

Ravenscroft argues that not only do the songs mirror the verbal nuances and possible meanings of Dickinson's poetry, but also the relations between the composer and poet, resonating with feminist concerns of power and escape, and with the role of the woman composer in contemporary society.

In the final chapter, Laurel Parsons considers Elisabeth Lutyens's *Essence of Our Happinesses* (1968), for tenor, chorus, and orchestra. In contrast with the voices of female poets and singers in Saariaho and Larsen's compositions, Lutyens sets male-authored texts for a male soloist (sometimes supported by a mixed chorus). But her own voice is still unmistakable, particularly in her choice of text for the second movement: a meditation by John Donne on the nature of time and human happiness that echoed her own regrets as a woman in her sixties looking back on her life. During the first section of the movement, tenor and chorus sing Donne's text. But, as Parsons shows, in the short instrumental dance that follows the orchestra itself voices the temporal imagery of Donne's meditation through Lutyens's irregular juxtapositions of fleeting melodic motives and gestures against a relentlessly ticking ostinato.

NOTE

1. Kaija Saariaho, "Kaija Saariaho on her *From the Grammar of Dreams*," article published February 29, 2012, <http://www.carnegiehall.org/BlogPost.aspx?id=4294984862>.

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Kaija Saariaho, "The claw of the magnolia . . . ," *From the Grammar of Dreams* (1988)

The Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho is unquestionably one of the finest composers of her generation, and one of the few female composers whose music has not only been performed and recorded to wide acclaim, but has also attracted scholarly analytical attention.¹ Born in 1952, Saariaho was educated in Helsinki at the Rudolf Steiner School, where the curriculum included a strong focus on arts and music.² She studied violin and piano and, later, guitar, and began writing her own compositions at the age of ten. Upon graduation from school, she first enrolled in the Institute for Industrial Arts and Crafts to study graphic design. A few years later, in 1976, Saariaho entered the Sibelius Academy, where she studied composition with the modernist Finnish composer Paavo Heininen and began experimenting with tape music.

After graduating in 1980, Saariaho attended the Darmstadt summer school, where she was attracted to the spectral music of the French composers Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail. She also met Brian Ferneyhough there, and went on to study with him and Klaus Huber in Freiburg even though she felt unsatisfied by the opacity of the so-called New Complexity's "complex techniques and inaudible structures."³ It was not until she

i. See for example Vesa Kankaanpää, "Displaced Time: Transcontextual References to Time in Kaija Saariaho's *Stilleben*," *Organised Sound* 1, no. 2 (August 1996): 87–92; Damien Pousset, Joshua Fineberg, and Ronan Hyacinthe, "The Works of Kaija Saariaho, Philippe Hurel and Marc-André Dalbavie—*Stile Concertato, Stile Concitato, Stile Rappresentativo*," *Contemporary Music Review* 19, no. 3 (2000): 67–110; and Tim Howell with Jon Hargreaves and Michael Rofe, eds., *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

ii. Biographical information on the composer is drawn from Pirkko Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

iii. *Ibid.*, 9.

attended a course at IRCAM in Paris that she felt she had found the ideal environment for the development of her musical ideas, and in 1982 Paris became her permanent home. Saariaho spent several years at IRCAM experimenting with technology and timbre and producing such works as her tape piece *Vers le blanc* (1982), as well as several compositions combining acoustic instruments with live electronics.

In the 1990s Saariaho's music moved into a new phase, characterized by greater expressivity and rhythmic activity. Her violin concerto, *Graal théâtre* (1995), was composed for Gidon Kremer, and 1996 saw the composition of two works for the soprano Dawn Upshaw, *Château de l'âme* and *Lonh*, for soprano and electronics. Many other collaborations and commissions have followed, for orchestras such as the New York, Los Angeles, and Berlin Philharmonics, the Orchestre de Paris, the Boston Symphony and the Cleveland Orchestra. Her first opera, *L'amour de loin* (2000), was staged by Peter Sellars at the Salzburg Festival and won her the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 2003.^{iv} Her music has also been recognized by the Prix Ars Electronica, the Nordic Council Music Prize, the Léonie Sonning Music Prize, and, in 2013, the Polar Music Prize.

Superposition in Kaija Saariaho's "The claw of the magnolia . . ."

John Roeder

Kaija Saariaho's *From the Grammar of Dreams*, composed in 1988, is a cycle of five unaccompanied duets for soprano and mezzo-soprano that sets "Paralytic," a late poem of Sylvia Plath.¹ The text gives vivid voice to the reveries of a male polio victim, immobile and speechless in an iron lung, who remains aloofly sensible of the women (nurses, wife, and daughters) attending to him.

The composer apportions the ten brief stanzas to her songs in a dramatic and provocative way that highlights the concluding lines. In Songs I and II, the soprano sings the first four and next five stanzas, respectively, while the mezzo simultaneously sings excerpts from *The Bell Jar* that treat similar themes of dreams, numbness, and death. Song IV polyphonically combines two other excerpts from the novel that portray the beating of a woman's

iv. Two additional operas, *Adriana Mater* and *Emilie*, were premiered in 2006 and 2010 respectively.

heart as a motoric "brag" that overrides her self-destructive impulses. But only temporarily: the last song begins as a vocalise on the phoneme [a] that, just as it opens up to revisit stanza nine's words "I smile"—the only first-person declaration of affect in the poem—abruptly cuts off, according to the composer's direction "as if in the middle of a phrase." All four of these songs include exaggerated vocal techniques such as accented whispering, *Sprechstimme*, glissandi, and melismatic acciacaturas.

