

Berg's De Profundis: The Finale of the *Lyric Suite*

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Among the manuscripts of Alban Berg placed by his widow in the Musiksammlung of the Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna are several preliminary sketches for the last movement, the *Largo desolato*, of the *Lyric Suite*.¹ In addition, there is a manuscript of the entire work. This manuscript contains a note in the handwriting of Helene Berg to the effect that it was used by Berg at rehearsals of the work. Perhaps for this reason she labeled it the *Studienpartitur*.² It offers a varied appearance. Most of it is written in lead pencil; a few passages are in ink, and a liberal use of pencils of various colors overlays the entire score. Though showing many erasures, the first, second, fourth, and fifth movements are in a state of near-completion. On the other hand, the third movement and the finale, though these are by no means the first sketches, are still in a formative stage.

Except for the short song "Schliesse mir die Augen beide," which Berg wrote in the summer of 1925, the *Lyric Suite* is Berg's first essay in twelve-tone composition. The twelve-tone sections of this "study score" are colorful evidence of his determination to justify every note

according to the method. Indeed, Berg's accounting of the activities of his twelve tones in the finale is so prominent that it was only after several hours of perusal that my attention was drawn to certain words written beneath various staves of the score. In contrast to Berg's careful musical calligraphy, his handwriting is difficult to read. (Even Schoenberg had occasion to complain of it.³) Furthermore, some words are omitted, their places taken by a dotted line, while others are indicated only by the initial letter. With the help of Dr. Rosemary Hilmar and other members of the library staff, I was able to be certain of a couple of phrases and several other single words. It became clear, first, that what is here is a poem the words of which correspond rhythmically to the melodic line under or over which they are placed. I could not tell whether the poem was by Berg himself, whether it was a translation, or whether it was a German-language poem by a well-known or obscure writer. After several days of being led up blind alleys and following disappointing hunches, I identified the poem as the sonnet "De Profundis Clamavi," from Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal* in the Stefan George translation. This is, of course, the same volume from which Berg chose the text of his concert aria *Der Wein* of 1929.⁴ Baudelaire's poem is given below with a literal translation. The George version, with its translation, follows.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

De Profundis Clamavi

J'implore ta pitié, Toi, l'unique que j'aime
Du fond du gouffre obscur où mon cœur est tombé.
C'est un univers morne à l'horizon plombé
Où nagent dans la nuit l'horreur et le blasphème;
Un soleil sans chaleur plane au-dessus six mois,
Et les six autres mois la nuit couvre la terre;
C'est un pays plus nu que la terre polaire;
—Ni bêtes, ni ruisseaux, ni verdure, ni bois!

Or il n'est pas d'horreur au monde qui surpasse
La froide cruauté de ce soleil de glace
Et cette immense nuit semblable au vieux Chaos;
Je jalouse le sort des plus vils animaux
Qui peuvent se plonger dans un sommeil stupide,
Tant l'écheveau du temps lentement se dévide!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Zu dir • du einzig teure • dringt mein schrei
Aus tiefster schlucht darin mein herz gefallen •
Dort ist die gegend tot • die luft wie blei
Und in dem finstern fluch und schrecken wallen.

Sechs monde steht die sonne ohne warm.
In sechsen lagert dunkel auf der erde.
Sogar nicht das polarland ist so arm •
Nicht einmal bach und baum noch feld noch herde.

Erreicht doch keine schreckgeburt des hirnes
Das kalte grausen dieses eis-gestirnes
Und dieser nacht • ein chaos riesengross!

Ich neide des gemeinsten tieres los
Das tauchen kann in stumpfen schlafes schwindel...
So langsam rollt sich ab der zeiten spindel!⁵

De Profundis Clamavi

I implore your pity, you, the unique one I love
From the depths of the dark gulf where my heart has
fallen.

It is a dismal world with leaden horizon
Where horror and blasphemy swim in the night;
A sun without warmth hovers above for six months,
And for the other six months, night covers the earth;
It is a country more naked than the polar land;
Neither beasts, nor brooks, nor foliage, nor woods!

But there is no horror on earth that surpasses
The cold cruelty of this sun of ice
And this vast night like the ancient Chaos;

I envy the lot of the lowest brutes
Who can plunge themselves into a dull sleep,
So slowly does the skein of time unwind!

To you, you sole dear one, my cry rises
Out of the deepest abyss in which my heart has fallen
There the landscape is dead, the air like lead
And in the dark, curse and terror well up.

Six moons without warmth stands the sun.
During [the other] six darkness lies over the earth.
Even the polar land is not so barren
Not even brook and tree, nor field nor flock.

But no terror born of brain approaches
The cold horror of this icy star
And of this night, a gigantic Chaos!

