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From Mood to Tone: On Schoenberg and Musical Worlds

1. *The Musical World*

The concept of 'world' is certainly not foreign to musical discourse. We find it not only in analytical investigations of complex musical works, such as those composed in cyclical form, but also in less demanding contexts, such as the conversation during a concert interval, when an enthusiastic listener tries in vain to find the right words to describe his or her experience ('it was like being in another world'). E.T.A. Hoffmann famously wrote that music "schließt dem Menschen ein unbekanntes Reich auf; eine Welt, die nichts gemein hat mit der äußern Sinnenwelt, die ihn umgibt".¹ Again, a more mundane usage of the word can be found in one of the standard genres of books on music, namely those volumes that cover both the composer and his world.

We can already discern three different kinds of worlds. Firstly, the world constructed by a composer and unveiled by analysis. Secondly, the world experienced when someone is immersed in a musical event. Thirdly, the world in which the listener, the musician and the composer co-exist, that is, the aesthetic, social, economic, religious and political context. Common sense would have it that these three worlds may be related to each other, but that the meaning of 'world' varies in each case. A common-sense attitude would certainly welcome the understanding of each world in relation to the others. A more radical conception, however, where all three are held to be one and the same world, might be harder to accept. Yet, this is my point of departure in the following elucidation of Schoenberg's musical worlds.

My assumption is that a musical work installs a world, that it 'worlds'; moreover, that any musical world throughout the process of historical change becomes 'unworlded' (being decomposed) and, under specific circumstances, even 'reworlded' (reappearing after having been decomposed).² The terms chosen may sound awkward, but they are apt for investigating music's interrelation with that which is usually termed extra-musical meanings or elements (it may even be impossible to tear the

1 E.T.A. Hoffmann, [review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, without title], *Schriften zur Musik. Aufsätze und Rezensionen* (München: Winkler, 1977), 34.

2 The notion of 'worlding' comes, of course, from Martin Heidegger's "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes", where the philosopher also claimed that the world disappears with the passage of time. However, the 'reworlding' suggested by me is set up against Heidegger's understanding of historical change. Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes", in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977).

musical and the extra-musical apart). For a moment, let us dwell within the parlance of musicology and the philosophy of music, in order to see if prospects are good for an elaboration of such an extended world concept.

There have previously been steps taken in the direction indicated here. We can find the term *Welt*, that is, 'world', for instance in Hermann Danuser's *Weltanschauungsmusik* (2009), but even if he demonstrates the intricate relationship between autonomy and heteronomy within works that express some kind of world-view, he evades philosophically far-reaching attempts to understand what 'world' actually stands for.³ Albrecht Wellmer's scattered remarks in *Versuch über Musik und Sprache* (2009) on the relationship between the musical work and the world outside are a noteworthy contribution to our field.⁴ He primarily deals with two tendencies in the later developments of New Music: the first placed in accord with the linguistic traits of music, whilst the second departs in a direction where any parallel to language, or anything at all outside of music, is to be dismissed. What Wellmer illustrates is that not only the first tendency can be fruitful in our understanding of the world (actually, that tendency tends to preserve already existing structures and ways of relating to the world), but also the second one, due to its ability to break with the *status quo* and afford us with new ways of understanding.

Concerning Schoenberg and 'world', we are in the fortunate position of having a small number of articles by John Covach, who not only tries to introduce the concept of 'world' in relation to Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, making this concept productive for musicology, but also deals with musical worlding in Schoenberg during the phase that I intend to discuss, namely his breaking with tonality around 1908. At the same time, I myself am in the fortunate position of discovering that Covach has only taken the first steps, since he curtails his argument due to his restrictions concerning what a *musical* world is. In short, Covach suggests that one way for a piece of music to be meaningful is in its relations to canonical works belonging to the same musical tradition (such as tonal music from Bach to Mahler).⁵ This includes both aesthetic experience and musical analysis: "every analysis or experience of a certain work invokes the other works in the canon".⁶ What happens then, when Schoenberg leaves the canon of tonal works in order to investigate the new world of 'atonicity'? The atonal work breaks with the rules governing the tonal tradition, it resides outside that world in what Covach describes as "an 'other' musical world".⁷ However, it still relies on the tonal world in order to achieve its effect.

3 Hermann Danuser, *Weltanschauungsmusik* (Schlingen: Argus, 2009).

4 Albrecht Wellmer, *Versuch über Musik und Sprache* (Munich: Hanser, 2009).

5 The articles where Covach discusses the musical world are "Musical Worlding: Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology and the Understanding of Music", *Methods* (1994), 49–58; "Deconstructing Cartesian Dualism in Musical Analysis", *Music Theory Online* 0:11 (1994), <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.94.0.11/mto.94.0.11.covach.html>; "Musical Worlds and the Metaphysics of Analysis", *Music Theory Online* 1:1 (1995), <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.95.1.1/mto.95.1.1.covach.html>; "Schoenberg's Turn to an 'Other' World", *Music Theory Online*, 1:5 (1995), <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.95.1.5/mto.95.1.5.covach.html>.

6 Covach, "Schoenberg's Turn", §3.

7 Covach, "Schoenberg's Turn", §4.

I shall return to Covach's analyses of specific works by Schoenberg later on, analyses that are both illuminating and precise. Nevertheless, I must point out the limitations of Covach's world concept. He defines it in the following terms, choosing a strictly musical range of meaning: "The musical world of a piece is a number of other works that form a kind of background – a body of other pieces that create a purely musical context for some particular piece."⁸ Even if Covach breaks with the analytical scheme, which implements a dualistic relation between interpreting subject and interpreted object, he keeps to the scheme that separates a (strictly) musical world from the (strictly non-musical) surrounding world. Furthermore, he takes his point of departure from the fundamental ontology of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, where world is indeed central to the analysis of "being-in-the-world", whereas he neglects Heidegger's later world concept of "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes". There, world is said to be "das immer Ungegenständliche, dem wir unterstehen, solange die Bahnen von Geburt und Tod, Segen und Fluch uns in das Sein entrückt halten"; the world worlds where "die wesenhaften Entscheidungen unserer Geschichte fallen".⁹ So, according to Heidegger, the world is not an object. Essential historical decisions may take place there. It concerns the work of art, but also our lives too.

2. 'Atonality' as the crux

We thus have exciting problems, not only concerning the concept of world; much can also be said about the term 'atonal'. Covach writes the word without quotation marks, but it has been debated ever since it entered usage in the early twentieth century – disputed by Schoenberg himself, who preferred the terms 'pantonal' or 'polytonal' for his 'atonal' music. Perhaps the most well-articulated recent critique has been formulated by Ethan Haimo, who wants to dispense with the distinction between 'tonal' and 'atonal' since he finds that it blurs and distorts the complexity of both individual works and the development of Schoenberg's compositional techniques during the period: "From approximately 1899 to July 1909", he writes, "one must understand the pitch-language of Schoenberg's works as comprising an on-going extension and transformation of prior techniques, not a renunciation of them."¹⁰ Here Schoenberg is the progressive, the evolutionary; he is not the radical or revolutionary. During these years, from work to work, Schoenberg is understood to proceed step by step. He introduces new kinds of chords and refines contrapuntal principles, he turns chamber music into programme music and disturbs the genre with banal songs from the street. He elaborates his motivic material to its extreme and moves in a direction where tonally defining procedures are of less and less importance. Still, Schoenberg is supposed to stay within one and the same evolutionary development; the radical break comes with *Erwartung*.

The standard conception of the changes within Schoenberg's musical aesthetics is a curve of progression, commencing in late-Romanticism, followed by the atonal pe-

8 Covach, "Schoenberg's Turn", §8.

9 Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes", 34–35.