In Song III, the central song of the cycle and the focus of this essay, the composer sets the crucial concluding lines, in which the narrator metaphorically articulates a double-edged epiphany: "The claw / Of the magnolia, / Drunk on its own scents, / Asks nothing of life." The power of this text derives from its superposition of starkly contrasting images: petals/talons, perfume/inebriation, enlightenment/self-infatuation, vitality/the void. The narrator's condition offers him apparent spiritual freedom, but at the price of physical imprisonment; the alluring fragrance of autonomy mingles with the toxic odor of death. The strongly feminine connotation of the magnolia exposes Plath's ventriloquism, transmuted the paralyzed male, his senses stifled in "cellophane," into Woman in her bell jar.

Compared to the elaborate surrounding songs, Saariaho's music for these lines is simple. The singers share a single text, and they sing plainly, with no pyrotechnics. The tempo, expressive, and dynamic marks of the score direct them to project a sustained and subdued affect that may be taken to denote the paralytic's "buddha"-like mindfulness (described in the preceding lines). These qualities, along with its position at the center of the set, give a strong and appropriate focus to this striking stanza.

The directness of the compositional language in Song III invites especially close listening. By drawing upon a variety of mutually supportive analytical techniques, this essay will show how artfully the composer coordinates various aspects of its music, not only to suit the form and syntax of the text, but also to create concurrent, contrasting processes that symbolize its metaphorical superpositions. This essay will first discover those processes through a detailed consideration of the first measures, then follow their actions throughout the rest of the song, showing that, although the voices rarely attack together or double each other, they may be heard to collaborate to articulate the lines of the text, and to create a fairly traditional flux of tension and relaxation, through coordinated changes of pitch, intervals, and rhythmic behavior.

The setting of the first line, beginning with "the claw," immediately manifests this collaboration. Sustaining the phoneme [a], the voices dwell for twenty seconds on just four pitches, {F₄, F#₄, A#₄, B₄}, a collection that features two semitones, two perfect fourths, a major third, and a tritone, but no interval classes 2 or 3. Melodically they emphasize the semitones,

switching almost simultaneously from one to the other. This reinforces the familiarly progressive quality of these small intervals while also imbuing the larger intervals with a more harmonic identity, since they appear mostly as simultaneities. This unvarying pitch content, ordered palindromically by the soprano (from her second attack until the end of this texture in m. 4), conveys a sense of timelessness and self-enclosure expressive of the paralytic's state of mind.

Nevertheless, interactions between the parts and exchanges of register subtly shape the unvarying pitch content and timbre. The voices connect verbally from the very start, when the soprano sings the definite article "the" and the mezzo directly provides the corresponding noun, "claw." This cooperation becomes intervallic as the soprano imitates the ascending semitone of the mezzo and grows in a rapid exposition of all four possible ways to combine the two lower pitches in the mezzo with the two higher pitches in the soprano.² These four harmonic intervals are labeled between the staves at the beginning of Example 7.1a, a skeletal sketch of the passage. The last of them, a tritone, sounds like an ending because it is followed by the first simultaneous attack, in m. 2, that initiates the first registral exchange of the voices. ●

This segmenting function for the tritone is affirmed as the voices' rhythms interact to form phrases through a varying meter. By this I mean not the notated beat, which is hardly articulated past m. 1, but "projective" meter: the process, theorized by Christopher Hasty, of immediate durational reproduction.³ The symbols surrounding Example 7.1b express this dynamic measuring activity. Vertical strokes (|) denote the "dominant beginnings" of the durations, indicated by solid curved arrows, that, as they become definite, generate expectations that they will be reproduced by subsequent events. The two levels of the analysis show such "projections" forming for both shorter and longer durations. Not every event is equally important in this process; those marked by diagonal slashes contribute to the accumulation of durations already begun.

The analysis shows that the mezzo first assumes the role of timekeeper, realizing a "projective potential" Q, and also realizing its projection Q' (the metrical sensation that Q will be replicated) by its move to F₄, which creates the first instance of a tritone between the voices.⁴ Such simultaneous tritones, indicated by the boxed 6s in Example 7.1a, will prove to have a consistent metrical function. The soprano supports the action, providing an anticipatory anacrusis (/) to the mezzo's third attack and establishing the projective potential of duration R, to which the mezzo's second duration has contributed as a continuation (\). In other words, upon the completion of R, the listener expects events a half note and a whole note later. However, an attack—a strong one, in both voices simultaneously—comes

Example 7.1

Kaija Saariaho, "The claw of the magnolia . . ." aspects of mm. 1–4: (a) simultaneity intervals, imitation and melodic structure, and register exchange; (b) four phrases (boxed) articulated by metrical process, recurring pitches, and distinctive simultaneity intervals; (c) how pitches function as scale degrees with respect to two tonics, B and B_b (A \flat)

(a) Skeletal sketch of the passage. The Soprano part is shown with a dashed line indicating a "soprano palindrome" from m. 2 to m. 4. Register exchanges are marked with "register exchange" and "+1". Scale degrees are indicated below the notes: 5, 4, 5, 6, 4, 5, 6, 1, 5, 4, 5, 6, 5, 1, 6, 5, 05. The Mezzo part is shown with "mezzo imitates soprano" and "s. imitates m.". Tritone markings (tritone) are shown between the staves.

(b) Four phrases (boxed) articulated by metrical process, recurring pitches, and distinctive simultaneity intervals. The phrases are marked with tritone symbols (tritone) and metrical symbols (|, /, \, //, //). The phrases are: 1. F#4, F#4/F; 2. F#4, F#4; 3. F#4, F#4; 4. F#4, F#4.

