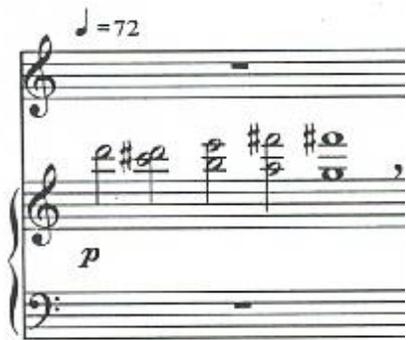


“Still” from *Though Love Be a Day*

A Musical Analysis by Gwyneth Walker

Earlier in the musical analyses, the first song from this set, “thy fingers make early flowers,” was studied in detail. Many of the same techniques and vocabulary are evidenced in this last song as well. The reader is directed to that analysis as a foundation for this discussion.

As noted previously, the number five figures prominently in the songs cycle – five songs, five words for the title, references to fingers (five digits), quintuplets in the first song, etc. The number again assumes prominence in this song. One notices immediately the opening five intervals, displayed alone, without meter. These intervals split apart as the pitches diverge from the central D. One might call this the “splitting apart” motive. It fills this song.

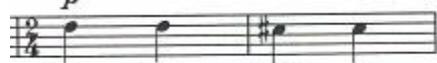


Immediately after the presentation in the piano right hand, the same pattern now appears in the left hand, while the right hand offers a countermelody. The sevenths (the extremity of the “splitting” in this passage) are extended downward to a C base to end the second phrase.



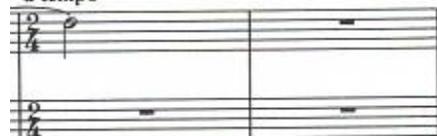
The voice then enters with D, C#, B, A, the lower line of the “splitting apart” motive.

a tempo  
*p*



When the streets are

a tempo

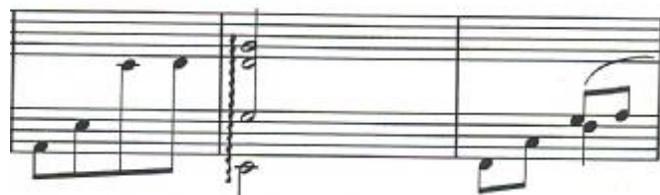


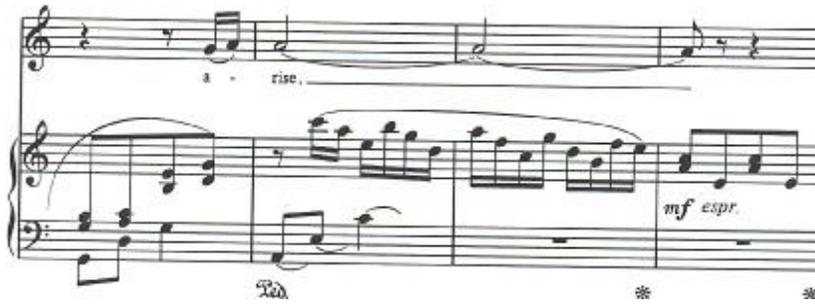
new - world - dawn - ing,

Taking a look at the text, the central message is one of separation, yet closeness. “Beyond the speaking and the breaking, you are with me as I arise.” The separation might be expressed in the “splitting apart” motive. The healing closeness may be found in the melodic material associated with “you are with me as I arise.” This is always cadential material, often presented in a diatonic cadence of VI VII i in the minor mode.



you are with me as I





Therefore, if one looks at this song as the combination of the two principal motives described above, one sees the splitting and the healing as the two, contrasting factors. The splitting is associated with the semitone opening interval, the healing is stepwise. The splitting is associated with sharp keys (often B Minor). The healing comes either in A Minor or G minor. [One notes that key signatures were not used in this song, in accordance with the early style period of the composer. Also, this particular song changes tonal center frequently, rendering key signatures impractical.]

Of particular interest is the piano interlude in the middle section, with the voice in the background on the syllable “ah.” The left hand of the accompaniment presents the harmony. The right hand plays five 16th notes derived from the first cadence of “you are with me as I arise.” This pattern continues, shifting entirely to the left hand. The right hand now plays the opening “splitting apart” motive (a large quintuplet) above the left hand accompaniment. There is some harmonic ambiguity here, since the RH motive is associated with the key of B Minor, yet the left hand is based on E Minor. And, of course, rhythmical ambiguity arises as the quintuplets fall across the barline. This is an amorphous section, perhaps reflective of sleep or remembrance inherent in the text.



5

5

simile

Ah

The ending is similarly amorphous, as meter is discarded, and the song concludes with a repeated pattern fading away. The words “you are with me as I arise” are obviously not intended to be a bold statement. Rather, they are part of a less tangible realm of existence.

*mf* *p* slowly

you are with me, you are with me as I a -

*mf* *p* *colla voce*

*8va* *loco*

a tempo

rise.

*8va* *delicato 3* *pp*

\* *ped*  
\* repeat pattern ad lib. al fine

\* *ped*

\* *ped*

\* *ped*  
5' 20"

Harmonically, the language is diatonic. Yet tonal centers shift frequently. [See the analysis of the first song, “thy fingers make early flowers” for an in-depth harmonic analysis of the language employed in these songs.] This enables the music to sound familiar and yet unpredictable at the same time.

Unexpected juxtapositions of tonalities are often achieved through common-tone modulations. For example at the climax on the high G (“to bring you near as I arise”), the G is first presented as the 7th of an A minor-7 chord, then the 7th of an Ab Major-7 chord and then the third of an E Minor chord. This progression is intended to bring freshness to the word “love” as it opens the last stanza.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line has the lyrics "near as I a - rise." and a dynamic marking of *f*. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with many notes, including some with grace notes. The second system also has a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "love, love this mo - ment glis - tens" and a dynamic marking of *(f)*. The piano accompaniment continues with similar complex textures, including some chords with sharps.

Chromatic modulations are another method used to link diverse tonalities. One sees the measures leading into the final statement of “beyond the speaking and the breaking” as delineating E minor. Yet, with the coloration of the expected D into D flat, and the B into B flat, the tonality of B flat Minor is quickly introduced.



These early songs show a composer exploring ways to expand the diatonic tonal language.

The form of this song is a strophic with modifications. The first two verses share the same musical setting. Each moves from the B Minor tonality to A Minor. The second verse then progresses up to the relative Major, C Major, for a refrain “comes the time beyond all question.” Then, through a common-tone modulation, the music shifts to the key of C# Minor for verse 3. This is a step higher than the previous two verses, functioning both as growth in the vocal line and as a link to the Interlude to follow in E Minor.

At the end of the Interlude, through another common-tone modulation, the refrain is restated, but in the key of Eb Major. This reflects a mediant relationship with the previous C Major statement. Verse 3 is also restated in a key a third higher than the previous appearance – E Minor now instead of the earlier C# Minor. And, a final mediant progression leads the conclusion to the key of G Minor.

Mediant relationships are often found in this song. These progressions are central to the growth and harmonic richness.

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