'the' Mozart sonata as evidence of a Mozartian influence in Brahms's compositional profile but does not at all name the sonata in question:

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<sup>19</sup>. See HOFMANN, Kurt. *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms: Bücher- und Musikalienverzeichnis*, Hamburg, Wagner, 1974 (Schriftenreihe zur Musik, 1), pp. 148 and 157.

In his inscription of a copy of the original edition of his Violin Sonata in G Major Op. 78 to the designer Heinrich Groeber, [Brahms] referred to Mozart as well as to Beethoven by writing on it the incipits of the first movements of the Violin Sonatas in G Major of both masters (Beethoven Op. 96), setting above them the words spoken by the Himmelskönig from Faust's Verklärung in Goethe's *Faust*: «Komm, hebe dich zu höheren Sphären!/  
Wenn er Dich ahnet, folgt er nach» (Come, rise to higher spheres!/  
If he senses, he will follow!). In this way Brahms indicated that his Sonata was continuing the tradition of violin sonatas by Mozart and Beethoven even choosing the same key as the two notable examples<sup>20</sup>.

In his commentary on Op. 78, Laurence Wallach points specifically to Mozart's K. 301 as the pertinent sonata but fails to offer any reasons as to why this sonata and not the other<sup>21</sup>.

Given that Kalback was at times prone to flights of fancy, it may be that he simply conjured up this document in his imagination as he did for certain aspects of Brahms's life<sup>22</sup>. The textual, visual, and tactile specifics of his description, however — on the *backside* of the front page, an actual motto on the *top*, one musical quotation on the *left*, another on the *right*, a dedication on the *bottom*, all written in *pencil* — suggest that such a document indeed existed at one point, that Kalbeck did see it, perhaps even handled it. Suspicion is by no means an adequate substitute for absent evidence, however. But absence

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<sup>20</sup>. FELLINGER, Imogen. 'Brahms's View of Mozart', in: *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies*, edited by Robert Pascall, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 41-57: 53.

<sup>21</sup>. WALLACH, Laurence. 'Sonata No. 1 for Piano and Violin in G Major, Opus 78', in: *The Complete Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*, edited by Leon Botstein, London-New York, Norton, 1999, p. 94. On this attribution, see also SWAFFORD, Jan. *Johannes Brahms: A Biography*, London, Macmillan, 1998, pp. 93-94.

<sup>22</sup>. Kurt Hofmann's reassessment of Brahms's early years (1833-1862) counters various misconceptions about Brahms's life that range from the relatively low social position of his family, through his alleged employment as a piano player in brothels, to his preoccupation with rising from «rags to riches», all of which can be traced back to Kalbeck. Drawing upon new archival evidence, Hofmann shows instead that the family household was well off by middle-class standards, that the adolescent Brahms was neither required nor could possibly have served as a house musician in such venues, and that his primary concern was to win the approval of his father for his burgeoning musical career. See HOFMANN, Kurt. 'Years of Transition: Brahms and Vienna 1862-1875', in: *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, edited by Michael Musgrave, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 1999 (Cambridge Companions to Music), pp. 3-30. Another worthwhile assessment of Brahms's early years is AVINS, Styra. 'The Young Brahms: Biographical Data Reexamined', in: *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XXIV/3 (March 2001), pp. 276-289.

of evidence is not evidence of absence, and a comparative analysis of salient features of the sonatas suggests that Brahms may have quoted Beethoven's Op. 96 and Mozart's K. 379 in the Groeber dedication. This claim is borne out through parallels in key, tonal design, and disruptive repetitions in their respective finales of elements from their slow movements<sup>23</sup>.

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Identity of key might reflect the fact that Brahms sometimes chooses the same tonality as the composition upon which his work is modeled, as he did for the First Symphony in C Minor and the Third Piano Quartet in C Minor, both of which house reminiscences of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony<sup>24</sup>. But mere choice of key is hardly grounds for ruling out the Spring Sonata as a putative model, and it still leaves open the question of which of Mozart's two G-major sonatas are involved. Stronger parallels emerge in peculiarities of tonal design. Although Brahms's generic title declares his to be a sonata in G *major*, too many instances of minor and diminished modalities intruding into the tonal space seem to pull the expressive trajectory of the sonata away from what the title explicitly stipulates. Indeed, the whole sonata seems poised to shift from tonic major to minor as it unfolds, a maneuver which takes place in his Op. 8 Trio in both the 1854 and 1888 versions. In the first movement of the sonata, these tilts to the minor mode are consistently overcome through thematic reassertion — material from the first group relocates the tonality in a major modality. In the next movement, however, these tilts give way to a compromise formation — a second movement in E-flat major, a key combining elements of both G major and G minor. The force of the minor mode cannot be so easily suppressed, however, for

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<sup>23</sup>. Although any such analysis can produce connections between any two or more compositions, our case for selecting these particular sonatas rests on the musical parameters we privilege as the matrix out of which connections are constructed. In other words, other analysts who privilege other parameters might construct different points of contact between two or more compositions and consequently yield different conclusions.