(c) How pitches function as scale degrees with respect to two tonics, B and B_b (A \flat). The Soprano part is shown with scale degrees: B_b: 1, B: #7, 1, 5, B_b: 1, 2, 1, B: 1, #4, 5, 1. The Mezzo part is shown with scale degrees: B: #4, 5, #4, B_b: 6, B_b: 6, B: #4, 5, 1, 5.

earlier than expected, dispelling the emerging sense of meter (symbolized by the interruption of the broken arc following arrow R).

With this new "dominant beginning" (|) on the shared attack, the process of setting up and disrupting meter repeats. The mezzo's change from her initiating A \sharp ₄ to a tritone-creating B₄, supported by a soprano anacrusis, establishes a fresh duration S and its projection S', but that projection terminates through a metrical "hiatus" (||) after no event arrives in time to realize S'. Thus projective meter again arises at, but then is disrupted immediately after, the onset of a tritone simultaneity. A longer phrase is initiated in m. 3 by a new, striking simultaneity interval, a semitone (indicated on Example 7.1a by a circled 1), when the mezzo leaps down to F \sharp ₄ over the soprano's F₄. However, as in the first phrase, its projections are cut off after a tritone simultaneity. The reattack of F \sharp ₄, whose duration is continued by a half-step-forming F, creates a fourth dominant beginning.

The rhythm then regularizes to a series of triplet quarter notes that act as an anacrusis to a new dominant beginning at the shared attack in m. 5, and so the tritone that initiates this anacrusis signals the ending of the fourth phrase. By conceiving of the meter of the opening section of the song in this way, then, one can hear four metrically distinctive phrases, marked by exchanges of register, that associate particular pitches and harmonic intervals with metrically activating or closing functions.

As the larger intervals in the fixed-pitch collection are exhaustively exposed, they create shifting priorities among the notes. Example 7.1c shows how the events can be interpreted (sometimes enharmonically) as scale degrees in two different keys during mm. 1–4 on the basis of common intuitions about the rootedness of intervals and the position of semitones in diatonic scales.⁵ Stems indicate the most stable events, which always appear as members of tonally definite simultaneities, while less stable events appear unstemmed and slurred, as melodic prefixes or suffixes, to them. The initial perfect fourth simultaneity {F, A#} prioritizes A# as an enharmonic B \flat .⁶ Then both notes ascend to a perfect fourth {F#, B} that prioritizes B. (Open and solid stemmed note heads distinguish notes that are stable in B and B \flat , respectively.) As these fourths recur in mm. 3 and 4, the tonal focus shifts back to A#/B \flat and then “modulates” again to B. The repeated assertion of two alternative tonal contexts suggests a special interpretation for the stable dyad {F#, A#} in m. 2, which is emphasized as the only one that both voices attack simultaneously: it might be heard to allude to both tonalities at once, superposing the tonic of B \flat with the dominant of B. However, such intuitions raise an interpretative problem: they do not attribute repose to a tritone, which makes it hard to hear closure at the {B, F}s that terminate every phrase. As I will show later, the piece solves this problem later on by reprising the special {F#, A#} in a way that provides both convincing closure and an ingenious musical expression of the paralytic’s mentality.

Across mm. 1–4, other processes cooperate with the coalescing metrical and tonal organization documented in Example 7.1 to contribute to the general musical affect. Attacks come more rapidly. Registral exchanges appear almost regularly. In m. 2 a process begins of running through all four possible combinations of the high mezzo A#4 and B4 with the low soprano F and F#, but the last combination (mezzo B4 over soprano F#4) is withheld until just before the many changes in m. 5. A larger-scale relationship also develops, as shown in Example 7.1a: the mezzo imitates the soprano’s opening succession of four pitches, after which the soprano imitates the mezzo’s last three pitches. We seem to be caught in an enclosed chamber with intensifying, circular echoes.

The paradoxically animated stasis of this opening passage sensitizes the listener to processes that will shape the rest of the song: changes and

exchanges of register, fluctuations of imitative intensity and rhythmic density, the definition and succession of distinctive pitch collections, and varying meter and tonality. The following discussion shows how each of these produces and articulates a distinctive musical continuity, and how they coordinate to create sections (starting at mm. 1, 5, 10, 12, and 15) that match the divisions of the text and bring out its associations of conflicting images. I draw upon a variety of analytical approaches to discuss these aspects; in the interests of concision, however, I will relegate expositions of methodology to the endnotes.

● Example 7.2a renders the pitch sequence of each voice as a continuous line—dotted for the soprano, dashed for the mezzo—coordinated with the measure numbers and text shown along the top. In the contour of the soprano a traditional arch shape spanning the entire piece is evident, rising to a first peak around mm. 6–8, falling off, gaining a climax in m. 14, then falling back to the original register. The highest pitch, emphasized by a leap, sets the only verb of the text, “asks.” Its musical tension highlights the possibility that the paralytic might engage with “life” outside his reverie, but the rapid drop-off in register that follows it emphasizes the irony of the “nothing” he demands.

Although the mezzo line includes some striking low points, its contour otherwise traces the same shape, at about the same pace, as the soprano’s, even though the voices almost never sing the same pitch. Thus each often encroaches upon the other’s range, with special intensity when they hold high pitches only a semitone apart. Example 7.2a indicates two such moments; both times the semitone is {F, F#}—the same dyad that initiated phrases in the first section, but an octave higher, and it seems to spur the soprano on to melodic high points.