I envy the lot of the most common animal
Which can plunge into the dizziness of a senseless
sleep...
So slowly does the spindle of time unwind!

In his commentary for the Kolisch Quartet,⁶ Berg notes that the Largo of the *Lyric Suite* is *liedförmig*, but then crosses this word out and writes *durchwegs Cantabile*. He goes on to say that bars 1-6 are an introduction, that bars 7-8 hint at the main melody, bars 9-12 are the introduction again, and that the main melody begins at bar

13 in the viola. And it is indeed at the pick-up to bar 13 that the text begins. (This eighth-note pick-up is, in the *Studienpartitur*, an octave higher than in the published score.) The underlay of the poem's first eight lines occurs as in Example 1, Berg's omissions being indicated by brackets:

Example 1

Example 1 shows a musical score for a string quartet, specifically measures 13 through 27. The score is written for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The lyrics are in German and are interspersed with musical notation. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and brackets. The lyrics are: Zu D[ir] d[u] E[inzig] Teu[re] dringt [mein] Schrei aus tiefster [Schlucht darin mein] Herz [gefallen] Dort ist die Gegend tot die Luft wie Blei und ... wallen die Sonne ohne Warm, So- Sechs Monde steht In sechsen lagert Dun- - - kel auf der Erde [nicht das Po-lar-] gar [land ist so] arm und Baum noch Herde noch Fel[d] Nicht einmal Bach (Tristan quotation). The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27. The lyrics are written below the musical notation, with some words in brackets indicating omissions. The score is a transcription of a musical score, showing the relationship between the music and the text.

Measures 19 and 20 are too elaborate to admit a singable line. In the quartet score itself, Berg has simply indicated that line 4 of the sonnet is to occur here by writing only the first and last words of the line,

interspersed with dots, the last word of the line appearing in the margin. But beneath m. 19, very lightly sketched, one can make out the following:

Example 2

Example 2 shows a musical score for a string quartet, specifically measures 19 and 20. The score is written for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The lyrics are in German and are interspersed with musical notation. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and brackets. The lyrics are: und [in dem finstern] [und schrecken wallen] fluch. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 19 and 20. The lyrics are written below the musical notation, with some words in brackets indicating omissions. The score is a transcription of a musical score, showing the relationship between the music and the text.

Apparently not certain of the appropriateness of this setting of line 4, Berg tries out another possibility in the

next available space, beneath m. 20 (Example 3). This alternative itself presents more than one possible choice.

Example 3



The sestet of the sonnet begins at the pickup to m. 29 with another "unsingable" passage. Example 4 shows how the first violin part is written in the *Studienpartitur*. The

eighth-note stem and beams appear in orange pencil, the remainder in ordinary lead pencil.

Example 4



The next words ("hirnes/Das kalte grausen dieses eis-gestirnes") begin as a doubling of the second violin part, then continue with that of the first violin. The faint annotations beneath the second violin part and in the

margin make it clear that the "voice" part is to be understood as occurring at the lower octave or double octave.

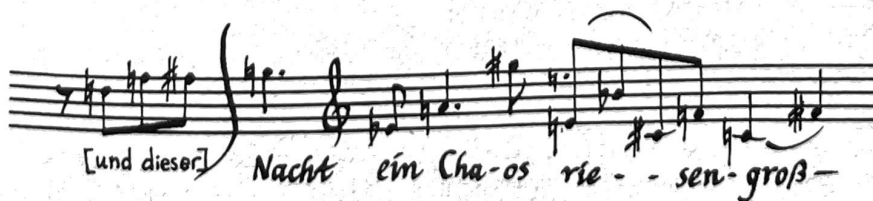
Example 5



In his notes for Kolisch, Berg points out that the accented tones which run through the four instruments in mm. 31-32 re-introduce the rhythm of the main melody (Violin I, m. 7; Viola, m. 13).⁷ He affixes the climactic

words of the poem ("ein chaos riesengross!") to this rhythm and writes the potential vocal line lightly beneath the cello part of m. 31.

Example 6



The last three lines of the poem are affixed to the second violin part, the final line widely separated from the preceding two.