<sup>24</sup>. On this aspect of Brahms's output, see SMITH, Peter H. *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in his 'Werther' Quartet*, Bloomington (IN), Indiana University Press, 2005 (Music Meaning and Interpretation), pp. 234-284. For another discussion of Brahms's choice of key in relation to past compositions see WEBSTER, James. 'The *Alto Rhapsody*: Psychology, Intertextuality, and Brahms's Artistic Development', in: *Brahms Studies. Volume 3*, edited by David Brodbeck, Lincoln-London, University of Nebraska Press, 2001, pp. 19-46. See also MUSGRAVE, Michael. 'Brahms's First Symphony: Thematic Coherence and Its Secret Origin', in: *Music Analysis*, 11/2 (1983): pp. 117-134.

even this formation yields momentarily to its parallel minor, E-flat minor, in mm. 24-29, and thence to a third-movement finale, a Rondo in G minor. Even though the finale eventually reestablishes the major mode in reverse, first through E-flat major (m. 84) and then through G major (m. 140), the increasing presence of the minor mode throughout the whole becomes more and more palpable as the sonata unfolds<sup>25</sup>.

This progression from a movement primarily in the tonic major to ones infused more and more with the minor mode finds a close ancestor in Beethoven's Op. 96. In the first movement, its first theme remains firmly rooted in G major until a momentary tilt to the minor mode in m. 24 seems to precipitate longer excursions into that realm. The second theme might be cast in D major, but it has a long passage in B-flat major (mm. 58ff), a sonority echoed in the flat-6th scale degree manifested throughout the closing theme in D-major (mm. 84-94). This scale degree relation is carried into the development section where the minor mode predominates, while in the recapitulation the expected excursion to the flat sub-median within the second theme (mm.197ff) now appears in the first theme group with a lengthy excursion to E-flat major (mm. 148-169). G major is reasserted in the coda though not before a brief chromatic fantasy in the piano recalls the minor mode (mm. 241-247). As in the Brahms sonata, Beethoven's second movement unfolds an *Adagio espressivo* in E-flat major and features both a chromatic middle section in A-flat major and coda that brings the flat sub-dominant into the fray. The third movement recalls some of these minor mode excursions. A Scherzo in G minor frames a Trio in E-flat major, not overlooking the G-major coda tacked on. Although the fourth movement finale is cast as a theme and variations in G major, Beethoven recalls these tilts to the minor mode when E-flat major makes a brief but noticeable appearance as a false variation (mm. 165-171), and variation seven, a fugal treatment of the theme, ventures into G minor (mm. 217-244)<sup>26</sup>. Since neither the 'Spring sonata' nor Op. 30 no. 3 plays with modality in this way, it seems that Op. 96 is the more likely candidate for the Beethoven incipit cited in the Groeber dedication.

<sup>25</sup>. For a detailed account of how this works throughout the whole sonata, see PARMER, Dillon R. 'Brahms, Song Quotation and Secret Programmes', *op. cit.* (see note 10), pp. 161-177.

<sup>26</sup>. Further similarities in rhythmic figuration suggest Beethoven's sonata as a model for Op. 78. The piano figuration in Brahms's first movement (mm. 9-20), for instance, is reminiscent of that in Beethoven's (mm. 10-19).

Although Wallach and Jan Swafford point to K. 301 as the pertinent Mozart Sonata, neither offers an explanation as to why or how this earlier work might be the one Brahms cited. This sonata ventures into the minor mode in its second movement (mm. 75-114), but in our view it is K. 379 and not K. 301 that plays with this mode in a manner more closely paralleling Beethoven’s Op. 96 and Brahms’s Op. 78. A two-movement sonata, its first movement divides into two halves differentiated by contrasting tempi and mode, a slow introduction in the major and an Allegro proper in the minor. This introduction can be taken as a displaced second movement cast in a sonata form interrupted by the abrupt statement of its main motif in the minor mode (mm. 45-49). This statement precipitates the displaced first movement that ensues. Like Beethoven’s finale, Mozart’s second movement proper is also cast as a theme and variations, and, like its Beethoven and Brahms successors, it refers back to an initial minor modality. In the fourth variation, Mozart revisits the parallel minor before returning to G major in the fifth and sixth variations (Allegretto). Although the connection between Brahms and Mozart is more attenuated than that between Brahms and Beethoven, K. 379 seems to harbor a comparable tonal ambiguity that hinges on the contrast between the modality declared in its title and the minor mode of its Allegro proper. Indeed, the sonata begins with what sounds like a slow introduction in G major, but the first movement Allegro that follows suggests that its *real* key is G minor. Given these modal peculiarities, a progression between the three sonatas can be adduced by the degree to which each of them allows an initial minor mode component to become more explicit in dictating the course of the modal narrative that follows, Mozart to the lesser extent and Brahms to the greater extent, with Beethoven poised in between. These parallels are charted in FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 2  
MINOR MODE EXCURSIONS ACROSS THE THREE SONATAS