The graphical superposition of the two lines also reveals the recurrence of three distinctive coordinated behaviors that associate the words they set and articulate formal divisions of the song. Consider, for instance, the voices’ exchanges of register in mm. 1–4; these are evident in Example 7.2a as line crossings, creating a series of four registral arrangements corresponding to the four phrases discussed above. These exchanges disappear at m. 5 but resume at m. 10, marking both moments as the beginnings of sections and associating the contrasting words “claw” and “magnolia.” They cease again at m. 12, marking the beginning of the third line of the poem. They then proceed to another distinctive shared activity: each voice alternates between notes separated by a leap. This begins with the word “drunk” in m. 12 and recurs in mm. 15–16, setting “asks nothing of life.” Both instances precede a third sort of distinctive collaboration, the immediate succession of trills in each voice on the same semitone, respectively {A, B \flat } (mm. 12–13) and {F, G \flat } (mm. 17–18). The latter sounds closural partly

Example 7.3
Pitch-class-set recurrences

(a) The claw (m. 1), of the ma (m. 5), of the magnolia, of the magnolia, (m. 10), Drunk on its own scents, (m. 12), Asks nothing of life. (m. 15)

(b) (supports B minor), (supports Bb major)

tetrachords with the same pitch classes

and because there are some clear instances of sets related by transposition or inversion.⁹ Indeed, the timing and ordering of related sets support hearing m. 10 as an important articulation in the flow of the music, just as do the changes in registral behavior, imitation, and density at that moment (recall Example 7.2). This is the moment that initiates the repetition of sets introduced earlier. Also, the intense activity preceding m. 10 interlocks two types of tetrachords, 0236 and 0135, whose other instances are organized similarly, as shown by Example 7.3b. For both series of tetrachords, two sets related by T_3 are linked by I_9 to two other instances of the same set class, themselves linked by I_9 . Before they entangle, only 0236 is present (in m. 5); after m. 10, only 0135.

Some recurrences associate words of the poem. For example, the 0147 type $\{F\#, B, C, E\}$ sets both “drunk” and the soprano’s “asks nothing.” Also, the final four notes, $\{F, F\#, A\#, B\}$, setting “nothing of life,” reprise the tetrachord that set “the claw” at the start of the song, linking those allusions to death. There are no other instances of this 0156 set class, and these two have exactly the same pitches except for $A\#$, which appears an octave lower at the end. The significance of this change will be discussed below.

The music is not as harmonically diverse as the numerous labels seem to assert; to the contrary, they unify the song by maintaining a fairly constant collection of intervals. Only six of the 29 tetrachord classes (counting the two all-interval sets as different) contain the four ics of the opening set, 1, 4, 5, and 6. All six appear prominently. All the other tetrachords shown in Example 7.2 also include ics 1, 4, and either 5 or 6. This consistency also manifests more concretely in the similar dyadic organization of different passages; for instance, mm. 7–8, 10–12, and 15–18 all feature the dyads $\{D, E\}$, $\{G, A\}$, and $\{F\#, B\}$, even though those are combined into various tetrachords. Some dyadic repetitions are associated with formal articulations: for instance, the ordered dyad $\langle E\#, C \rangle$ marks section beginnings at mm. 5, 12, and 15.

These overarching interval and pitch continuities are articulated by contrasts between simultaneous or successive tetrachords, which also clarify texture or suggest harmonic progression. For example, a series of such contrasts at m. 5 breaks the voices’ initial entwining within $\{F, F\#, A\#, B\}$: first, the singers shift to new notes (notably $\langle E\#, C \rangle$); then they present two ics (2 and 3) that were lacking in the opening tetrachord; and finally, they diverge completely from each other in pc content and register. Changes to previously unheard types of tetrachords also mark all other important registral, imitative, and textural articulations (which correspond to syntactic articulations in the poem): 0157 at m. 10, 0147 at m. 12, and 0237 at m. 15. Lastly, the sudden change during the final text phrase “nothing of life” (mm. 15–16) from one dyad pair, $\{\{E\#, C\}, \{D, G\}\}$, to a completely different one, $\{\{B, F\#\}, \{F, A\#\}\}$, dramatically highlights the return of the opening tetrachord.

Comparing Example 7.3 to Example 7.2, one can see how pitch groupings coordinate with texture to provide unity, continuity, shape, and sectionality that match the articulations of the text and associate its words. However, while such a multifaceted account does some justice to Saariaho's art, it does not adequately address the most interesting musical feature of the setting: its polyvocality. In the other songs of this opus, the concurrency of different texts requires such a texture, but in Song III both voices sing the same words, sometimes to different music, at other times echoing each other's intervals. This musical and textural imitation has a dual temporality, on the one hand highlighting two independent concurrent processes that compete for attention, on the other also imbuing the following voice with the special continuity of repetition. Are there musical processes that support this disunited unification, and if so, do they relate to the poem and its themes? In order to address these questions it is necessary to go beyond a description of content to examine the senses of musical time and space created by the shifting metrical and tonal relationships between the voices. As they variously imitate, synchronize, and diverge, truly dual points of reference emerge—two equally present tonalities and the coexistence of multiple meters—that artfully portray the stanza's symbolic superpositions.

The principal sections of the music after m. 4 pass the voices through a variety of metrical interactions, each involving a concurrency of two independent streams of activity. Across mm. 5–9 (Example 7.4a), they reverse metrical roles. First they attack together twice, a half note apart (very unusually for this song), and the soprano provides an anacrusis to the second attack, thus collaborating to establish projection $Q-Q'$. Thereafter the mezzo's regular attacks realize that projection, and even articulate a longer projection $R-R'$, creating a sense of tactus and measure. But the soprano untethers her rhythm from the mezzo's meter, placing regular attacks off the beat, and suggesting a five-quarter-note projection ($S-S'$) rather than a whole note. The G_5 she attains triggers more novel behavior: the mezzo begins a series of three oscillations within dyads, singing irregularly stressed accelerating durations in such a way as to thwart entrainment at any tempo. Into this temporarily unmeasured continuity, the soprano gradually assumes the timekeeping role, indeed establishing a metric field very similar to the mezzo's at the beginning of this section. Also changing roles, the mezzo, like the soprano at first, now provides anacrusic support. Thereafter, however, despite the presence of the longer projection, the sense of tactus dissolves in the accelerations toward the sustained trills.