Example 7

33
Ich neide des ge-meinsten Tieres

34
Loos das tauchen kann in stumpfen

35
Schlafes Schwin-del

40
So langsam rollt sich ab der Zeiten Spindel

The meaning of the words is depicted by the music as plainly as in any song: the rise from the depths of "dringt mein Schrei" (mm. 13-14); the bleakness of "Dort ist die Gegend tot" (m. 17), the lower instruments *col legno*, as is the first violin, too, in the *Studienpartitur* but changed for the published score to *non vibrato*. The correlation between music and words is too clear to require spelling out in detail. The ending of the *Lyric Suite* is justly famous. The steady eighth-note rhythm dwindles down without *ritardando* to the unaccompanied viola's alternating thirds which continue (in our imaginations) forever. The discovery that this passage is a musical representation of the unwinding of the skein of time comes as no shock, but rather as something dimly felt all along, perhaps because of the analogous ending of *Wozzeck*. There is no indication, at least in the available sketches, that there ever was to be an actual fifth part, a voice, added to the four instruments of the quartet. The text is always written above or beneath one of the instrumental parts except in those cases where the parts are completely unvocal (see Examples 2, 3, 5, and 6). But these very passages compel us to consider the other side of the question. Is it reasonable to suppose that a composer would write out a feasible vocal line to an otherwise unsingable passage, and even sketch out, at least in one place, more than one possible way of singing it if, in fact, he had no intention of having it sung at all? Certainly, the addition of a voice to the last movement of a string quartet would not go against the grain, considering the precedent available to Berg. Berg had been the one to prepare for publication the voice and piano versions of the last two movements of Schoenberg's *String Quartet No. 2*. Still, it seems strange, if Berg did originally plan to include the voice in the *Lyric Suite*, that he made no mention of this intention in discussing the work in his letters of 1926 to Schoenberg and to Webern. I am inclined, then, to the hypothesis that Berg did not originally plan for the addition of a singer to the finale, but, while composing the work, he did toy with the idea and at that time wrote the vocal lines for the unsingable passages. The *Tristan* quotation in m. 26 points in this direction. Berg does not indicate whether, on the word "Baum" the voice is to sing the E-flat or the A-flat.

II

Berg was drawn to Baudelaire, at first, at least, because of what he felt was superb expression of thoughts and ideas which were his own. "Are these not in short," he asks Helene, "my words, my thought?"⁸ In 1907, almost

three years before his first reading of Baudelaire, the twenty-two-year-old Berg had written to his American friend, Frida Semler (later Seabury), of the importance of sensuality in modern art, particularly mentioning Strindberg and Wedekind.

At last we have come to the realization that sensuality is not a weakness, does not mean a surrender to one's own will. Rather is it an immense strength that lies in us — the pivot of all being and thinking. (Yes, all thinking!) In this I am declaring firmly and certainly the great importance of sensuality for everything spiritual. Only through the understanding of sensuality, only through a fundamental insight into the "depths of mankind" (shouldn't it rather be called the "heights of mankind?") can one arrive at a real idea of the human psyche. . . . But from earliest times it has always been the case that that which the whole world has assimilated only gradually was *inborn* in the great spiritual heroes, the geniuses of the world.⁹

He goes on to speak of Homer, Shakespeare, and Goethe. Undoubtedly when he came to read the poetry of Baudelaire, its reliance on sensual images was one of its attractions for him. He seems to have shied away from the repulsive or grotesque. Thus, years later, although a handwritten copy of "Le Vin de l'Assassin," in French, is to be found among the papers in the Nationalbibliothek that have to do with *Der Wein*, Berg chose not to use this poem, nor "Le Vin des Chiffonniers," for the concert aria of 1929. Among these papers is a typed copy of the George translation of the "Hymne a la beauté," a poem from those of *Fleurs du mal* sometimes called the "Cycle of Art." Conceivably, Berg considered this poem as a possibility for the concert aria, as the poet, in the first stanza, identifies art or beauty with wine. The last stanza reveals that in Baudelaire's mind the function of beauty in art is to bring consolation. This does not apply to beauty in nature. Baudelaire's prose-poem "Le Confiteur de l'Artiste" served, in 1910, as Berg's introduction to Baudelaire. Berg writes to Helene of his delight and amazement at finding his own thoughts expressed here.¹⁰ A few days before he had written her of his odd reactions to the beauty of nature:

There are people who are so overpowered by music that they nearly faint when an E-minor chord is struck . . . I am like that with nature . . . And the fear of nature, the experience of a superfluity of beauty,

drives me to restlessness and dissatisfaction rather than to joy. I retreat from these frightening ecstasies as from sexual orgies, fits of intoxication, or morphia dreams. I flee to my room, to my books and scores. Here I feel: I can manage, this is my realm, elsewhere I should become ill, I should "go to rack and ruin" (what a new experience!) from submer-sion in nature.¹¹

Now he observes that, since writing these words, he has come across a "precious volume," the prose-poems of Baudelaire. This book might just as well be called "What the day brings me" (probably a reference to Mahler's Third Symphony, of which he had spoken in the letter quoted above) or "Fables of life." He remarks that Helene can no longer accuse him of being easily influenced by what he has read, for when he wrote that letter he had not acquired this volume. "Until now I knew absolutely nothing of Baudelaire except his name and had never read anything! When I wrote so much on the love of nature, wasn't it much more a *new discovery*, a *rebirth of an idea* that I already had thought for years and that I now find again in a fifty-year-old book?"