BRAHMS OP. 78	<b>1<sup>st</sup> movt</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> movt</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> movt</b>	
	I (with excursions to minor mode)	.VI (with excursions to .vi and .III/VI)	i-v- VI-I	
BEETHOVEN OP. 96	<b>1<sup>st</sup> movt</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> movt</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> movt</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> movt</b>
	I-V (with excursions to .VI/V and .VI)	.VI-(iv)- .VI (mixed with .iv)	i- VI-i-I	I (with excursions to .VI and i)

MOZART K. 379	<b>1<sup>st</sup> movt</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> movt</b>
	I (Adagio)-i (Allegro)	I (with excursion to i)

A second set of parallels involves the cyclic repetition in the finale of elements from the preceding slow movements (see FIGURE 3). We have already mentioned this aspect in regard to modality and key, but it takes place in the domains of other parameters as well. Mozart's fifth variation, an Adagio that abruptly halts the momentum of the preceding variations in the manner of a cadenza recalls the tempo of the opening slow introduction. Beethoven too invokes cadenza-like passages in the Adagio variation (m. 145), passages which recall both the tempo and similar figurations in his second movement. As well, both sonatas show a tendency to create greater continuity between movements: Mozart's slow introduction and Beethoven's slow movement are followed by *attacca* movements, while Beethoven's opus is permeated with trills and other related figuration. Brahms's opus exhibits these features in abundance. Whereas the cyclic relations between slow and final movements within each of the Mozart and Beethoven sonatas are restricted to mode and tempo, the relationships that emerge between the movements of Brahms's sonata transcend these to include theme, motif, and narrative plot. The closing theme from the first movement, for instance, reappears in the next movement expressively transformed into a funeral march; the second movement theme intrudes into the finale, first in E-flat major, and again in G major. Brahms's finale theme itself, a quotation of his Op. 59 *Lieder*, can be taken as the source of the recurring dotted rhythm that saturates the previous two movements<sup>27</sup>. Brahms goes one step further. The literary subject for the songs — a nostalgic yearning for lost youth (see APPENDIX 3) — provides a context for clarifying the expressive narrative of the sonata as a whole, which seems to accept and be reconciled to the loss<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>27</sup>. For one analysis that surveys this and other intracompositional relationships, see MCKINNEY, Timothy R. 'Beyond the "rain-drop" Motif: Motivic and Thematic Relationships in Brahms's *opera* 59 and 78', in: *The Music Review*, LII/2 (May 1991), pp. 108-122.

<sup>28</sup>. For discussion of the literary connection, see PARMER, Dillon R. 'Brahms, Song Quotation and Secret Programmes', *op. cit.* (see note 10), pp. 161-177.

FIGURE 3  
CYCLIC REPETITION IN THE FINALES OF THE THREE SONATAS

	<b>Key/Mode</b>	<b>Theme/Motif</b>	<b>Tempo</b>
BRAHMS OP. 78	Recurrence of E-flat major recalls second movement key; G-minor theme realizes previous excursions to minor mode	Recurring dotted rhythmic figure; 2 recurrences of slow movement theme (the first in E-flat major, the second in G major)	No corresponding shift to slow tempo but recurrence of the slow movement theme could be played in a slower tempo
BEETHOVEN OP. 96	Main theme returns in false key of E-flat major; Variation 7 recalls G minor	Variation 4 recalls cadenza-like material; recurring trill (and related) figurations	Variation 4 recalls Adagio from the slow movement
MOZART K. 379	Variation 4 recalls G minor of Allegro proper	No explicit recurrences	Variation 5 (adagio) recalls slow introduction

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Although there is no way of ascertaining what specifically Brahms wanted Groeber to notice, or even if Groeber noticed anything at all, these parallels could have been evident to someone prompted by the dedication to look for connections to its supposed progenitors as they played through Op. 78. Having noticed such parallels, this hypothetical player may have been uniquely positioned to sense the elements in Brahms's sonata that transcend its classical antecedents. When those antecedents are brought within the spheres of both the Faustian quotation and the Groth poems, Brahms's cyclical treatment of themes and motifs can be heard not just as definitive features of his sonata, but also as the medium through which Brahms desires to reconnect with past classical models and simultaneously transcend them. Although he does not quote or allude to any of their thematic material, Brahms takes an expressive potential latent within their modal ambiguities and cyclical repetition and composes them out in manner that implicates his thematic and motivic work within an expressive narrative defined by the song texts. When played against especially the Faustian quotation, such parallels in the three sonatas suggest that Brahms identifies himself with a musico-historical lineage which he transcends through a unique synthesis of music and poetry. The implication for Groeber is that when he senses these higher spheres of Mozart

and Beethoven in Brahms's Op. 78, he too, like Faust after Gretchen, will follow along.