A striking change marks the beginning of the following passage, mm. 10–12, as the voices engage differently to create two definite and distinct concurrent meters.¹⁰ To clarify this collaboration, Example 7.4b places each event on one of two staves, representing different streams of pulse, with

Example 7.4

(a) Projective meter in mm. 5–9; (b) Concurrent pulse streams in mm. 10–12; (c) Metric coordination of voices, mm. 15–end

(a) Projective meter in mm. 5–9: This diagram shows the vocal lines for Soprano and Mezzo. The Soprano part has annotations S, S', R, Q, Q', R' indicating rhythmic projections. The Mezzo part has annotations Q, Q', R, R' indicating rhythmic projections. The notation includes notes, rests, and slurs.

(b) Concurrent pulse streams in mm. 10–12: This diagram shows the vocal lines for Soprano and Mezzo. The Soprano part has a '5/4 pulse stream' annotation. The Mezzo part has a '5/4 pulse stream' annotation. There is a 'quasi' section indicated by a dashed box. The notation includes notes, rests, and slurs.

(c) Metric coordination of voices, mm. 15–end: This diagram shows the vocal lines for Soprano and Mezzo. The Soprano part has lyrics: 'nothing asks asks nothing of life nothing of life of life'. The Mezzo part has lyrics: 'Asks no-thing asks life of life asks nothing of life of life'. The notation includes notes, rests, and slurs.

the stem direction indicating the voice that sings it; attacks with stems across both staves contribute to both streams. During mm. 10–11, a pulse stream on the top staff arises from the recurring eighth notes, while the regularly repeated peak on E_b5 , indicated by brackets over the staff, creates a sense of meter. Meanwhile, six attacks alternate between $F\#/G_b4$ and B_4 . They are not exactly regular—the second attack is a trifle early, and the sixth attack quite delayed, like a *ritardando*—but can nevertheless be perceived essentially as the five-sixteenth pulse shown in gray below the staff. Its strong beats (on the $F\#$ s, recalling mm. 1–4) have the same tempo as the other's E_b strong beats but do not coincide with them. At m. 12 the pulse streams change; each dividing the same time span differently. The changing stem directions on each staff make it clear how, across the entire

passage, the two voices switch between the two metrical streams, much as they exchanged registers in mm. 1–4.

Immediately following this rigorous construction, the closural trill alternations reappear, and the song suddenly and strikingly abandons meter for a while. During the text “on its own scents” the durations vary widely and unpredictably—a common way to signify inebriation. Some of this uncoordinated irregularity may be heard to persist into the last line of the song, mm. 15–18. But meter does return, now in a complex but eventually clear coordination of rhythmic behaviors that are laid out in Example 7.4c. Separately, each voice has a varying, loosely projective meter, indicated by the symbols above and below the rhythms, which is further complicated by the aforementioned imitative relations between them. However, their combination is much more regular, providing attacks nearly every quarter note, as shown by the lines in the middle of the figure.

One compelling way to reconcile the sensations of separate meters with this combined quarter-note pulse stream is to focus on the reiterations of the crucial word “nothing.” Nearly all its instances are set to a distinctive short-long “snap” rhythm, consistent with English prosody and emphasizing the onset of the first syllable despite its shorter duration. The quarter-note beat itself arises from the mezzo’s two attacks on her first “nothing,” recalling her initial role as timekeeper, and although she misses the next attack (at the moment when the voices shift to the final tetrachord), she reaffirms the beat with two following attacks. The soprano’s first two “nothing”s appear off this beat, even competing with it. However, at the moment marked with a dagger (†)—the only simultaneous attack of the passage—the soprano places her third “nothing” on the beat, and she supports it thereafter. Indeed, at this shared attack one can sense a projection Q–Q’, initiated by the mezzo’s first “nothing,” that will eventually be realized by the soprano’s final onset. Thus, for the first time in the song, the two voices work together to articulate a plain tactus—yet it appears only from the superposition of their separately complicated meters. Superficially one might hear the metrical cooperation as symbolizing the narrator’s attitude of resolve, apparent in the last line of the poem. This regaining of future-directed temporality becomes ironic, however, when the following projection R–R’, suggested by the clear whole note in the soprano, is realized exactly at the moment, marked by an asterisk (*), when both voices cut off their final word, “life.”

The varying priority of pitch also gives rise to multiple concurrent processes, which Example 7.5 represents using a special notation. ● Note size and the presence or absence of a stem indicate the degree to which the corresponding event stands out within its local context, owing mostly to its accents of duration and contour.¹¹ The first four measures summarize

Example 7.5
Interacting tonalities across the entire song

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled with circled numbers 1, 5, and 10. The bottom staff is labeled with circled numbers 10, 12, and 15. Annotations include tonalities (B♭: 1, B: 5, F/F♯, B: 3, B: 1, B♭: 5), rhythmic patterns (5 of the ma, asks, asks), and other markings like (-gnolia), (D/E♭ trill: B major/B♭ major ambiguity), (emphasis of B major), and (*). Brackets and arrows connect these annotations to specific musical events on the staves.