10 Ethan Haimo, *Schoenberg's Transformation of Musical Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 19.

riod and ending with dodecaphony. We find this in Bryan R. Simms's *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg 1908–1923*,¹¹ where exactly those works that Haimo tries to tie as close as possible to the evolutionary aspects of Schoenberg's compositional technique are scrutinized in order to find revolutionary traits. Malcolm McDonald, in his Schoenberg biography, places the same emphasis on the year 1908, calling the period 1908–13 a *peripeteia*.¹² This is totally in line with Theodor W. Adorno's description of the George songs in the cycle *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, as not only deeply rooted in tradition, but also as a part of the avant-garde.¹³ Sociologically, according to Albrecht Dümmling, this meant that Schoenberg chose a solitary position with the George cycle.¹⁴ In a more recent Schoenberg study, Walter Frisch traces this line in a different way dealing with that which he calls the "tonal composition" during this period; here a key-work, such as the Second String Quartet, belongs to Schoenberg's 'early' phase.¹⁵

These overlapping schedules, all these attempts to pinpoint the exact turn, may be very instructive for an organization of history, but are in vain when we want to understand the historical process that has taken place. I shall treat this turn in another way, seeing it not as a specific point in time, but as a protracted *attunement* turn.¹⁶ During this period, Schoenberg went through a transformation, having been one of the most outstanding moderns and becoming someone who belonged to another sphere of communication. This means not only that his music changed radically from a compositional point of view, but also that this change leads to works where the musical works 'worlded' in a new way – or in new ways. His musical world diverged from the world of others (even among his students, the change was met with incomprehension – Anton Webern and Alban Berg were, of course, exceptions). Furthermore, and of greatest importance, the new world started to world long before it was finally established, whereas the old world faded away in a slow process of unworlding.

How can we understand this conflict of worlds from our perspective today? In what follows, I will elucidate how the world of the last movement of the Second String Quartet and that of the *Gurre-Lieder* differ, and a main point is here a change in Schoenberg's relation to the text: he started to listen to the poetic word as tone, whereas he earlier treated the poem as a producer of moods. In order to give this difference a historically cogent foundation, I shall lend an ear to what the first listeners of the works had to say. Instead of presuming that, in those days, the ordinary listener in Vienna was conservative, and instead of scoffing at the musical criticism of the time (once again), I propose that we should give full attention, I exactly their articulation

11 Bryan R. Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg 1908–1923* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

12 Cf. Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg* (London: Dent, 1976), 1.

13 Theodor W. Adorno, "Zu den Georgeliedern", in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 18 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 412–13.

14 Cf. Albrecht Dümmling, *Die fremden Klänge der hängenden Gärten. Die öffentliche Einsamkeit der neuen Musik am Beispiel von Arnold Schönberg und Stefan George* (Munich: Kindler, 1981).

15 Walter Frisch, *The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg 1893–1908* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), 247.

16 For this concept, see the author's *Being Musically Attuned: The Act of Listening to Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). An 'attunement turn' here means a fundamental change in the way in which a world is disclosed.

of attunement differences between musical worlds. It is the most precise formulation of what happened, regarding both what was heard and what was not heard.

3. The 'Mood-Critics' as Testimonies

The premiere on 21st December 1908 of Schoenberg's Second String Quartet in F-sharp minor op. 10 by the Rosé Quartet was a culmination of public antagonism directed against Arnold Schoenberg, both in the Viennese press and at the actual concerts. Together with the famous *Skandalkonzert* 31 March 1913 – when Schoenberg and his students Webern and Berg were attacked – it is the circumstances around Schoenberg's second quartet that have attracted attention when posterity has looked back in order to understand the birth of modernism in Vienna. However, the premieres of the First Chamber Symphony and the First String Quartet on 5th and 8th February 1907 respectively can also be counted amongst the scandals. During all these concerts, sections of the audience hissed and shouted, trying to stop the performances. Once, even, the police were called, due to scuffles and scimmages. These concerts can be seen as the major transformation of the musical scene, when modern music (*die Moderne*) was divided into modernism (or New Music, *Neue Musik*) and neoclassicism.¹⁷

Such an understanding is opposed to the reasoning in those scholarly works where continuity is emphasised – and without doubt, many formulations in Schoenberg's own writings offer support to the continuity thesis. However, the composer also expresses his conviction that the transition came with the Second String Quartet, whereas the major step into the new field was taken with the Two Songs op. 14, the George cycle op. 15 and the Three Piano Pieces op. 11.¹⁸ What interests me here is the affective response from the listeners, since it is testimony to an upheaval in musical sensibilities or, described in other terms, a testimony to one of those events when we have to deal with a fundamental attunement change within a cultural sphere. The musical world started behaving in a new way, with the audience and music critics being struck by something unknown to them. That means, too, that if we want a better understanding of this change, we should approach the derided critics of Vienna, the object of ridicule, again and again, in the historiography of 20th century art music.

We must then ask ourselves what kind of critics these reviewers were. It does not suffice to say that they were conservative or reactionary. Schoenberg himself gives us the key in some of his commentary to these events: the reviewers were *Stimmungskritiker*, 'mood-critics'. He writes that this kind of critic was born when Wagner's music was rejected by guild musicians, whilst being saluted by the laymen, since the latter heard a poetic meaning in a music that did not follow the laws of the old works: "They acquired the faculty of letting the poetic mood work on them; they found it

17 As Carl Dahlhaus suggests in *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, in vol. 5 of *Gesammelte Schriften* (Wiesbaden: Laaber, 2003), 380.

18 Arnold Schoenberg, "My Evolution" (1949), in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings* (Berkeley, Calif: California UP, 1984), 86. Since *Style and Idea* was first published in English (even if many of the texts were translated), I choose to quote from that book, sometimes highlighting the original German expressions.

possible to ignore artifice and submit to those elemental impressions released by music, the language of the unconscious."¹⁹ These laymen made their way into music criticism, where they for a while were suited to their mission, but then the reaction against Wagnerism came with absolute music: "mood no longer did the trick, knowledge had to lend a hand".²⁰ One could expect that Schoenberg would draw the conclusion that only technical knowledge would do but we should not forget that, to Schoenberg, music depended on both heart and brain. No, instead he writes that a proper response only takes place "if one has available receiving apparatus tuned in the same way as the transmitting apparatus".²¹ Here we must observe how the English translation of the text replaces the sensitivity of mood, with an apparatus in tune with another apparatus, whereas the original German expression ("dem Absendeapparat gleichgestimmten Empfangsapparat"²²) still has an active relation to *Stimmung*, mood.

The musicologist Esteban Buch has already discussed some of the elements at play here, trying to "reconstituer l'espace des perceptions" of exactly the same period and place.²³ He, like myself, is totally aware of the enormous obstacles to the fulfilment of such an aspiration. It calls for the re-creation of a whole scene of musical listening, such as James H. Johnson's cultural archaeology of Paris in the decades around 1800.²⁴ However, the review material from the chosen concert is so rich that the thrust or tremor can be discerned. The reason that the collision between two different worlds took place is not only that Schoenberg happened to write a specific work of art, but also that the emerging avant-garde was placed at the centre of Vienna's musical scene. The concert took place, in fact, in the prestigious Bösendorfer Saal in the Musikverein.²⁵

Inherent to the presumption that a collision between two different musical worlds happened, is the fact that the situation includes an element of alienness, which is an affective phenomenon, grounded in a lack of understanding.²⁶ There are cognitive reasons for this phenomenon, a lack of cognition leading to a lack of recognition, but the phenomenon is affective and, in itself, grounded in distunement (instead of the expected attunement – remember Schoenberg's words about a receiver apparatus being in tune with the transmitter).²⁷

When approaching the articles regarding the concert on 21st December 1908, we soon realise that most of the published texts are not proper reviews. Even music critics who were well-known in those days, such as Ludwig Karpath, Richard Batka and Max

19 Arnold Schoenberg, "About Music Criticism", in *Style and Idea*, 192.

20 Schoenberg, "Music Criticism", 194.

21 Schoenberg, "Music Criticism", 195.

22 Cf. Arnold Schönberg, "Über Musikkritik", in *Stil und Gedanke: Aufsätze zur Musik, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1976), 163.