Two further and final questions remain: who, if anyone, is Groeber to follow, and from what, if anything, was he being lead away? To the first question, the answer is simply 'Brahms'. But an answer to the second is more difficult to posit. Kalbeck mentions Groeber only twice in the Brahms biography, each time in the context of the years immediately surrounding 1884-1885, and each time in the context of a discussion of Anton Bruckner. He draws from three sources in particular, the Brahms-Herzogenberg correspondence, an 1896 article by Richard Specht 'Ein Gespräch mit Brahms', in the Viennese daily newspaper *Zeit*, and what he refers to as an «an excellent discussion of Heinrich Groeber of 1895 on Bruckner», which included Brahms's comments (see APPENDIX 4). Kalbeck refers to the exchange of letters between Elisabet von Herzogenberg and Brahms, following a performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 in the Leipzig Gewandhaus on 30 December 1884. Herzogenberg wrote to Brahms seeking his reassurance that she was not alone in her abhorrence of Bruckner's music, a composer she considered to be a «philistine», and objected to having his music thrust upon her «like a compulsory vaccination»<sup>29</sup>. Brahms's reply in no small measure amplifies Herzogenberg's misgivings, and can be taken as a caustic attack on Bruckner to whom Brahms refers as «a lamentable, crazy person that the priests of St. Florian have on their conscience»<sup>30</sup>. Similar sentiments appear in Kalbeck's other sources. In Specht's 1896 article, for instance, Brahms allegedly characterized Bruckner's music as a «swindle that will be dead and forgotten in one or two years»; while in Groeber's 1895 discussion, Brahms dismisses Bruckner's music as having «no notion of musical logic, no idea of an arranged musical structure»<sup>31</sup>. Clearly, Brahms was by no means a fan.

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<sup>29</sup>. Elisabet von Herzogenberg to Johannes Brahms, undated but between December 30, 1884 and January 11, 1885.

<sup>30</sup>. Brahms to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, 12 January 1885, in: *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Heinrich und Elisabet von Herzogenberg*, edited by Max Kalbeck, Berlin, Verlag der Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1908, vol. II, p. 53. The letter is abridged in Kalbeck's edition of the Herzogenberg correspondence. For the full letter see KALBECK, MAX. *Op. cit.* (see note 16), vol. III, pp. 408-409, footnote 1.

<sup>31</sup>. Despite efforts to locate the original document containing Groeber's conversation with Brahms, we have not yet had success. Moreover, Groeber is not mentioned in any of the Bruckner literature we have examined, and hence we have no broader context for Brahms's alleged comments on Bruckner. Here, Brahms is reported to have considered Nietzsche's charge that his own fame was the result of his accidentally being appointed the head of the

At present the authenticity of neither the Groeber source nor its contents can be confirmed with certitude. Assuming its authenticity, and that the two sonatas implicated in it are those specified through this admittedly cursory analysis of salient features of their tonal and thematic design, it can only be suggested that Brahms may have intended to lead Groeber away from the music of Bruckner by inviting him to sense the higher spheres of a classical tradition now past but still alive in the rhetoric of his own musical logic, in the specific arrangement of his own musical structures. Brahms's appeal is not for himself, therefore, as Gretchen's appeal was not for herself. Rather his appeal is for the musical soul of Groeber, to lead him away from what he viewed to be musical philistinism and into the bright light of a new morning, a uniquely Brahmsian synthesis of a higher classical tradition with a present, romantic one. One can only wonder if Groeber followed along...

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anti-Wagner party, as nonsense. Brahms is alleged to have taken this opportunity to attest his admiration for Wagner while emphasizing his lack of respect for Bruckner's music. He allegedly stated: «I said it once to Wagner himself that today I am the leading Wagnerian. Do you consider me so limited that I could not be charmed by the cheerfulness and greatness of *Meistersinger*? Or to be so dishonest as to conceal my opinion that I consider a pair of bars of this work as valuable as all the operas that have subsequently been composed? And I an anti-priest? It is indeed too stupid! And Bruckner's works immortal and completely symphonic? That is to be laughed at!»; Brahms as quoted in KALBECK, Max. *Op. cit.* (see note 16), vol. III, p. 409.