III

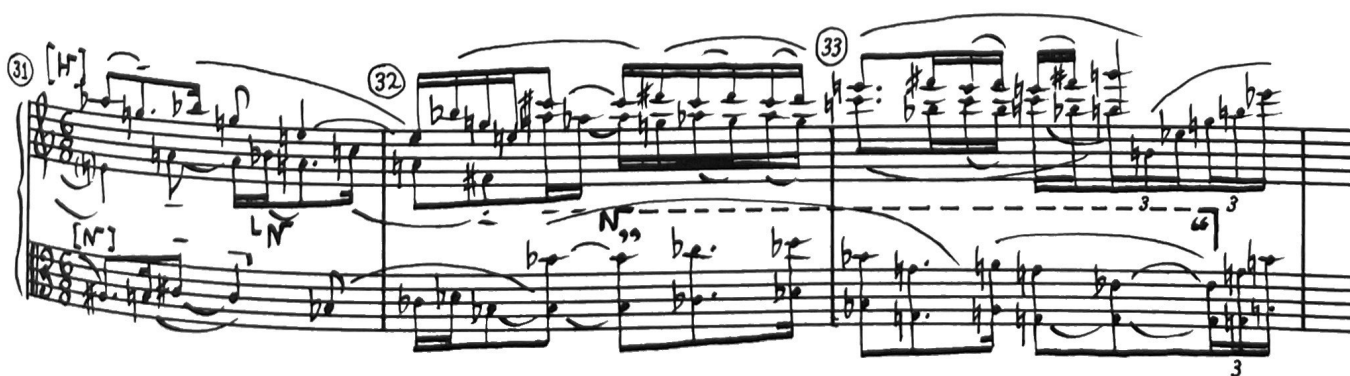
Apparently Berg did not speak of his use of Baudelaire's sonnet in the *Lyric Suite*. I was informed by Helene Berg shortly before her death on August 30, 1976, that she knew nothing of it. Similarly, Berg's former students and close friends Willi Reich and Fritz Heinrich Klein (the discoverer of the all-interval series on which the *Lyric Suite* is based) have written me that they have no knowledge of the matter. Berg composed the suite for the Kolisch String Quartet (i.e., "The New Viennese String Quartet") who gave it its first performance on January 8, 1927. Its leader, Rudolf Kolisch, now a professor at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, rehearsed under Berg's tutelage and was the recipient of Berg's aforementioned commentary on it. He, too, says he knew nothing of the poem even though the *Studienpartitur*, according to Helene Berg, was the score used by Berg for the rehearsals. Paul Amadeus Pisk has informed me that at the rehearsals he attended in late 1926, nothing was said of any poem. The Galimir String Quartet made the first recording of the *Lyric Suite*,¹² Felix Galimir playing

first violin and his sister, Adrienne Galimir (now Mrs. Louis Krasner), second. Though they remember the rehearsals under Berg's guidance with clarity and great pleasure, they recall nothing of a Baudelaire poem. The very fact of Berg's close-mouthedness leads one to infer that the poem, and therefore the music, had a profound personal meaning for him.

It is a commonplace of musical journalism to point out that Alban Berg was a composer who normally relied on a dramatic or lyric stimulus as the springboard for the conception of a new work. Operas and other vocal works aside, the famous case of the Violin Concerto is regularly cited. Even so constructivist a work as the Chamber Concerto for piano, violin, and 13 wind instruments is partially the result of extramusical stimuli, as Berg makes clear in his dedicatory open letter to Schoenberg.¹³

A specific impetus for the *Lyric Suite* such as occurred for the two concertos has not so far made itself known. The dedication of the work to Alexander von Zemlinsky seems to have been more than a mere gesture of the esteem in which Berg held the music of Schoenberg's teacher and brother-in-law. (On July 9, 1920, Berg wrote Schoenberg of his intention to write first an article, then a book, on Zemlinsky, "one of the masters living hidden from the public."¹⁴) The title of Berg's suite was apparently suggested by the *Lyrische Symphonie*, Op. 18, of Zemlinsky, based on poems by Rabindranath Tagore. Composed in 1923 and published in 1925, the symphony is clearly a descendant of Mahler's *Lied von der Erde*, as its very differences point up: a "symphony" consisting of seven (rather than six) songs, for orchestra with alternating soprano and baritone (rather than contralto and tenor) soloists, making use of poems of modern Indian (rather than ancient Chinese) origin. The musical style, particularly in the treatment of the orchestra, and even in specific motivic utterances, shows a number of similarities to Mahler's masterpiece. The fourth movement, *Adagio appassionato*, of Berg's *Lyric Suite* includes a quotation from Zemlinsky's work — the initial theme of the symphony's third movement, sung to the words "Du bist mein Eigen, mein Eigen." This melody is cited in the viola in octaves at bars 32-33 (see Example 8). Its appearance is anticipated one bar earlier in a slight variant — the first two pitches reversed — by the first violin (m. 31) and again by the second violin (mm. 31-32).