23 Cf. Esteban Buch, *Le cas Schönberg: Naissance de l'avant-garde musicale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 42.

24 James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

25 Cf. Martin Eybl, ed., *Die Befreiung des Augenblicks: Schönbergs Skandalkonzerte 1907 und 1908: Eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), 22.

26 Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Grundmotive einer Phänomenologie des Fremden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006).

27 For a more detailed discussion regarding the affectivity of the alien and distunement, see my *Being Musically Attuned*, 215–20.

Kalbeck, acted more like journalists when they described the chaotic and aggressive events of the concert. Acclamation from the Schoenberg circle was contrasted to loud hissing, already after the first movement. Between the third and the fourth movement, both featuring soprano singing, someone cried out: "Nicht weitersingen! Schluß! Wir haben genug! Wir lassen uns nicht frozzeln!"²⁸ One of the reviewers thought that the only instrument missing was someone to tread on a dog's tail.²⁹ Even American readers were able, soon afterwards, to find out that "the audience was in an uproar such as no concert hall in the Austrian capital ever before had known".³⁰ The descriptions, or non-descriptions, of the music are of great interest. The music was said to be "cat music", worthless, totally without harmonies, pathological. Richard Kralik wrote about "die prinzipielle Vermeidung von Harmonie und Melodie".³¹ One of the most common objections, here in the phrasing of Brahms's well-known biographer Max Kalbeck, was that the quartet was "angeblich" in F-sharp Minor, that is, he could not find any key at all.³² The same unknown author, who ironically asked for someone to tread on a dog's tail, was more detailed in his description: "Er [Schoenberg] stellt sich also die Aufgabe, so zu komponieren, daß weder aus dem Zusammenklang der Instrumente, noch aus der Tonfolge je ein Genuß für das normale Ohr hervorgeht, und er löst diese Aufgabe mit solcher Konsequenz, daß auch jedes zufällige Tonintervall vermieden ist, das für eine Sekunde dem gewöhnlichen Menschen erträglich wäre."³³

Unlike today, when music critics usually have the possibility of studying PDFs of the scores to be premiered (at least, this is what they should do), many of those who reviewed the concert did not have a fair chance to prepare themselves. There were, however, exceptions. One anonymous author explained: "Ein Blick in die Partitur belehrt den, der zu lesen versteht, daß von einem Ulk keine Rede ist, daß jede Note mit äußerster Sorgfalt und er mit präziser Absicht so und nicht anders hingesetzt will."³⁴ Another was Elsa Bienenfeld, a musicologist supervised by Guido Adler for her doctoral thesis, and one of only two active female critics in Vienna at that time. She told her readers about the dramatic concert in a short article published anonymously in *Neuer Wiener Journal* the day after the premiere, but she returned to the topic three days later, now with a signed article. Saying that the chaotic concert had prevented the listeners from obtaining a fair impression of the work, she stressed that those who knew the score were also convinced that the four movements were "mit der größten Sauberkeit, der größten Beherrschung der Technik geschrieben, daß die musikalische Formen hier, wohl nicht in einer schablonenhaften Weise, aber mit strengster Logik durchgebildet sind".³⁵

28 Probably written anonymously by Paul Stauber, *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 22 Dec., 1908, in *Die Befreiung*, 180.

29 Unknown author and publication, in *Die Befreiung*, 204.

30 "J.L.H.", *Musical America*, 9:12, 30 Jan., 1909, 21, in *Die Befreiung*, 236.

31 Richard Kralik, *Vaterland*, 49, 30 Dec., 1908, in *Die Befreiung*, 202.

32 Max Kalbeck, *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, vol. 42, 24 Dec., 1908, in *Die Befreiung*, 195.

33 Unknown author, date and periodical, in *Die Befreiung*, 204.

34 Anonymous, *Montags-Revue*, in *Die Befreiung*, 200.

35 Elsa Bienenfeld, *Neues Wiener Journal*, 16, 25 Dec., 1908, in *Die Befreiung*, 198–9.

The conditions would change for those interested in the musical scene of Vienna, due to the publication of a detailed analysis in the periodical *Erdgeist*, on 20th February, possibly written by Heinrich Jalowetz and Schoenberg's mentor Alexander von Zemlinsky. Here, the analyses demonstrate with the utmost care that the composer had been working totally in accordance with traditional principles, in terms of thematic elaborations and within conventional forms: sonata form in the first movement, followed by a movement close to the standard scherzo, whereas the slow movement presented a theme with variations, and the finale was described in terms of a free sonata form.³⁶

The string quartet was performed again five days later, but now at a concert arranged by the Verein für Musik und Kunst in the more intimate Ehrbar Saal. It was combined with the string sextet *Verklärte Nacht*, an important work in the repertoire of the Rosé Quartet (adding two musicians). Exactly this combination was the point of departure for comparisons between the late-Romantic Schoenberg and the composer of the scandal quartet, leading to acclaim for the sextet and more or less devastating formulations about the quartet. No critic was able to hear the continuity between the works. Richard Batka referred to the musicians from the Schoenberg circle who were supposed to have admitted that "vieles in Schönbergs Kompositionen häßlich und abscheulich klingt, aber sie hegen die Zuversicht, daß es ihnen oder der nächsten Generation noch als schön oder erhaben einleuchten würde".³⁷ Instead of continuity, Batka found that at least one movement, the finale, was agreeable to him, coming close to *Verklärte Nacht* (i.e., it was supposed to turn back to already known qualities): "hier meldet sich eine große, weite Stimmung und selbst der irre Ausklang in schmerzliche Dissonanzen wirkt psychologisch motiviert".³⁸ Whether the critic from *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, Carl Lafite, had read the analysis in *Erdgeist*, or actually studied the score is impossible to say, but his opinion says a lot about how something that is logical to the eye, might sound another way to the ear: "Wie viel von dem, was auf dem Papier geistreich und überraschend aussieht, ist nichts als häßlich, klingt miserabel und läßt sich mit dem besten Willen keine Stimmung unterschieben, als höchstens die einer schweren, aber schon sehr schweren Magenindigestion."³⁹

In these articles, we find expressions of a confrontation between musical worlds. Some of the reviewers were able to reflect upon their inability to make sense of the music. Others, who had read the score, saw the musical logic at work, but were unable to understand the sounding work of art. All of them, however, gave testimony to an affective shock, a heavy distortion of their musical world – and a disturbance of their musical minds.

36 Probably Heinrich Jalowetz and Alexander Zemlinsky, *Erdgeist*, 4:7, 20 Feb., 1909, in *Die Befreiung*, 243–53.

37 Richard Batka, *Fremden-Blatt*, 63, 7 Jan., 1909, in *Die Befreiung*, 272.

38 *Ibid.*, 274

39 Carl Lafite, *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 Mar., 1909, in *Die Befreiung*, 280.

4. Text as Tone

During the period when Schoenberg took his first step into a new musical reign, his works were not instrumental music, but all of them – the Second String Quartet, too – included texts. Furthermore, they were almost exclusively written by the German poet Stefan George. We know very well from the composer himself, that text had been important to him when he solved the problem of how to compose more extended works when reference to the tonic and harmony's structural organization were gone: "Hence, it seemed at first impossible to compose pieces of complicated organization or of great length", Schoenberg writes in a text on compositional technique, only to continue: "A little later I discovered how to construct larger forms by following a text or a poem."⁴⁰ Here, he probably referred to *Erwartung*, with its duration of approximately 30 minutes but, already in the works with texts by George, language had a new kind of organizing force.