APPENDIX I

Das war keine schöne Redensart, sondern Brahms' aufrichtige Meinung. Dr. Heinrich Groeber in Wien hatte Brahms einige seiner köstlichen Musikerkarikaturen geschenkt, die bei ihren geringen (modest) Übertreibungen (exaggeration) des Charakteristischen Anspruch auf Porträtähnlichkeit erheben dürfen. Groebers Udel- und Bruckner- Bilder gefielen ihm über die Maßen, und er schüttelte sich vor Lachen, wenn er sie ansah und anderen zeigte. Zum Dank schenkte er dem Zeichner, der zugleich ein tüchtiger Violinist war, ein Exemplar seiner G-dur-Sonate Op. 78 und schrieb auf die Rückseite des Titelblatts:

«Komm, hebe dich zu höheren Sphären!  
Wenn er Dich ahnet, folgt er nach.»

Darunter in Noten, links, die ersten vier Takte der Mozartschen Violinsonate in G-dur, rechts, den Anfang der Beethovenschen G-dur, der sogenannten Frühlingssonate Op. 96, mit der Widmung: «Herrn Dr. Heinrich Groeber als freundliche Erinnerung. Joh. Brahms.» — Die Worte der Himmelskönigin aus Fausts Verklärung gelten dem Komponisten wie dem Geiger, die Muster Mozarts und Beethovens sind die höheren Sphären, und wer sie in der dritten G-dur Sonate (der Brahmschen) ahnt, folgt ihnen nach.

[That was no hackneyed cliché, rather Brahms's honest opinion. Dr. Heinrich Groeber in Vienna had given Brahms a gift of one of his magnificent musical caricatures, which make a claim to the likeness of a portrait with their modest exaggeration of characteristics. Groeber's Udel and Bruckner pictures appeal to him a great deal, and he shakes with laughter when he sees them and shows them to others. Thankfully he bequeathed to the artist, who is at the same time a capable violinist, a copy of this G Major Sonata Op. 78 and wrote on the reverse side of the title page:

«Come, rise to higher spheres!  
If he senses, he will follow.»

Underneath this in notes he wrote, on the left-hand side, the first four bars of Mozart's Violin Sonata in G Major, and on the right-hand side, the beginning of the Beethoven G Major, the so called «Spring» Sonata Op. 96 with the dedication: «Herr Dr. Heinrich Groeber as a fond memory, Joh. Brahms.» — The words of the Himmelskönigin from Faust's Verklärung are significant to the composer as well as the violinist in that Mozart's and Beethoven's models are the higher spheres, and he who senses them in the third G Major Sonata (Brahms's) follows them<sup>32</sup>.]

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<sup>32</sup>. *Ibidem*, vol. III, pp. 383–384, footnote. 1. All translation are our own unless otherwise stated.

## APPENDIX 2

LITERARY CONNECTIONS STIPULATED BY BRAHMS IN HIS INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC<sup>33</sup>

Opus	Movement or Number	Year of composition / publication	Literary or other textual adjunct	Comments
I	iv	1852-1853/1853	Robert Burns, «My Heart's in the Highland»	Brahms's close friend, Albert Dietrich, alleges that the composer had this poem in mind when he composed the A-minor melody in the 6/8 passage from the finale (mm. 107-125) <sup>34</sup> .
2	ii	1852/1854	Count Kraft von Toggenburg, «Minnelied»	An inventory of the collection of Antonia Speyer-Kufferath and Edward Speyer reports that a document in Brahms's own hand containing the <i>Minnelied</i> , labeled «Lied von Toggenburg' Op. 2» once existed <sup>35</sup> . Brahms clearly indicates that the <i>Minnelied</i> is to accompany the second sonata, although he does not specify which of its four movements. The location of this document is unknown, but a letter to Clara (August 21, 1855) contains a similar document, in an unknown hand, that transmits the first stanza of the Toggenburg poem, now linked decisively to the second movement of Op. 2 <sup>36</sup> .

<sup>33</sup>. For a fuller discussion of these and related cases see PARMER, Dillon R. 'Musical Meaning for the Few: Instance of Private Reception in the Music of Brahms', in: *Current Musicology*, LXXXIII (Spring 2007), pp. 109-130.

<sup>34</sup>. DIETRICH, Albert. *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms in Briefen besonders aus seiner Jugendzeit*, Leipzig, Otto Wigand, 1898, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup>. See BOZARTH, George S. 'Brahms's Lieder Inventory of 1859-60 and other Documents of his Life and Work', in: *Fontes Artis Musicae*, xxx/3 (July-September 1983), p. 111.

<sup>36</sup>. Bozarth speculates that the first document was the one enclosed in the letter to Clara, but when separated was replaced by the document in the unknown hand. ID. 'Brahms's *Lieder ohne Worte*: The "Poetic" Andantes of the Piano Sonatas', *op. cit.* (see note 5), p. 353, footnote 20.

«COME, RISE TO HIGHER SPHERES!»