Example 7.1c, the hearing in which B and B \flat , supported by their respective dominants, alternate in priority, and in which small melodic intervals are interpreted as manifesting neighbor-note relations. With this priming, one is more sensitive to the reappearance of these same notes as well as others that reinforce their priority. Accordingly, it is easy to hear that the soprano's most important high pitch events, indicated by upward-stemmed open note heads, are all members of a B major triad (reading E \flat enharmonically as D \sharp). Indeed, as shown by beams above the staff, the succession of the soprano's most prominent notes arpeggiates that triad up twice and then down.

During the passages framed with brackets, the mezzo also emphasizes notes of B major, as shown by downward-stemmed open note heads. However, during other passages, marked with asterisks, she asserts B \flat major, indicated with stemmed solid note heads, even arpeggiating that triad up and down concurrently with the soprano's B major arpeggiations.¹² Indeed, the song's entire pitch field (shown by the black letter names labeling the vertical axis of the pitch-time graph of Example 7.2a) might be conceptualized abstractly as the combination of two harmonic series based on fundamentals B \flat and B, a semitone apart. That is consistent with "spectral composition" procedures that Saariaho studied at IRCAM and applied in other works,¹³ but in this specific context it can also be heard to have a particular significance that becomes apparent at the conclusion of the song.

Other, less salient events are represented by Example 7.5 as bearing traditional melodic relations (neighbors, passing tones, and arpeggiations) to the more important notes, again as suggested by mm. 1–4. Among them, Cs and Gs are singled out, with eighth-note flags, as notes that seem to act consistently as longer-range upper neighbors to the tonics and dominants of the two salient triads.¹⁴

By following this representation of the changing, overlapping tonalities, and by correlating them with the polyvalent metric and imitative activity, as discussed below, one can appreciate deeper aspects of Saariaho's setting. After m. 4, the mezzo next prioritizes B \flat in m. 6, when she leaps down an enharmonic perfect fifth from F $_4$ to A \sharp_3 , evoking a common tonic-defining bass-voice gesture. (The latter is the lowest pitch in the song and is isolated, with the next lowest a major third away.) This is also exactly the moment when, according to the analyses presented above, the two voices diverge metrically and registrally, and cease their imitation. Subsequently, during the metrically and melodically uncertain G $_5$ in the soprano, the mezzo provides a few notes in support of B major. This might be heard to prepare for the soprano's resumption of imitation, which transforms the mezzo's motive into a version that emphasizes B and F \sharp . But just before the soprano regains metric and tonal definition with her F \sharp_5 , the mezzo undercuts her

by reemphasizing notes of B \flat major, noticeably the high F $_5$ that creates a semitone harmonic dyad with the soprano. Similarly, the semitone {D, E \flat } trills that the voices alternate in m. 9 superpose the major mediants of the two triads. The blending of a neighbor-note C with them gives this moment a special quality of tonal ambiguity that nicely matches the dissolution of the tactus.

Resolving these uncertainties, the many changes of m. 10 reassert a unification of the voices in which they share a single tonality and collaborate to create concurrent pulse streams (Example 7.4b). This vividly depicts the "magnolia" as self-sufficient, controlled, and multifaceted. But all sense of coordination vanishes, appropriately enough, when the voices begin to sing the next line of the text, "drunk on its own scents." As meter dissolves under a repeatedly stressed F \sharp_5 , a B \flat major triad arpeggiates up from F $_4$ to F $_5$, again creating a semitone clash. (It involves the B \flat -sounding \circ_{135} tetrachord, {A, B \flat , C, D}, shown in Example 7.3b, which is a transformation of the B minor-sounding \circ_{135} , {F \sharp , G, A, B}, of mm. 10–11.) A moment of B major clarity briefly stabilizes the soprano's climax on B $_5$. But then B \flat major arpeggiations reappear and persist together with B major. The two tonalities seem clearest and most distinct at the song's conclusion: the return, in the mezzo, of the falling fifth to A \sharp_3 strongly affirms the latter as tonic; it opposes the contour of the equally definite ascending F \sharp_4 –B $_4$ dominant–tonic successions in the soprano; and neither voice sings the other's tonic. The sense of separate meters, analyzed in Example 7.4c, contributes to the tonal independence, even as the tactus they cocreate suggests stability.

Analogously, the concluding trills make the final tonal superposition seem terminally irresolvable. Both voices alternate the same two pitches, F and F \sharp , but in the soprano they sound like a chromatic lower-neighbor embellishment of the dominant of B, while in the mezzo they appear as a chromatic upper-neighbor embellishment of the dominant of B \flat . Thus, this final superposition of F \sharp and F stands as a synecdoche of the prevailing dual tonality. The song concludes with the same tritone simultaneity, {F $_4$, B $_4$ }, that concluded the phrases of mm. 1–4, but now it is clear that this dyad combines the tonic of one key with the dominant of the other—just as the {F \sharp , A \sharp } of m. 2 did, but with the associations reversed. The listener has been primed to expect the mezzo's last F $_4$ to fall again to A \sharp_3 tonic, but this goal, like the affirmation of the whole-note projection R–R' (Example 7.4c), fails to be realized, leaving the listener musically, like the paralytic literally, in a state of suspended animation.¹⁵