In the article "The Relationship to the Text", Schoenberg famously says that he had understood George's poems from "their sound alone" (or, in the original German phrasing, "bloß aus dem Klang heraus").⁴¹ Sometimes, it has been suggested that this formulation expresses an idea of the musicalization of language, where no element of meaning or reference is of any relevance. However, earlier in the same article, Schoenberg seems to be heading for something much closer to intuition:

I had composed many of my songs straight to the end without troubling myself in the slightest about the continuation of the poetic events, without ever grasping them in the ecstasy of composing, and that only days later I thought of looking back to see just what was the real poetic content of my song. It turned out, to my greatest astonishment, that I had never done greater justice to the poet than when, guided by my first direct contact with the sound of the beginning, I divined everything that obviously had to follow this first sound with inevitability.⁴²

Here, I believe, we cannot put all our trust in the notion of language as pure sound, but should rather move in the direction of language as tone, just as Schoenberg himself did in his correspondence with another poet, Richard Dehmel, who had been the major contributor of texts in an earlier stage of Schoenberg's songs. In a letter to the poet, where a co-operation is proposed, Schoenberg writes:

Denn Ihre Gedichte haben auf meine musikalische Entwicklung entscheidenden Einfluß ausgeübt. Durch sie war ich zum erstenmal genötigt, einen neuen Ton in der Lyrik zu suchen. Das heißt, ich fand ihn ungesucht, indem ich musikalisch wiederspiegelte, was Ihre Verse in mir aufwühlten.⁴³

40 Arnold Schoenberg, "Composition with Twelve Tones (1)" (1941), in *Style and Idea*, 217.

41 Arnold Schoenberg, "The Relationship to the Text", in *Style and Idea*, 144, and "Das Verhältnis zum Text", in *Stil und Gedanke*, 5.

42 Schoenberg, "The Relationship to the Text", 144.

43 Letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Richard Dehmel 13 Dec. 1912, published by Joachim Birke in "Richard Dehmel und Arnold Schönberg: Ein Briefwechsel", *Die Musikforschung*, 11:3 (1958), 282.

Again, Schoenberg declares that his approach to poetry has to do with something within the auditory sphere, this time not with the poem as sound, but as tone. His response to this tone is always articulated in his musical works. We do not, however, find any closer description of this tone (or sound). Nevertheless, in the case of Stefan George, there really is something like a tone that can be identified as belonging to exactly that poet. Hans-Georg Gadamer, who is otherwise often engaged with the wonders of meaning when reading poetry, returns to this tone again and again in his essays on George. He speaks about its "eigentümliche Erweckungskraft", attracting perhaps only a few "dichterisch empfänglichen Menschen".⁴⁴

Even if Gadamer was never a part of the famous and influential 'George circle', he came to know one of its ideologically most important members, Friedrich Wolters. Furthermore, from Gadamer's descriptions of George's tone, we can also understand that he had been present during some of the famous readings, which took place when the circle met. Instead of lowering the tone in the end rhymes, Gadamer writes, George's voice kept the pitch, and gave the impression of forming arcs in the poem. It is not to be equalled with Hölderlin's architecture, and the philosopher explains why:

Es ist vor allem die Wiederholungsform und die Steigerung in der Wiederholung, durch die seine Bogenführung zustande kommt, ein Sichüberlagern und ein Aufschwung bis zu einer höchsten Erhebung des dichterischen Tones. Wieder sind es die gleichen Mittel einer inneren Komposition des Lautgebildes, des Klangleibes der Worte, die hier verwendet werden. Aber dazu kommt die Kurzform Georgescher Sätze. Sie läßt die rhythmische Einheit zugleich Sinneinheit sein und macht dadurch Wiederholung und Steigerung auf einfache Weise möglich. Das ist in der deutschen Verskunst etwas Einzigartiges. Es ist die melodische Substanz des gregorianischen Chorals, der Georges "Ton" dichterisches Leben verliehen hat.⁴⁵

Gadamer describes these traits as *Kunstmittel*, giving them an instrumental character. However, when, in another essay, he goes beyond instrumentality, he comes closer to a phenomenology of George's tone when he likens its impact with "eine Übertragung von Wille zu Wille".⁴⁶ The will takes hold of another will. One way of coming closer to this extremely vague and fugitive, yet powerful, aspect of a specific poetic language could be to listen to what one of George's closest friends has to say, the literary scholar Friedrich Gundolf. As a matter of fact, Gundolf, in his book on George, tries to capture the poet's tone, according to its "intonation".⁴⁷

Again, we shall encounter that word 'world'. Already in his first published texts, Gundolf writes, there is a totally original language in George's poetry: rhythms strung

44 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Der Dichter Stefan George", in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9, 217.

45 Gadamer, "Der Dichter Stefan George", 222.

46 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hölderlin und George", in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9, 240.

47 Since emphasis is given here to the close personal relationship between George and Gundolf, it should be noted that Gundolf's book was a work of crises, a kind of reverence shown to the poet when Gundolf's position in the circle was put into question.

so hard that they could break, together with a formal mastery – but these still do not proclaim a world. This happens with a turn (with *Kairos*), which subordinates the tone (*Ton*). The tone cannot be explained scientifically, it can only be perceived. It involves nothing aesthetic: “Der Ton ist kein ästhetisches Zubehör, sondern das Zeichen des seelischen Raums, der Welt welcher sein Finder und Kündler angehört, und die ihn von allen heutigen Autoren trennt. Innerhalb dieses Raums haben erst seine Bilder und Sätze ihr Gewicht. Man muß sie in ihrem Ton hören: mit dem Es dem sein Ich sich eingelassen hat, das in sein Ich eingebrochen ist.”⁴⁸ Moreover, anticipating both the authoritarian and ritualistic characteristics of the George circle, Gundolf suggests that perception of the tone also means an inauguration:

Die Wortwahl, die Zeichenwahl, sogar das Tempo, den größeren oder geringeren Nachdruck, alles Räumliche, Stoffliche und selbst Klangliche hat er weitreichend in der Gewalt die ihm überhaupt als einer Person zusteht, womit er “begabt” ist: aber mit aller Begabung kann er den Seelenton nicht finden der ihn “zum Dröhnen der heiligen Stimme” macht, und der ganz allein das Zeichen der Weihe, der Einweihung ist, des Durchbruchs auf eine Ebene jenseits der bloßen Persönlichkeit oder des Einbruchs überpersönlicher Welt, Zeichen der wirkenden Einswerdung mit dem Urwesen, man nenne es Natur oder Gott.⁴⁹

When *Ton* (or *Klang*) is conceived of in this manner, it is easier to envision how Schoenberg could claim that it is enough to listen to the tone or sound at the beginning of the poem, and gain a better understanding, than could be arrived at through a close analysis of the same text. If I am correct, then it is not particularly meaningful to state that many traits of Schoenberg’s compositions show that he really had read the text (of course he had – whatever he claimed). His was an intuitive understanding, which was enabled by a specific kind of text.⁵⁰

Nonetheless, we should also pay close attention to the George quotation within the Gundolf quotation, where the tone appears to be the resounding or, without mediation, the roaring of the sacred voice (“zum Dröhnen der heiligen Stimme”). This not only happens to be an excerpt from the poem referred to by Gadamer, when discussing the influence of one will on another will, but also the text chosen by Schoenberg for the last movement of the Second String Quartet: George’s “Entrückung”.