5	ii	1853/1854	Poetic motto, an excerpt from the poem «Junge Liebe» by C. O. Sternau (the literary pseudonym of Otto Inkermann)	Motto published in score but not present in autograph.
5	iv	1853/1854	«Bitte» by C. O. Sternau	Poem found with «Junge Liebe» in Brahms's apartment after his death
9		1854/1854	Tenth variation entitled «Rose and Heliotrope have bloomed»	In the manuscript version only <sup>37</sup> .
10/i		1854/1856	«Nach der schottischen Ballade: 'Eduard' in Herders 'Stimmen der Völker'» (after the Scottish Ballade: «Edward» in Herder's «Voices of the People»)	Published in score, present in autograph
15	ii	1854-1859 / 1861-1862	«Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini!» (Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!)	Found in the autograph score of the slow movement only <sup>38</sup> .
60		1855-1875/1875	Goethe's <i>Werther</i>	Indicated only in correspondence.
78		1878-1879/1879	Klaus Groth's «Regenlied» and «Nachklang»; poetic motto from Goethe's <i>Faust</i>	Via quotation from Brahms's vocal settings of these poems; Goethe quotation found only in privately owned copy of the first edition.

<sup>37</sup>. The Schumann theme, a compact rounded binary in F-sharp minor, is the fourth piano piece from *Bunte Blätter* (Op. 99), the first of the «Albumblätter» cycle. The theme was originally composed in 1841 and later incorporated into the larger collection of 1852. In 1853, Clara composed a set of seven variations on the same theme (Op. 20) which she played for Brahms on May 24. Brahms responded in kind with a set of 14 variations on the same theme completed in June of 1854, to which he added two new variations (10 and 11) later in August, making sixteen in all which he published in November and dedicated to Clara.

<sup>38</sup>. A facsimile of this page can be found in FLOROS, Constantin. *Brahms und Bruckner: Studien zur musikalischen Exegetik*, Wiesbaden, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1980, p. 147. The inscription appears on only the first page in the lower staves. Although there are no notes directly above the words, it seems clear, given the underlay, that they are to be «sung» with the violin-violin melody (mm. 1-5).

<b>81</b>		1880/1881	Tragic title	The work may have originated in conjunction with a proposed staging by Franz von Dingelstadt of Goethe's <i>Faust</i> <sup>39</sup> .
<b>117/i</b>		1892/1892	Poetic motto from a Scottish ballad, again from Herder's folksong collection, a German translation of «Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament» from Thomas Percy's <i>Reliques of Ancient English Poetry</i> .	Present in autograph and published edition
<b>117/iii</b>		1892/1892	«Wehgeschrei der Liebe» or «Herzweh,» again from Herder's folksong collection as given above	No motto in autograph or score, follows «Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament» in Brahms's personal collection.
<b>118 no. 6</b>		1893/1893	Anonymous poem	Kalbeck identifies the poem for only one of these cases, the last Intermezzo of <i>Sechs Klavierstücke</i> (Op. 118 no. 6).

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<sup>39</sup>. KALBECK, Max. *Op. cit.* (see note 16), vol. III, pp. 257-258.

APPENDIX 3

TEXTS OF KLAUS GROTH'S «REGENLIED» AND «NACHKLANG»<sup>40</sup>

**Regenlied**

Walle, Regen, walle nieder,  
wecke mir die Träume wieder,  
die ich in der Kindheit träumte,  
wenn das Naß im Sande schäumte!  
Wenn die matte Sommerschwüle  
lässig stritt mit frischer Kühle,  
und die blanken Blätter tauten,  
und die Saaten dunkler blauten.  
Welche Wonne, in dem Fließen,  
dann zu stehn mit nackten Füßen,  
an dem Grase hin zu streifen  
und den Schaum mit Händen greifen,  
oder mit den heißen Wangen  
kalte Tropfen aufzufangen,  
und den neuerwachten Düften  
seine Kinderbrust zu lüften!  
Wie die Kelche, die da troffen,  
stand die Seele atmend offen,  
wie die Blumen, düftetrunken,  
in dem Himmelstau versunken.  
Schauernd kühlte jeder Tropfen  
tief bis an des Herzens Klopfen,  
und der Schöpfung heilig Weben  
drang bis ins verborgne Leben.  
Walle, Regen, walle nieder,  
wecke meine alten Lieder,  
die wir in der Türe sangen,  
wenn die Tropfen draußen klangen!  
Möchte ihnen wieder lauschen,  
ihrem süßen, feuchten Rauschen,  
meine Seele sanft betauen  
mit dem frommen Kindergrauen.

**Nachklang**

Regentropfen aus den Bäumen  
fallen in das grüne Gras,  
Tränen meiner trüben Augen  
machen mir die Wange naß.  
Wenn die Sonne wieder scheint,  
wird der Rasen doppelt grün:  
doppelt wird auf meinen Wangen  
mir die heiße Träne glühn.