Example 8



This variant had figured prominently in the second movement of the *Lyric Suite*, the *Andante amoroso* (mm. 5, 10, 50-51, 53, 54, and 131-136). The first three notes of Zemlinsky's theme become the chief motif at the end of the *Adagio's* coda (mm. 65-69). At mm. 46-50 the second violin quotes Zemlinsky's theme again, this time prominently. Reinhard Gerlach has demonstrated how the harmony here derives from Zemlinsky's setting.¹⁵ The linearization of this harmony, as played by the viola beginning in m. 45, reappears in the fifth movement, the *Presto delirando*, in the violins (mm. 356-370).

Beyond these derivations from the symphony and the dedication itself, there seems to be no specific relation between Zemlinsky and the *Lyric Suite*. Reginald Smith Brindle's contention that the initial measure of the first movement is intended to simulate the rhythm of the name of the dedicatee seems farfetched (one would have to say "von Zém-lin-sky").¹⁶ Mosco Carner names Zemlinsky as the inspirer of the work in order to place it among those compositions which grew out of "the living presence or vivid recollection of persons with whom he was linked in love and friendship," such as Schoenberg and Webern (Chamber Concerto) or Manon Gropius (Violin Concerto).¹⁷ But this contention is simply not bolstered by external evidence such as exists in the case of the two concertos.

Whether or not there was an external stimulus which helped to shape the conception of the *Lyric Suite* in Berg's mind, commentators have invariably assumed a personal expressive purpose on Berg's part. Willi Reich declares the suite to be "certainly Berg's most 'personal' work."¹⁸ In addition to the Zemlinsky quotation, there is the quotation of the motif from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in the finale (mm. 26-27). The connotative adjectives accompanying the tempo markings are not to be overlooked. T. W. Adorno goes so far as to call it a "latent opera" which builds to a catastrophe in the fifth movement and subsides into sadness in the epilogue-finale.¹⁹ To a large extent, emotional qualities are emphasized by strong and sudden contrasts. There is what Berg called the *Stimmungssteigerung* ("mood intensification")²⁰ achieved over the whole suite by the well-known arrangement of the movements: the odd-numbered ones become progressively faster, the even-numbered ever slower. The result is stronger and stronger contrast between movements. And, too, with the exception of the first two, extreme contrasts pervade the individual movements: the *Trio estatico* of the third movement, the *molto tranquillo* and *molto adagio* sections of the fourth, and the extraordinary *tenebroso* parts of the fifth. But nowhere in the suite do we find such sudden and strange outbursts in violent contrast to subdued or even austere passages as in the finale, *Largo desolato*. As we have seen, reference to the poem reveals the representational meanings of these contrasts.

Evidence that expression in the *Lyric Suite* is of a personal nature is to be found in Berg's dependence on the number 23 and its multiples in devising his time-schemes.²¹ The last three movements employ no metronomic markings other than multiples of 23. This fact is highlighted by two details. First, in the *Adagio appassionato* there are actually three tempi, the second occurring at m. 45 (*Molto tranquillo*) and the third at m. 59 (*Molto adagio*). Contrary to the usual practice of his mature works, Berg gives no metronomic markings at these

points. One can only conclude that if a tempo in this movement cannot be expressed by a multiple of 23, no metronomic indications at all can be given. Second, in the *Studienpartitur* at the opening of the *Largo desolato*, Berg originally wrote $\text{♩} = 46$. Apparently finding this too fast, he changed it to $\text{♩} = 69$, the next slower speed possible when using units of 23. Similarly, various sections and even entire movements comprise multiples of 23 measures.²²

Berg's consistent dependence on the fateful number and its "alter ego," 5, throughout the *Lyric Suite* in determining the length of its beats, its phrases, its sections, and its movements, points strongly to a desire on Berg's part to emphasize in a "secret" way the personal character of the work. One is reminded of Bach's hidden "double signature" to his last work, the organ chorale *Vor deinen Thron*, BWV 668, brought about by the number of notes in the chorale melody.