5. The Sensing of a New World: “Entrückung”

Efforts have been made to figure out what Schoenberg meant by saying that he understood George’s poems from “their sound alone”, as well as what function the linguistic material actually had when he constructed “larger forms by following a text

48 Friedrich Gundolf, *George* (Berlin: Bondi, 1920), 61.

49 Gundolf, op. cit., 60–1.

50 The Swedish essayist Horace Engdahl traces this poetic phenomenon back to early Romanticism. We find it in Friedrich Schlegel and in Novalis (both using *Ton*), whereas Hölderlin developed a poetics of tones. Cf. Horace Engdahl, *Beröringens ABC: En essä om rösten i litteraturen* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1994).

or a poem". In his investigation of the influence of the text on Schoenberg's music in *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, Karl Heinrich Ehrenforth finds no genuine impact on the musical form (Schoenberg may, however, as Ehrenforth writes, sometimes follow the structure of the poems).⁵¹ In a close reading of the fourteenth song of the George cycle, Reinhold Brinkmann observes that Schoenberg deviates from George's formal tightness, but he finds a uniform tone in its "ruhigen Gestimmtheit aufgrund der Schönheit der 'Form' ".⁵²

The texts chosen by Schoenberg demonstrate metrical rigor – one of the traits Gadamer stresses in his analysis of "George's tone". Nevertheless, we do not find many metrical schemes when we turn to Schoenberg's settings. Some commentators, whose point of departure is George's poetry, make no attempt to hide their indignation. Wolfgang Osthoff, for example, states that Schoenberg's actual music has released itself from, or even counteracts, the 'music' of the verse.⁵³ Calvin Scott who, in his intermedial investigation into the relation between George and the Second Vienna School, has invested a lot in the 'musical' qualities of George's poetry, laments the circumstance that there is no hint of liturgical declamation in Schoenberg's music.⁵⁴

At this juncture, George's poetry should be allowed to speak for itself, and the following example is "Entrückung", with its emblematic rise into a new state, a new world:

Entrückung

Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten.
Mir blassen durch das dunkel die gesichter
Die freundlich eben noch sich zu mir drehten.

Und bäum und wege die ich liebte fahlen
Dass ich sie kaum mehr kenne und Du lichter
Geliebter schatten – rufer meiner qualen –

Bist nun erloschen ganz in tiefern gluten
Um nach dem taumel streitenden getobes
Mit einem frommen schauer anzumuten.

Ich löse mich in tönen · kreisend · webend ·
Ungründigen danks und unbenamten lobes
Dem grossen atem wunchlos mich ergebend.

51 Karl Heinrich Ehrenforth, *Ausdruck und Form: Arnold Schönbergs Durchbruch zu Atonalität* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1963), 34.

52 Reinhold Brinkmann, "Schönberg und George: Interpretation eines Liedes", *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 26:1 (1969), 25.

53 Wolfgang Osthoff, *Stefan George und "Les Deux Musiques": Tönende und Vertonte Dichtung im Einklang und Widerstreit* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989), 181.

54 Calvin Scott, *"Ich löse mich in tönen ...": Zur Intermedialität bei Stefan George und der Zweiten Wiener Schule* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2007).

Mich überfährt ein ungestümes wehen
 Im rausch der weihe wo inbrünstige schreie
 In staub geworfner beterrinnen flehen:

Dann seh ich wie sich duftige nebel lüpfen
 In einer sonnerfüllten klaren freie
 Die nur umfängt auf fernsten bergesschlüpfen.

Der boden schüttert weiss und weich wie molke . .
 Ich steige über schluchten ungeheuer ·
 Ich fühle wie ich über lezter wolke

In einem meer kristallnen glanzes schwimme –
 Ich bin ein funke vom heiligen feuer
 Ich bin ein dröhnen nur der heiligen stimme.⁵⁵

We should establish immediately that George accommodates the *terza rima* – the verse form developed by Dante Alighieri, a poet translated and revered by George – for his own needs. The three-line stanzas are interlocked by a chain rhyme, which, in the example above, does not follow the strict pattern of ABA-BCB-CDC-DCD, but ABA-CBC-DED-FEE. It is an iambic pentameter, with five stresses and normally six unstressed syllables, observed with rigour, except in lines 11, 14 and the two concluding lines, where the deviation underscores the acuteness of a sudden tension (“inbrünstige schreie”), and the concluding outburst respectively. Even if this metrical scheme is hardly discernable in the musical composition (again there is an exception, namely the sixth stanza which concludes in strict triple meter), we can still guess that it meant something to Schoenberg. It was most probably a scheme that he could work against, a structure that he could dissolve. However, when Ehrenfort says that Schoenberg chose George’s poetry because of his own need for boundaries to transgress,⁵⁶ this is only partly true: there is still George’s tone – that unmistakable high tone, which cannot be reduced to a stern meter.

In another context, I have described how the world of a work of instrumental music can be approached in a way that allows the worlding world to *be* a world, without making it into an object (since then it would cease to be what it is).⁵⁷ This world always possesses temporality, spatiality, mobility and materiality; these are the dimensions of the world made present. We are entering into a pre-reflexive relation to the work, since reflection upon it would make it into an object for our thoughts. What

55 Stefan George, “Entrückung”, *Der Siebente Ring*, in: *Sämtliche Werke in 18 Bänden*, vol. 6–7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 111.

56 Ehrenforth, *Ausdruck und Form*, 47.

57 Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned*, esp. chapter “Playing in Between”, 111–42. There, the main goal is to fathom the phenomenon of attunement in music, but this is achieved through an approach to the work of art as a world.

happens when words are made present alongside music? Words have their temporality, spatiality, mobility and materiality, just like notes and other sounds. However, they also have a linguistic meaning, a meaning which is a part of the world: it can describe a world – in George’s poem, a *new* world is predicted – simultaneously as the dimensions (such as the mobility and the materiality of the words, the way they move and their sound) make a world present.

In George’s poem, all these dimensions can be discerned, and can also be sensed in a performance of the string quartet movement. There is, however, an essential difference between George’s words by themselves, and the same words in the Schoenberg work: in the quartet, the words are part of a musical world, and their dimensions are constituted differently. One of these dimensions is salient: the way in which the work moves, its mobility. It concerns both words and music in a way that clarifies the fact that we cannot separate these elements from each other. Yet, this specific mobility is dependent on the lack of tonality in large segments of the composition; it is a mobility where gravitation has lost its power. Schoenberg’s Second String Quartet places us at the threshold to atonality; a threshold that appears with the last two movements. They were composed in 1908, whereas the two previous ones were composed in 1907 (the second one was, however, completed only in 1908). When Schoenberg worked on the third and the fourth movement, he had already completed the two songs of op. 14, and almost half of the George cycle *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* op. 15. In the George song op. 14:1, only once does there appear a triad in root position, namely the last B-minor chord. In the song cycle Schoenberg goes even further: in the words of Ethan Haimo, we find an “abandonment of the triad as agent of closure” and it leaves Schoenberg with a need for alternatives to the triad, which he finds by “returning to only slightly altered versions of prior material”.⁵⁸

In the Second String Quartet all movements end with a tonic, bringing closure to the music, after journeying into the fields of chromaticism and sheer atonality. However, whereas the two earlier movements can be said to point to the threshold, the two latter ones are placed on it. In the third movement, “Litanei”, the E-flat minor chord appears at the end of each variation, but exerts little in the way of gravitation. In “Ent-rückung” gravitation emerges only in limited regions, with the ‘tonic’ F-sharp major chord. Most of the time, the tonic has vanished, or is shrewdly hidden – except for in the coda. When this gravity is gone, a world still worlds, but not according to the laws of tonality. The world is changed in a radical way, exactly in the way it was perceived by the Viennese audience of the first performance of the Second String Quartet.

Schoenberg has often been hailed for the introduction to the finale that gives a musical account of an escalation through the heavens, through a rising figure of demisemiquavers, where no tonal gravitation towards a stable point can be discerned. When the soprano starts to sing the words “Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten”, they come as a verbalization of this kind of mobility. In this instance, being on the threshold means both that the music maintains a relationship to tonality (we do find ton-

58 Haimo, *Schoenberg’s Transformation*, 251.

al tendencies), and also faces atonality. Then again, as John Covach reminds us, we should not take the soprano at her words too easily: many a musicologist has been unable to resist the temptation of equating her prophecy with the definitive step into 'atonalism'.⁵⁹ However, it can without doubt be said to be one of the moves preceding the decisive step, and there is every reason for us to incorporate Covach's discussion of the relationship between the atonal sphere and the tonal field.