**Rainsong**

Pour, rain, pour down,  
reawaken in me the dreams  
which I dreamt in childhood,  
when moisture foamed in the sand!  
When the weary sultriness of summer  
fought indolently against the fresh coolness,  
and the gleaming leaves dripped of dew,  
and the fields of grain took on a deeper blue.  
What joy it was to stand  
in the downpour with bare feet,  
to brush against the grass  
and to reach for the foam with your hands,  
or to catch cool drops  
on hot cheeks,  
and to open one's childlike heart  
to the newly awakened scents!  
Like the calyxes dripping there,  
my breathing soul stood open,  
like the flowers, intoxicated with fragrances,  
sunk with heavenly dew.  
Each trembling drop cooled  
right down to the beating heart,  
and the holy weave of creation  
penetrated the hidden sources of life.  
Pour, rain, pour down,  
awaken my old songs,  
which we sang in the doorway,  
when the drops fell noisily outside!  
I would like to listen to them again,  
to their sweet, moist murmuring,  
so that my soul is gently bedewed  
with holy childlike awe.

**Echo**

From the trees raindrops  
fall into the green grass;  
tears from my dulled eyes  
moisten my cheeks.  
When the sun shines again,  
the lawn becomes twice as green:  
my hot tears burn twice  
as fiercely on my cheeks.

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<sup>40</sup>. The original German text is taken from FISCHER-DIESKAU, Dietrich. *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder: The Texts of over 750 Songs in German*, translated by George Bird and Richard Stokes, London, Victor Gollancz, 1976, pp. 319-320 and 302.

## APPENDIX 4

EXCERPT FROM KALBECK, Max. *Op. cit.* (see note 16), vol. III, pp. 408–409, N. 1.

Der im Briefwechsel Brahms-Herzogenberg von mir unterdrückte Schluß des Brief gehört hierher; denn hier handelt es sich um eine möglichst erschöpfende Darstellung des Brahms'schen Wesens, wobei es vollkommen gleichgültig ist, ob das Urteil des Meisters zu Recht besteht oder dem Superarbitrium der Geschichte erliegen sollte. Brahms fährt in dem Schreiben vom 12. Januar 1885 fort:

«Sie sind doch nicht böse, daß auch Hanslick dieser Meinung ist und mit aller Andacht und allem Vergnügen Ihren Brief gelesen hat? Übrigens sind eine Symphonie und ein Quintett von Bruckner gedruckt. Suchen Sie sich einen Einblick zu verschaffen, Ihr Gemüt und Urteil zu stählen — mich brauchen Sie gewiß nicht. Alles hat seinen Grenzen. Bruckner liegt jenseits, über seine Sachen kann man nicht und her, kann man gar nicht reden. Über den Menschen auch nicht. Es ist ein armer verrückter Mensch, den die Pfaffen von St. Florian auf dem Gewissen haben. Ich weiß nicht, ob Sie eine Ahnung davon haben, was es heißt, seine Jugend bei den Pfaffen verlebt zu haben? Ich könnte davon und von Bruckner erzählen. Ach von so häßlichen Dingen soll man mit Ihnen gar nicht reden! Höchst verdrießlich und tiefst ergeben und herzlich grüßend, Ihr, J. Br.»

Derselben Meinung gab Brahms mündlich öfters Ausdruck. Richard Specht hat in einem Feuilleton der Wiener «Zeit» «Ein Gespräch mit Brahms» überliefert, das im Todesjahre des Meisters Statt fand und das in dem, was Bruckner angeht, so ziemlich mit den Äußerungen übereinstimmt, die auch ich in den Achtzigerjahren manchmal aus seinem Munde vernahm. In einem, von Dr. Heinrich Groeber 1895 ausgezeichneten Diskurs über Bruckner sagte Brahms: «Alles ist bei ihm gemacht, Affektation, nichts Natur. Seine Frömmigkeit — das ist seine Sache, das geht mich nichts an. Aber diese Meßvellenitäten sind mir ekelhaft, ganz zuwider. Er hat keine Ahnung von einer musikalischen Folgerichtigkeit, keine Idee von einem geordneten musikalischen Aufbau.» — Specht läßt ihn sagen: «Bei Bruckner ist das etwas etwas ganz anders» (im Gegensatz zu Gustav Mahler und Hugo Wolf, die er nicht beurteilen wolle, weil ihm das dazu gehörige Gefühl oder Verständnis fehle!); «da handelt es sich, wenigstens zunächst, gar nicht um die Werke, sondern um einen Schwindel, der in ein bis zwei Jahren tot und vergessen sein wird. Fassen Sie es auf, wie Sie wollen; Bruckner verdankt seinen Ruhm ausschließlich mir, und ohne mich hätte kein Hahn nach ihm gekräht, aber dies geschah sehr gegen meinen Willen. Nietzsche hat einmal behauptet, daß ich nur durch einem Zufall