Thus, while meter and tonality support the linear, form-giving processes of texture and pc-set succession, they also manifest in superposed, concurrent continuities that simultaneously interact and vie for

attention, creating more global, systematic effects analogous to those arising from the voices' imitative declaiming of the text. Indeed, the superposed processes stand as metaphors for the combined temporalities expressed so starkly in the poem's conflicted introduction and close. Time for the paralytic is manifested both in the events passing in an outside world he cannot affect ("it happens") and in the looming possibility of extinction ("will it go on?—," its em dash directed into the blank margin). The magnolia with which he identifies experiences a serene detachment from the time of "life," but the very features upon which it narcissistically transfixes, the clawlike shape and intoxicating odor, prefigure its own inevitable demise. The tonal and metrical dualities, without mapping simply onto the paralytic's, nevertheless also make alternative temporalities simultaneously available. When two concurrent but differing meters are manifested, a given moment can be heard as onbeat and pulse-continuative with respect to one meter, but as off-beat and pulse-resistive with respect to the other. When two different tonalities can be heard, they can be heard to impart different temporally charged functions to a given note—as when B \flat can be heard both as a stable tonic and as a leading tone expected to resolve—and thus promote different expectations about the music's future. Although one may not literally hear both tonalities or both meters at the same time, they are nevertheless available as different and sometimes mutually exclusive frameworks for perceiving the events of the piece, options that may be exercised differently with every new listening.

These poetic and musical dualities might be understood as examples of what feminist theory calls a "double-voicedness" that keeps "two alternative oscillating texts simultaneously in view," a "dominant" discourse (reflecting, say, conventional gender roles) and a "muted" discourse subversive to it.¹⁶ Indeed, it is tempting to interpret *From the Grammar of Dreams* biographically by speculating on what its texts might mean to a composer who abandoned her native Finland early in her career complaining that "in every domain there was always one wise old guy with a bald head, the male authority whose aesthetics or politics ruled. . . . I felt squeezed to be something that I'm not,"¹⁷ and who has subsequently cultivated a distinctively feminine identity in her choice of texts and focus on women's voices.¹⁸ In the absence of any more specific commentary about this work from Saariaho herself, however, one can only guess the extent to which she sympathizes with the gifted but thwarted poet, or with the paralytic's antipathetic sensations of freedom and imprisonment. Whether or not one hears such power struggles, the analysis presented here shows how the superposed processes compellingly represent the narrator's wavering between life and death.

NOTES

1. An overview of the entire work, placing it in the context of Saariaho's other vocal compositions, is given by Éva Pintér in "Was die Träume erzählen: Textdeutungen in den Vokalwerken von Kaija Saariaho," in *Woher? Wohin? Die Komponistin Kaija Saariaho*, ed. Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich (Mainz: Schott Music, 2007), 75–83. She characterizes Song III as the slow movement in a five-movement arch form but does not analyze any specific musical details. She also mentions two other, later versions: one for soprano and electronics (2002), and a "stage version," presumably intended for the concert tour, called by the same name and featuring this work, that the composer organized in the late 1990s. *From the Grammar of Dreams* differs completely from Saariaho's similarly titled *Grammaire des rêves*, also from 1988–89 for two female soloists, but on texts by Paul Eluard, and with instrumental accompaniment.

2. At least, this is what the score specifies. However, in a definitive recording of this song (featuring singers who are identical twins!) the soprano shifts to B after only a quarter note on A#. Kaija Saariaho, "From the Grammar of Dreams, III," on *From the Grammar of Dreams*, with Anu Komi and Piia Komi (vocalists), Ondine OSE 958-2, 2000, compact disc; also available on iTunes. This does not seem to be a mistake, since the rest of the performance conforms more exactly to the score, but I have not determined whether the composer authorized the change, perhaps in the course of constructing later versions of the work mentioned in n. 1. In any case, it matters little to my analysis, except that it delays the entrance of the last of the four possible simultaneity intervals, the major third, until the first simultaneous attack in m. 2.

3. This processive conception of meter is theorized in Christopher Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), the later chapters of which analyze music in post-tonal idioms close to Saariaho's. The quoted terms in my discussion have specific technical meanings explained in that book.

4. The meter of the different rhythm performed on the recording cited in n. 2 can be heard as similar to the meter I describe in the notated version.

5. A well-known exposition of intuitions about the roots of intervals is Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition: Theoretical Part—Book 1*, trans. Arthur Mendel (New York: Associated Music, 1942), 68–89. The idea of using "rare intervals" to orient one's hearing is discussed in Richmond Browne, "Tonal Implications of the Diatonic Set," *In Theory Only* 5, nos. 6–7 (1981): 3–12.

6. Consistent with the first melodic motion in the soprano, the score nearly always shows A#, not B \flat , implying a leading-tone function, but I see this notation as increasingly ironic, since F continues pairing with A# to make it sound like a tonic.

7. Quantifying attack density requires deciding some methodological questions that implicitly engage rather tricky issues of temporality: over how long a span of time does one gather impressions of the activity of new onsets, and does one attribute those impressions to the beginning, middle, or end of the span? In this context I justify my choice of referential time span not only on notational grounds (that is, the meter signature is $\frac{4}{4}$) but also by the regular appearance on the downbeat of a change of texture, or of an event marked by substantial phenomenal accent, especially during mm. 5–6 and 8–13. Although one's sensation of changes in attack density must necessarily be retrospective, I nevertheless attribute it to the moment that initiated the changes, that is, prospectively from that moment. In other words, I hear the density of the time span as a quality that inheres in the beginning of the span, adapting ideas found in two essays by Christopher Hasty, "Rhythm in Post-Tonal Music: Preliminary Questions of Duration and Motion," *Journal of Music Theory* 25, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 183–216, and "On the Problem of Succession

and Continuity in Twentieth-Century Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 8 (1986): 58–74. Attributions to the middle or end of the span could be represented by shifting the curve of Example 7.2c two or four beats to the right; but neither alteration would substantially affect my reading of how density articulates and directs time.