As we saw, Covach's main thesis is that, with Schoenberg's turn to atonality, the composer left the world of tonality but remained dependent on that same context in order to achieve the targeted effects of his new music, since the meaning of his works was produced by deviation or otherness. Covach finds an example of this negative relation in the second piece of the Six Small Piano Pieces op. 19, which is said to invoke the key of C "but disrupting our sense of tonality in a way that prevents it from being situated securely in any key".⁶⁰ Following a Schenkerian path, he suggests that the piece could be said to be a prolongation of scale-degree 5, ending with a descent to degree 1. The descent consists of G–F–E-flat–D-flat–C, and Covach describes it in terms of a minor-key descent, disturbed by the flattened second scale-degree. However, since it does not follow the laws of tonal music, a tension appears. In this deviation from the law, the piece is negatively attached to that same law – and in order for the listener to understand the music, the law must be acknowledged.

Even if Covach takes no notice of it, Schoenberg uses almost the same strategy in the quartet finale. The composer preserves a slightly biased or free version of the tonal scheme in certain joints and sectional endings – in the piano piece, consisting only of 9 bars, the biased descent takes place in the last three bars, which of course can be seen as a sectional ending. In the quartet finale, that which could be said to be the exposition of an implied sonata form alludes to F-sharp major in the *second* theme complex in the soprano part, and the coda ends with that same tonality. However, the first theme complex starts in a way that alludes to a G mode, and even if the coda is surprisingly tonal after much circling and interlacing, it gives relief only when the tendencies of the whole work are taken into account (it is a deviation from the musical world established earlier on in the movement, a turning back towards a well-known sphere – or a fall back to Earth).

Unlike Covach, whose world concept can be likened to either Gadamer's hermetic horizon, or a musical version of a discursive field, I propose that we have to contend with an essential ambiguity: the musical work opens up a world, but this world cannot be separated from the historically-conceived world, in the sense of an era. The world is both specific and general at the same time. What occurs in Schoenberg's "Entrückung", is that a new world is opened up, even if not all dimensions are dramatically changed. The main difference concerns the mobility of the music, or even a certain aspect of that mobility: the long-spun melodic lines still have a late-romantic flavour, the voice-leading has not undergone any radical transformation, whereas the

59 Covach, "Schoenberg's Turn", §1.

60 Covach, "Schoenberg's Turn", §26.

sense of gravity, the actual loss of gravitation, leaves these motions unbound. George's poem stimulated Schoenberg's sensibilities, since it articulated in words that which the composer wanted to achieve in music: the dissolution of an existing world in order to let a new world rise, not as a subjective act, but as an instrument of forces of much greater magnitude. What the work bespeaks is an attunemental shift.

6. *Decaying Worlds and Reworlding*

We shall conclude with a turn backwards. This move was Schoenberg's own. When, in 1910, he returned to his *Gurre-Lieder* (begun in 1900) this would not be the only time when one of his existing fragments would be completed, despite the fact that the composer had orientated himself in new directions both stylistically and technically. In a minor way, this also concerns the Second String Quartet, which had been left uncompleted for half a year, during which his approach to composing changed profoundly. Schoenberg had to exert himself in order to bring the work to a well-balanced close. Other examples prove to be more complicated. The Chamber Symphony No. 2 was begun in 1906 and the composer returned to the work several times in the subsequent ten years, when he at last put it aside, so it seemed, for good. However, in 1939, when he was commissioned to write an orchestral piece, he finally completed the work, returning to a style that belonged to a past that was long gone.

Other works remained fragments, among them *Die Jakobsleiter* and *Moses und Aron*. Schoenberg did not abandon his hopes of completing them. Seventy years old, he made an application for a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation, planning to finish both works and several theoretical texts, but he was turned down.⁶¹ *Gurre-Lieder*, too, nearly passed into this collection of gigantic ship-wrecks. It should be counted with the series of works that John Daverio called "symphonic cantatas", beginning with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and ending with Mahler's Eighth Symphony.⁶² Conspicuous with these works are their compound character, not only drawing on different traditions and materials, but also transgressing genre borders. It is much more rewarding to consider *Gurre-Lieder* as a Romantic symphonic cantata, rather than as an example of *Weltanschauungsmusik*, in the way Danuser does in his book, mentioned earlier. Danuser focuses on only the last movement, "Des Sommerwindes wilde Jagt", with its combination of melodrama and double mixed choirs, and ascribes the work a monistic world view, influenced by evolutionary biology. It is true that J.P. Jacobsen, just as Danuser asserts, was the first translator of Darwin in Denmark and that the poet became a botanist, too. Thanks to Georg Brandes, the influential Danish critic, Jacobsen made his name as an exponent of the Modern breakthrough in Denmark. However, when Jacobsen's works, after the author's death in 1885, became fashionable in Vienna, it was not due to the realism in some of his prose works, but the neo-Romanticism and pre-symbolism that made him important to authors such as Hugo von Hof-

61 Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1975]), 1.

62 Cf. John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Shirmer, 1993), 129.

mannsthal and Rainer Maria Rilke. It has even been observed that the early translations of Jacobsen's poetry, published by Robert Franz Arnold in 1897, amplified traits that drew the poems as close as possible to the symbolism *en vogue* in those days, sometimes through even committing violence against the original.⁶³ It was Arnold's translations that Alexander Zemlinsky used for his three Jacobsen songs, composed in 1899, and it was probably he who made Schoenberg aware of the Danish author (Zemlinsky later gave to Schoenberg the first volume of Jacobsen's *Gesammelte Werke*, which included Arnold's translations in a slightly revised form, an edition which Schoenberg used along with the first version).⁶⁴ Therefore, it seems unlikely that Schoenberg was attracted to Jacobsen's Darwinism (lacking in the *Gurre* poems). His choice must be understood to be in line with his interests in the blunt expressiveness of Dehmel's poem "Verklärte Nacht" and the secretive suggestiveness of Maeterlinck's symbolistic drama *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which ended up in two pieces of programme music, the string sextet and the great symphonic work.

Behind Daverio's notion of the Romantic symphonic cantata, we find Friedrich Schlegel's "romantic imperative" that "demanded the mixture of all poetic types". Against the classicistic urge to separate different genres, the Romantic work of art should mix them. Certain outstanding novels from the early 19th century do this, spanning from works by Goethe to Hölderlin and Novalis. However, Daverio holds that these novels "may point the way to a poetic future, but they do not thoroughly inhabit it", and here he suggests that it was exactly the Romantic cantata that overcame the strictures of *musical* genres.⁶⁵ It should also be mentioned that Jacobsen's *Gurresange* are taken from a small book of his, *En Cactus springer ud* ("A Cactus in Bloom"), that long after the call responds favourably to Schlegel's Romantic imperative: mixing poetry with a simple story. In this frame story, some young authors gather in the home of an old man, reading poetry to each other, whilst waiting for a cactus to bloom.⁶⁶ Arnold chose, however, to translate only certain selections of poetry from the book, including besides the *Gurresange* also five "Stemninger" and "En Arabesk".