berühmt geworden sei: ich sei von der Anti-Wagner-partei als Gegenpapst nötig gebraucht worden. Das ist natürlich Unsinn; ich bin keiner, der dazu taugt, an die Spitze irgendeiner Partei gestellt zu werden, denn ich muß meinen Weg allein und in Frieden gehen und hab' ich auch nie mit einem anderen gekreuzt. Aber mit Bruckner stimmt das. Nach Wagners Tode nämlich brauchte jetzt natürlich seine Partei einen Papst, und sie hatten eben keinen Besseren als Bruckner. Glauben Sie denn, daß ein Mensch unter dieser unreifen Masse auch nur das Geringste von diesen symphonischen Riesenschlangen begreift, und glauben Sie nicht auch, daß ich der Musiker bin, der heute Wagners Werke am besten versteht und jedenfalls besser als irgendeiner seiner sogenannten Anhänger, die mich am liebsten vergisten möchten? Ich habe es einmal zu Wagner selbst gesagt, daß ich heute der beste Wagnerianer bin. Halten Sie mich für so beschränkt, daß ich von der Heiterkeit und Größe der «Meistersinger» nicht auch entzückt werden konnte? Oder für so unehrlich, meine Ansicht zu verschweigen, daß ich ein paar Takte dieses Werk für so wertvoller halte als alle Opern, die nachher komponiert werden? Und ich ein Gegenpapst? Es ist ja zu demm! Und Bruckners Werke unsterblich oder vielleicht gar Symphonien? Es ist ja zum Lachen!»

[The conclusion of a letter from the Brahms–Herzogenberg correspondence belongs here as it represents as exhaustive a representation of Brahms's nature as possible<sup>41</sup>. It is entirely immaterial whether the Master's opinion rightfully exists or whether it should be assigned to the great arbitrariness of history. In the letter of 12 January 1885 Brahms continues:

«You are, however, not wicked. Hanslick is of the same opinion and read your letter with great devotion and pleasure! But one symphony and one quintet of Bruckner's have been published<sup>42</sup>. Seek to look at them with a view to steeling your mind and your judgement. You will certainly not want me! Everything has its borders. Bruckner lies beyond them. One cannot speak about his things at all. Nor about the person. He is a lamentable, crazy person that the priests of St. Florian have on their conscience. I don't know if you have any idea what it means to have spent your youth with the priests? I could tell you about that and about Bruckner. But one should not speak to you of such wretched things. With highest ill-humour, deepest respect and kindest regards, Your J. Br.»

Brahms expressed the same opinion verbally on a number of occasions. Richard Specht delivered «Ein Gespräch mit Brahms» in a feuilleton of the Viennese daily newspaper *Zeit* which appeared the year the master died and concerns Bruckner. It is entirely consistent with the utterances I heard from him in the 80s. In an excellent discussion by Heinrich Groeber of 1895 on Bruckner, Brahms said: «everything he does is affectation, there is nothing natural.

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<sup>41</sup>. Kalbeck refers to a letter from Johannes Brahms to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, 12 January 1885.

<sup>42</sup>. Anton Bruckner, Symphony No. 3 in D minor dedicated to Richard Wagner, and String Quintet in F major.

His piousness — that is his thing, and it does not effect me. But this *Meßvelleitäten*<sup>43</sup> (religious/Catholic wallowing) is disgusting and completely contrary to me. He has no notion of musical logic, no idea of an arranged musical structure.» Specht reports him saying: «With Bruckner everything is completely different.» (contrary to Gustav Mahler and Hugo Wolf, whom he does not want to judge, because he lacks the feeling or understanding due to them.) «There the concern, at least initially, is not the works, but the swindle which will be dead and forgotten in one to two years. Understand it how you will. Nietzsche once claimed that I merely became famous by accident. I was used by necessity as the opposition-pope of the anti-Wagner party. Of course this is nonsense; I am not to be placed at the head of any party, because I must make my way alone and in peace, furthermore I never crossed another. However this is the case with Bruckner. After Wagner's death the party naturally needed a pope, and they had no one better than Bruckner. Do you believe then, that people under this unripe mass understand the least of these giant symphonic boa constrictors; and do you not believe that I am the musician who understands Wagner's music best today, at least better than any of his so-called supporters that I would dearly like to forget? I said it once to Wagner himself that today I am the leading Wagnerian. Do you consider me so limited that I could not be charmed by the cheerfulness and greatness of *Meistersinger*? Or to be so dishonest as to conceal my opinion that I consider a pair of bars of this work as valuable as all the operas that have subsequently been composed? And I an anti-priest? It is indeed too stupid! And Bruckner's works immortal and completely symphonic? That is laughable!]

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<sup>43</sup>. Brahms invented this word. «Velleität» is a philosophical term referring to feeble, hesitant intentions. This coupled with «Meß» (Sunday Mass, a reference to Bruckner's Catholicism) can be translated as religious/Catholic wallowing. We are grateful to Friederike Freier for her advice on the translation of this term.