There can be no doubt that the referential content running through the successive movements has to do with experiences of love. The quotations from Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony* and from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, along with the tempo markings, would show this even were one not able to discern it from the sound of the music itself. Moreover, George Perle has shown how Berg, in adapting Wedekind's text for the final scene of Act II of the opera *Lulu*, made clear the erotic implications of his own *Lyric Suite*.²³ Alwa is alone with Lulu and in his *Hymne* he praises her body:

Wedekind: *Büchse der Pandora*

Through this dress I feel your
form as a symphony.
These slender ankles, the Cantabile;
This charming swelling [of your
calves];
And these knees, the Capriccio;
And the powerful Andante of
voluptuousness . . .

Berg: *Lulu*

Through this dress I feel your
form as music.
These ankles, a Grazioso;
This enticing swelling, a
Cantabile;
These knees, a Misterioso;
And the powerful Andante of
voluptuousness . . .

It is the character of the movements, rather than the tempo indications, to which the reference is made. Although the reference is thus slightly veiled, the correlation between Berg's alterations and the first four movements of the *Lyric Suite* is scarcely to be doubted, particularly when one has followed Perle's line of reasoning in showing to what extent Berg identified himself with Alwa.²⁴ One assumes, then, that the music of the first four movements of the *Lyric Suite* is an expression, not of love in the abstract, but of a personal love experienced by Berg himself, and that the "catastrophe" of the fifth movement and the despair of the last are also his.

IV

In a letter of August 13, 1976, George Perle was kind enough to contribute his own thoughts regarding the referential aspect of the *Lyric Suite*:

I believe there are specific leitmotives and transformations of leitmotives that have to do with this [love reference] and both large-scale and small-scale metaphors having to do with love and every aspect of the experience of love, and the relation of love and death and the ego. The principal musical cell that has to do with all this is a four-note figure that only gradually emerges and finds its specific

"tonality" in the B flat - A - F - B collection in the third movement. The *Trio estatico* is an exposition of the fourth movement. The fourth movement is as literal a piece of program music as the drowning music in *Wozzeck*. The climax at mm. 54-55 is on a chord comprised of the same notes. The *Tristan* motive emerges from the same four notes at the beginning of bar 26 [of the sixth movement]. You get it again for the last time in the first violin in 34-35.

The group B flat - A - F - B is singled out in Berg's commentary as it functions in the third movement,²⁵ but he makes no mention there of its occurrence in other

movements.²⁶ In the *Allegro misterioso*, when this collection first appears in the cello (m. 6), Berg, in the *Studienpartitur*, labels it "Motif." In the list of set-forms which he drew up for use in composing the *Largo desolato*, he marks this collection with an over-hanging bracket and labels it M. In the first of the preliminary sketches for the *Tristan* quotation in the finale he also labels it M (see Examples 9 and 10). Roman numerals refer to transpositions of the set in descending order by half steps. Thus, since the original set begins on F, transposition VIII begins on B flat; II on E; IX on A; IXu, inversion ("Umkehrung"), also begins on A. These four set-forms are all labeled T [= Tristan] in Berg's list of set-forms.

Example 9

Example 9 shows a musical staff with a sequence of notes. Above the staff, the labels M, 1 2 3, M, 4, and Tr[istan] are written. Below the staff, the labels II, IX, and IXu are written, along with various numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) indicating transpositions or specific notes within the set.

And on the same page, further down:

Example 10

Example 10 shows a musical staff with a sequence of notes. Above the staff, the labels VII, T, and Tr are written. Below the staff, the label M is written, indicating a specific set-form or motive.

From the strictly musical point of view, the inclusion of the opening of *Tristan* is absolutely logical. In the rhythmic form Berg gives it:

The rhythmic notation for the Tristan motive is shown as a sequence of notes with a 3/2 time signature. The notes are written in a rhythmic pattern that corresponds to the motive's structure.

it resembles the prevailing rhythms of the movement: that of the main melody (e.g., m. 13 ff); that of m. 30 (see Example 5, first violin) and, because of its initial eighth-note upbeat, the eighth-note pattern which permeates most of the movement:

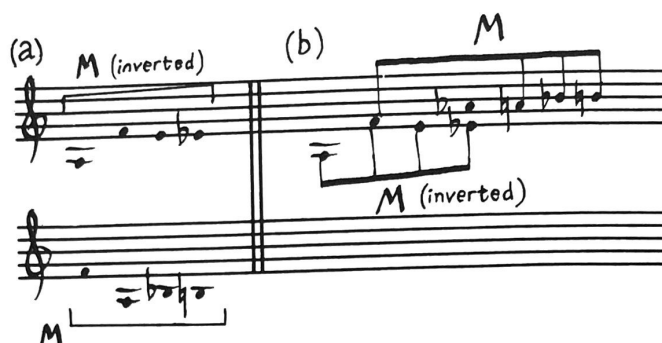
The rhythmic notation for the eighth-note pattern is shown as a sequence of notes with a 3/2 time signature. The notes are written in a rhythmic pattern that corresponds to the eighth-note pattern's structure.