In themselves, the *Gurresange* are disparate and unruly, blending firmly structured verses and free verse, but also spanning from *Stimmungslyrik*, *folkevise* and archaic turns

63 Bengt Algot Sørensen has treated this problem in a series of articles, beginning with "J.P. Jacobsen und der Jugendstil: Zur Jacobsen-Rezeption in Deutschland und Österreich", *Orbis Litterarum*, 33 (1978), 253–79. Sven-Olaf Poulsen has further developed this theme in "Umgang mit Texten. Zur Wechselwirkung zwischen Übersetzung und Rezeption am Beispiel ausgewählter deutscher J.P. Jacobsen-Übersetzungen", in Justa Holz-Mänttari and Christiane Nord, eds, *Traducere navem: Festschrift für Katharina Reiß zum 70. Geburtstag* (Tampere: Universitäts-Bibliothek, 2003), 417–432. Lena Großman has investigated in detail the Jacobsen reception in "Die Rezeption J. P. Jacobsen im deutschen Sprachraum" (Diplomarbeit, Mag.phil., Universität Wien, 2013).

64 Cf. John Bergsagel, "J. P. Jacobsen and music", in F.J. Billeskov Jansen (ed.), *J.P. Jacobsens Spor i ord, billeder og toner* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels forlag), 294–95. On the different versions in *Gurre-Lieder*, see Ulrich Krämer, *Kritischer Bericht* of Arnold Schönberg, *Sämtliche Werke*, Abteilung V: Chorwerke, Reihe B, Band 16, Teil 1, *Gurre-Lieder* (Schott: Mainz and Wien: Universal, 2006), 366–9.

65 John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 128–9.

66 J.P. Jacobsen, *En Cactus springer ud*, in *Samlede værker*, vol. 4 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1973).

67 For a thorough discussion, see Bernhard Glienke, *Jens Peter Jacobsens lyrische Dichtung: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der modernen Poesie* (Neumünster: Wachholz, 1975), 178–205.

taken from Icelandic poetry, to Medieval knittelverse, and structuring rhymes.⁶⁷ J.P. Jacobsen's poetic cycle is, in other words, an overt producer of moods – a perfect example of *Stimmungsproduktion*. Even Brandes, who was the celebrated spokesman for Nordic realism in Europe, discerned this tendency in the author's work, when he commented on Jacobsen's style in the main German organ of realism, the *Deutsche Rundschau*, in 1883:

All' seine Worte und Sätze sind mit Stimmung getränkt und durchdrungen; es schwebt über seinem Stil ein so warmer Stimmungsnebel, ein solcher Duft und Dampf der Stimmung, daß man in der Atmosphäre seiner Bücher wie in einem großen Treibhaus athmet, und wenn man sie aus der Hand legt, sich zu Muthe fühlt, als trete man aus der exotischen Wärme des krystallinen Gebäudes in die rauhe Winterluft der Wirklichkeit hinaus.⁶⁸

This can only be taken as a reversal to realism. No, Jacobsen's breakthrough in the German-speaking world came later and in another key than that of realism – exactly the key which Brandes used when commenting on moods. Stefan George translated Jacobsen during the 1890s in the *Blätter der Kunst* and included these translations in *Zeitgenössische Dichter* 1905. In 1903, Rilke wrote a letter to a young poet, where he strongly recommended a reading of Jacobsen's works: "Eine Welt wird über Sie kommen, das Glück, der Reichtum, die unbegreifliche Größe einer Welt."⁶⁹ It was a world beyond reality.

The musical world of Gurre was easily recognised by listeners in Vienna. The audience anticipated a new, great scandal but was overwhelmed after the first performance of Schoenberg's work, applauding for fifteen minutes. In Prague, *Pierrot Lunaire* was, on the contrary, a scandal the following day. There is an extreme contrast between two reviews, both appearing on the same page in *Prager Tagblatt*, 25th February 1913, where first "Dr. v. B." (Wenzel Bělský) complains about noise instead of music, concerning *Pierrot Lunaire*, and then Richard Batka reports regarding the success of *Gurre-Lieder* in Vienna.⁷⁰ The next day, now in *Fremden-Blatt*, the same Batka polarized the reception in the two cities, noting that, for once, Schoenberg had a triumph in Vienna and made a scandal in Prague:

Hier das alte, hochgemute Heldenpaar, die große Naturstimmung zwischen Abend und Morgen. Dort der Pierrot, der mondsüchtige, weintrunkene, in die Nacht hinein-phantasierende, skurrile Narr. Es kann keinen stärkeren Kontrast geben. Und die Frage erhebt sich, ob Arnold Schönberg im lebendigen Gedächtnis der Nachwelt als kraftvoller Sänger stolzer Guresagen oder als Interpret wehleidiger Katerideen eines Hanswursts fortleben wird. Waldemar und Pierrot! Zwei Seelen, zwei Welten!⁷¹

68 Georg Brandes, "Nachwort" to Jacobsen's short story "Die Pest in Bergamo", *Deutsche Rundschau*, 35 (1883), 300.

69 Rainer Maria Rilke, "Briefe an einen jungen Dichter", in *Werke*, vol. 4 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 519.

70 "Dr. v. B.", "Arnold Schönberg im Kammermusik-Verein: Lieder des Pierrot Lunaire", and "R.B.", Uraufführung von Arnolds Schönberg Gurre-Liedern", *Prager Tagblatt*, 25 Feb., 1913, 6 and 6–7 respectively.

71 "R.B." (Richard Batka), *Fremden-Blatt*, 26.02.13, 15 (Feuilleton-Beilage).

Yes, it was indeed two different worlds. Both audience and critics were attuned to the atmospheric sonic landscapes of *Gurre*, the heated dialogue between Waldemar and Tove, the gothic horror of hunters rising from the dead, and the jester who seemed to be a Wagnerian Loge in disguise. Even the melodrama in the closing section “Des Sommerwindes wilde Jagd”, which, from our perspective, foretells the *Sprechstimme* in *Pierrot Lunaire*, did not surprise the audience. Now almost extinct on stage and in the concert halls, but a genre reaching from Schumann and Mendelssohn to Liszt and Richard Strauss, the melodrama was part of the musical forms of the 19th century. In the review just quoted, Batka includes the “drastische Deklamation” amongst all the elements that accorded well to the old aesthetic rules.⁷² He was thoroughly acquainted with melodrama, having written an introduction to the history of the genre when Humperdinck’s *Königskinder* was debated after its premiere, as a melodrama, in 1897 (the composer later made the work into an opera).⁷³ For the original version, Humperdinck invented the notation of a spoken text with exact rhythm and approximated pitch, indicated by crosses as note heads, which Schoenberg later used.⁷⁴

The reviews were favourable, or even enthusiastic. Ever re-occurring is the discussion of *Stimmung*. Else Bienenfeld writes about moods that could shake the listener.⁷⁵ Ludwig Karpath thought that the *Stimmungsmalerei* must have been decisive when Schoenberg set Jacobsen’s text to music.⁷⁶ Julius Korngold fears that Jacobsen’s “vibrierender Stimmungen, sensitiver Dekandenz-Gefühle” would make him a poet “für all-ermodernste, für impressionistische, sezessionistische, für istische Musik”, but is surprised to find that Schoenberg has precisely refrained from such extravagances, and he instead acclaims the first part: “Hier waltet ein lyrischer Geist, der tief, mit Wärme, ja mit Ueberschwang, in luftschwelgerische wie todestraurige Liebesstimmungen eintaucht.”⁷⁷ Richard Robert finds that Schoenberg has an acute sensibility for Jacobsen’s moods: “In ausdrucksvollster Weise führt uns die Tonsprache Schönbergs den innersten Stimmungsgehalt der Dichtung zu Gemüte.”⁷⁸

Julius Korngold is also eager to point out from where Schoenberg has found his inspiration: the introduction, with an E-flat major chord, has a parallel in Wagner’s *Das Rheingold*. Waldemar’s decadent love is the same as Tristan’s longing, and the orchestra paints with the “Telramund-Ortrud-Palette”.⁷⁹ Many critics also make associations to Richard Strauss, but even Puccini is referred to and Robert goes as far back as to Schumann and Mendelssohn.