8. Considering the nature of vocal performance, I hear the semitone trills in m. 9 and m. 13 as sustained tones with vibrato, making them rhythmically cadential events, rather than intensifying, rapid alternations of discrete pitches. To represent them otherwise as dense, as if they were performed on a piano, would require altering Example 7.2c to show high density all the way through m. 9, and through m. 13; but it would still result in a change of slope, indicating sectional divisions around m. 10 and m. 14.

9. This way of hearing treats perfect fourths as equivalent to perfect fifths, which supports the hearings of tonal focus proposed by Example 7.1c.

10. For a summary of a method for analyzing concurrent pulse streams, see John Roeder, "Rhythmic Process and Form in Bartók's 'Syncopation,'" *College Music Symposium* 44 (2004): 43–57.

11. Fred Lerdahl first proposed hierarchizing pitch by perceptual salience in "Atonal Prolongational Structure," *Contemporary Music Review* 4 (1989): 65–87. His exposition addresses concerns raised by Joseph N. Straus in "The Problem of Prolongation in Post-Tonal Music," *Journal of Music Theory* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 1–21. He expands the method in the last two chapters of *Tonal Pitch Space* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), enumerating on p. 320 salience conditions for choosing an event to represent a time span and analyzing several atonal works. My hierarchical analysis notationally distinguishes between more and less salient events, but it is not consistent with Lerdahl's notational system, because I focus principally on the salient recurrence of certain possibly conflicting pc collections, not on an essentially monophonic process of tension and relaxation. I imagine that a tensional analysis could be made of this song, but that would entail simplifying the texture and rhythms, as well as obscuring the superpositions of tonality and meter that I claim are essential to relating music and text. Spencer N. Lambright, in "L'Amour de loin and the Vocal Works of Kaija Saariaho" (DMA diss., Cornell University, 2008), presents similarly reductive diagrams to indicate "hierarchical pitch schemes in her vocal lines" (110); he calls them "Schenkerian," but most of them, like mine, do not involve an a priori background contrapuntal framework.

12. There are numerous precedents for hearing simultaneous competing tonics. My approach here is influenced most directly by the work of William Benjamin, for example "Abstract Polyphonies: The Music of Schoenberg's Nietzschean Moment," in *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Charlotte Cross and Russell Berman (New York: General Music, 2000), 1–39, and "Tonal Dualism in Bruckner's Eighth Symphony," in *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality*, ed. William Kinderman and Harald Krebs (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 237–58. Benjamin's readings, however, usually interpret pitches as factors of chords that participate in functional harmonic progressions, whereas the reduction here simply identifies membership in a tonic triad.

13. For a general overview of Saariaho's compositional procedures, see Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho*, 61–64. The composer herself outlines some of her early techniques in Kaija Saariaho, "Timbre and Harmony: Interpolations of Timbral Structures," *Contemporary Music Review* 2, no. 1 (1987): 93–133. Superpositions of rooted sonorities are common in her works. One early example is *Lichtbogen* (1985–86). After the nine instruments open in unison on F#4 (the source of the harmony for the work was a Fourier analysis of a cello playing this pitch with increasing noise), the texture evolves into overlapping arpeggiations that combine various pairs of triads, often a semitone apart, for example: F# and

G in m. 43, A and B \flat in mm. 48–50, and A \flat and A in m. 54. In a later work, *Ariel's Hail* (2000), a motive heard several times in the first measures combines the pitch classes of the F# major and G major triads. Further examples, including analyses and an extended discussion of harmonic procedures, may be found in Lambright, "L'Amour de loin."

14. For example, this reading shows the prominent G5 in mm. 6–7 as subsidiary to the F#5s that precede and follow it. I hear it this way because the F# carries residual strength from its prominence in mm. 1–4, and because G does not belong to any of the recurring, tritone-containing tetrachord classes of the work. It therefore seems to function as neighbor to or passing from F# later in the song (mm. 10–11 and m. 14).

15. Just as the first four measures can be taken, as pursued here, to establish the musical material and processes that are important in the remainder of the song, it is interesting to consider how they also foreshadow the large-scale organization of tonal and metrical dualities. They present four imitative phrases, each with a distinctive meter, and with varying tonality; the final phrase comes to some tonal and metric clarity as the voices focus on {F#, B} and alternately attack to create a (triplet quarter-note) beat. Starting at m. 5, we then hear four large imitative sections, each with distinctive superpositions of meter and of tonality; the final section comes to metric and bitonal clarity as the voices focus on the synecdochal F/F#, and alternately attack to create a (quarter-note) beat.

16. Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 2 (1981): 179–205.

17. Nick Kimberley, "Kaija Saariaho: The Sound of Dreams (and a Few Nightmares)," *Independent (London)*, November 18, 2001. Saariaho's construction of her position in male-dominated European art-music culture is considered in two essays by Pirkko Moisala, "Gender Negotiation of the Composer Kaija Saariaho in Finland: The Woman Composer as Nomadic Subject," in *Music and Gender*, ed. Beverley Diamond and Pirkko Moisala (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 166–88; and "Decentering the Term 'Woman Composer,'" in *Frau Musica (nova): Komponieren heute/Composing Today*, ed. Martina Homma (Cologne: Studio-Verlag Sinzig, 2000), 83–94.

18. For example, Saariaho's three operas to date focus on women: *L'Amour de loin* (2000), which foregrounds a countess's perspective on the idealized love of the troubadour who seeks her; *Adriana Mater* (2006), about a mother who seeks to mitigate the harsh consequences of a wartime atrocity; and *La passion de Simone* (2010), a monologue dramatizing the writings and life of Simone Weil.