In pitch, too, the *Tristan* motive is appropriate to this movement quite apart from the manner in which Berg has worked it into his twelve-tone scheme. Berg's commentary

specifies how each movement is connected with the previous movement. To complete the circle, the last movement is connected not only with the previous movement, but also with the first movement. This connection is accomplished by a varied restatement of mm. 5-6 and 38-39 of the first movement as mm. 10, 38, and 39 of the finale. These are the very bars of the first movement that are related to the *Tristan* motive melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically.

Finally, the note-group formed by the first four notes of the *Tristan* motive is the inversion of Berg's four-note "Motif" B flat-A-F-B (Example 11a), and the "Motif" group forms an integral part of the *Tristan* motive (Example 11b).

Example 11



The fact that the *Tristan* quotation can be justified musically is not in itself reason enough to include it. Berg believed in the truth of Schoenberg's saying, "*Kunst* (art) does not come from *können* (can) but from *müssen* (must)." Since Berg quoted *Tristan*, he must have felt it was necessary to quote it. But why must reference be made to Wagner's *Tristan* in the *Lyric Suite* and particularly in a movement whose original impulse apparently stemmed from Baudelaire's "*De Profundis Clamavi*"? Before an answer to this question can be attempted, we must consider an expression used by Berg at the beginning of his commentary on the *Lyric Suite*, the words "*Schicksal erleidend*." It occurs in the following paragraphs:

The row is altered in the four movements [*Allegretto*, *Allegro*, trios of *Presto*, *Largo*] by altering the position of certain tones. (The change is not important to the line but is important to the character—"suffering destiny.")

The movements are connected—besides the row which is itself a connection—by carrying over into the following movement one ingredient (one theme or one row, one fragment or one idea), and the last movement refers back to the first. Naturally, not mechanically, but also in respect to the larger development (mood intensification) in the Suite as a whole ("suffering destiny!").²⁸

Among other things, then, the *Lyric Suite* can be taken as a musical expression of submitting to fate. The set itself submits to fate, that is, because of a defect in its own makeup it is forced to undergo a change. In a letter to Schoenberg, Berg discusses his progress on the *Lyric Suite*:

The [row's] symmetry has a great disadvantage, however, namely that the *second* half is the mirror of the *first* half, a diminished fifth away . . . the row has no independent retrograde form . . . for this reason (I did not notice it until I had started work) I decided to change the row as follows for the next piece [the fourth and tenth notes exchange places].²⁹

The twelve-tone set is altered still further for the last two movements.³⁰ Thus, the destiny of the set is to alter its profile through the successive movements. In the first movement, the all-interval set produced one of each size interval, or, by complementation, two of each with one tritone (minor second = major seventh, etc.). The alteration occurring in the second movement and used serially in the third brings about an important change: the set is now lacking the minor third and has, instead, four

minor seconds and three tritones. The second alteration, occurring in the last two movements, brings about a still more drastic imbalance, for two intervals (major second, perfect fourth) are missing entirely, with two or three each of the other four intervals. The other set of the finale, derived by a horizontal "splitting" of the row, is in great contrast for here there are no tritones, and only one or two of the other intervals except for the minor second of which there are six! The progress of the set, then, is analogous to that of the "mood intensification" of the successive movements. The destiny of both is towards greater and greater disparity.

(Example 12 on facing page.)

It seems entirely reasonable to apply the precept "suffering destiny," then, not only to the set and to the movement scheme, as Berg has explicitly done, but also to the referential aspect of the work. The course of the love that is represented in the *Lyric Suite* reaches its climax in the *Adagio appassionato*. But its bliss is destined to give way to the pain of the fifth movement, and so to the sorrow of the *Largo desolato*. This is the fate to which this love had to submit, just as that other lover, Tristan, had to suffer his own fate, the fate proclaimed by the circumstance of his being orphaned at birth (Act III, Scene I, "*Muss ich dich so verstehen*," ff), for which reason he is given the name "Tristan."

Baudelaire's poem describes a scene of utter desolation. Wasteland is the symbol of the absence of joy and love. Fecund surroundings are the symbol of their presence. Brook, tree, field, and flock are the language of bucolic poetry, with associations of dalliance among shepherds and shepherdesses. When Berg associates the eighth line of George's translation with the opening motive from Wagner's *Tristan*, he seems to be saying that all hope for lovers' meetings is gone, and that despair remains.