72 Ibid.

73 Richard Batka, “Melodramatisches”, *Der Kunstwart*, 11:21 (1898), 270–72.

74 Schoenberg probably saw a performance of the melodrama at the Theater an der Wein, some weeks after the first performance in Munich. Cf. Rudolph Stephan, “Zur jüngsten Geschichte des Melodrams”, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 17 (1960), 186–7.

75 Else Bienenfeld, *Neues Wiener Journal*, 24 Feb., 1913, 4.

76 Ludwig Karpath, *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 24 Feb., 1913, 16–7.

77 Julius Korngold, *Neue Freie Presse*, 1 Mar., 1913, 1.

78 Richard Robert, “Die ‘Gurre-Lieder’ von Schönberg”, *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung*, 24 Feb., 1913, 7.

79 Korngold, [review], 2.

This retrospective character not only has to do with the simple fact that Schoenberg had completed the whole piece in short score already in 1901. Compared with *Verklärte Nacht*, the cantata seems to take a step backwards, concerning both harmony and form. Ethan Haimo takes great pains to indicate in which way Schoenberg has, nevertheless, developed some compositional aspects. However, Haimo's endeavour is first of all motivated by the "incremental innovation", which he suggests was the composer's steering principle during the period 1899–1909. A practical reason for Schoenberg to compose within an established framework was that he commenced working on *Gurre-Lieder* with the intention of taking part in a composition contest for song cycles, arranged by the Vienna Tonkünstlerverein. However, he not only had a song cycle for two voices in mind, which would consist of the dialogue between Waldemar and Tove (the first nine songs); very early in the process of composition, he also planned the much larger work, where Jacobsen's whole cycle was to be used, now for soloists, orchestra and choirs.⁸⁰ According to Haimo, the song cycle is conservative, whereas the cantata is progressive: the cantata begins with a tonally obscure introduction; the cadences ending the songs in the first part were replaced by transitions, with the result that the tonal force weakened; the two later parts have no tonal centre.⁸¹ Haimo goes on to conclude: "Schoenberg maneuvered himself back toward the forefront of musical modernism".⁸²

In any case, Haimo's observations are accurate, but again we can put the grade of relevance in doubt. It goes without saying, that which was modern in 1901 was perhaps not that modern in 1913, when the work confronted an audience for the first time, but those who were there heard something they could recognise. Richard Taruskin comes closer to the truth than Haimo, when he writes that the emotions which Schoenberg had portrayed so masterfully "were anyone's" emotions, and they were expressed in terms that anyone could have learned from models in Wagner and Strauss.⁸³ This judgement can be put in another way: Schoenberg used a conventional musical language when finding the right expressions for the text; he did not find his own expressions.

There are, however, small distortions – a certain kind of newness in the work that might have been hard to perceive at the first performance. Since Schoenberg's work already existed in short score in 1901, his later instrumentation of it, with an imagination that had already produced both the Five Orchestral Pieces and *Erwartung*, makes the work slightly skew and wry. What I would like to suggest is that we hear a double projection, both of a conservative retrospection back into the Romantic lied and of a modernistic sound system.

Schoenberg himself was aware of the double nature of the work. He was not able to re-enter that past world: when, in 1911, he wanted to correct some passages, it

80 This is the suggestion made by Ulrich Krämer after meticulous studies of the manuscripts in "Oratorium oder Liederzyklus?", *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center* 3 (2001), 86–103.

81 Haimo, *Schoenberg's Transformation*, 55–65.

82 Haimo, *Schoenberg's Transformation*, 59.

83 Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 306.

caused him more problems than composing the whole work. Something also happened in the third part: "man muß es ja sehen, daß der 1910 und 1911 instrumentierte Teil im Instrumentations-Stil ganz anders ist als der I. und II. Teil. Ich hatte nicht die Absicht das zu verbergen. Im Gegenteil, es ist selbstverständlich, daß ich zehn Jahre später anders instrumentiere."⁸⁴ The new instrumentation is not illogical, concerning the unfolding of the work, since the dialogue between Waldemar and Tove, which dominates the first part, and then Waldemar's monologue in the short second part, are followed by the gothic scene, with the ghostly hunters, and then the melodrama. The text, but also Schoenberg's choice of recitation instead of song, demands another treatment in his instrumentation. There are instruments such as large iron chains and a rattle, but also the bright sound of xylophone and the quiet clarity of celesta. If one compares the opening of Schoenberg's melodrama scene with Mahler's introduction to the First Symphony, both of them depicting scenery from nature, there are certain parallels such as the outdrawn flageolets in the strings combined with piccolo flute. Yet, Mahler's soundscape is characterized by a clarity that allows the voices separated by many octaves to coalesce, whereas Schoenberg's sound is much more disparate – and 'modernistic'. The musical materiality is slightly displaced.

Gurre-Lieder is not only marked with history; it presents the passage of time, being both a monument to the past and a reflection of time passing. The worlding of the work is in itself an unworlding, a dissolution of late-Romanticism taking place right before our ears. By this, I do not intend the passage of events inherent in Jacobsen's text, and accomplished musically by Schoenberg: the ghostly world of the night is dissolved when the sun rises. A comprehensive Schoenberg scholar such as Jan Maegaard suggests that this was a conscious process, where the composer liberated himself from the Wagnerian influence.⁸⁵ What I intend is the celebration of late-Romanticism in a sound world that deviates from its original conception, sometimes barely perceptible through a small incongruence, sometimes with the result of two different projections. This explains the specific hollowness of the work, a hollowness that cannot be said to be just an aesthetic flaw, but a coming-in-to-being of de-composition. What we can hear when listening carefully is therefore an unworlding of the late-Romantic era, the same kind of lateness or even ageing that is perceivable in a work such as Hans Pfitzner's *Von deutscher Seele*, but also a strange reworlding of that same era. In this reworlding, what is past is exposed in a new garbing, viewed in a retrospective manner or, better, listened to from a distance, in a productive way with an auditory imagination that belongs to another world. An attunemental shift has taken place.

This allows us to draw a conclusion about the worlding, unworlding and reworlding of the musical artwork. When a work, such as Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, installs a new musical world, this leads to an upheaval. We saw how disorientated the Viennese critics became, when they met a musical world they could not grasp: it was

84 A letter by Arnold Schoenberg quoted by Alban Berg in his guide to *Gurre-Lieder*. See, Alban Berg, *Sämtliche Werke*, Part 3, *Musikalische Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol. 1, *Analysen musikalische Werke von Arnold Schönberg*, Wien: Universal Edition, 1994, 5.

85 Cf. Jan Maegaard, *Præludier til musik af Arnold Schönberg* (Copenhagen: Hansen, 1976), 46.

alien to them. Instead of attunement to the work, there was distunement. Today, more than one hundred years after the premiere, any qualified listener responds accurately to Schoenberg's quartet. Its world has since long become a part of the contemporary musical world, and the thrust of the work cannot so easily be discerned anymore – a hint that the work belongs to the past and that its world has begun to fade away.

Exactly the same Viennese critics responded favourably to the *Gurre-Lieder*, since that work stayed within the late-Romantic paradigm; its way of moving, its temporality and its musical spatiality were known to them. Yet, the materiality put forth in the musical world had been dislocated, bringing about a slight distortion. I hold this to be a sign of unworlding, where late-Romanticism shows itself to be ageing, losing its capability of letting a world rise. Several dimensions of that ageing world were reproduced. However, this change is not entirely negative: the world of *Gurre-Lieder* happens to articulate this dissolution, instead of being simply dissolved. If we add Schoenberg's reinterpretation of his own music into the instrumentation of the last part, then his symphonic cantata shows in an eminent way how a past world can be reworlded under new historical circumstances. The work itself performs the possibility of any retrieval of a music of the past.⁸⁶

86 My sincere thanks to Robin McGinley for copy editing the article.