In general atmosphere there is a decided resemblance between Baudelaire's poem and the opening scene of Act III of *Tristan*. The quality of the poem matches the oppressive gloom of the music of the prelude and of the *alte Weise* played on the shepherd's pipe which, in Kerman's words, "hangs on the heavy air like lead."³¹ Presumably, Mr. Kerman, when writing this line, knew of no connection between the scene and "*De Profundis Clamavi*," yet in describing the mood of the scene he uses an image very close to that in the third line of George's translation of the poem.

Lyric Suite: Progress of the Set

Allegretto gioviale

a.

Andante amoroso
(transposed to begin on A-flat)

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

i.

j.

misterioso

Allegro

Presto delirando

Largo desolato

Several of the symbolic landscape features mentioned in the poem also occur in this scene.

KURVENAL:

Des Hirten Weise
hörtest du wieder;
am Hügel ab
hütet er deine Herde.

TRISTAN:

Meine Herde?

KURVENAL:

Nun bist du daheim,
daheim zu Land;
Im echten Land,
im Heimatland;
auf eigener Weid' und Wonne,
im Schein der alten Sonne,
darin von Tod und Wunden
du selig sollst gesunden.

TRISTAN:

Dünkt dich das?
Ich weiss es anders . . .

KURVENAL:

Again you heard
the shepherd's tune;
over on the hill
he is tending your flocks.

TRISTAN:

My flocks?

KURVENAL:

Now you are home,
home on land:
in your true land,
in your homeland;
among your pastures and joys,
in the light of the old sun,
from death and wounds
you shall blessedly recover.

TRISTAN (after a silence):

Does it seem so to you?
I know otherwise . . .

The warm healing sun, the shepherd tending his flocks, the pastures—these are in stark contrast to Baudelaire's cruel *soleil de glace*, and his specific mention of the absence of foliage and animal life. But it is Kurvenal, anxious to buoy up his master's spirits, who speaks of these things. Tristan knows better. Here there is no running brook, only the sea which, in the shepherd's words, is desolate and empty ("Öd und leer das Meer!"). Tristan does lie in the shade of a linden tree, but the whole scene is described by Wagner as giving the impression of being ownerless, unkempt, dilapidated, and overgrown. Baudelaire's desire, in the thirteenth line, to sink into a sleep devoid of sensation recalls Tristan's world of night:

Nur ein Wissen
dort uns eigen:
göttlich ew'ges
Ur-Vergessen!

There one knowledge
only do we have;
blessed, eternal
oblivion!

Immediately after this passage we hear, for the first time in Act III, the original Tristan motive, the one quoted by Berg. This motive signals Tristan's inklings of recollection. Up to this point in the scene no mention has been made of Isolde. It is as if she, who is the cause of Tristan's present state, has been pushed back into his mind, and only now, after his remembrance of the world of night, does she return to his consciousness resulting in his great outpouring of yearning for her. In "De Profundis Clamavi," "Isolde" ("Du einzig Teure") is invoked at the beginning of the poem, her image fading as the poet dwells on his own sufferings. In spite of this reversal, the relationship between the first scene of Act III of *Tristan und Isolde* and "De Profundis Clamavi" is clear: the lover is brought down by his passion to a state of wretchedness and he cries out for help to his beloved.

Although Baudelaire's poem was conceived as the result of a definite situation in his own life, the finished work far transcends the historical circumstances.³² The *Lyric Suite*, too, goes beyond and universalizes any specific occasion out of which it may have grown. It is not essential for us to know or to inquire further whether, behind the conception of the *Lyric Suite*, was a real or an imaginary

symbolical expression of his own great love, a passion which finds but temporary fulfillment, for it was fore-ordained to end in catastrophe and sorrow.

* * * * *

Several writers, among them Redlich³³ and Carner,³⁴ have spoken of the close affinity between the finales of the *Lyric Suite* and of Mahler's *Lied von der Erde*, finding both to be music of an elegiac quality, a farewell. And yet I find this affinity quite elusive. Mahler's "Abschied" is music of a passionate longing, a yearning to hold on to the incredible beauties of the earth in full consciousness of the vanity of such a wish. This poetic content is completely revealed in the music. One need not know the words to sense it. Berg's *Largo desolato* is quite another thing. Far removed from the tenderness and resignation of Mahler, the music has a nightmarish quality, giving the impression, until the dissolution of the climax of mm. 31-32, of writhing in agony. Three highly expressive bars follow (mm. 37-39), probably the loveliest music in the entire *Lyric Suite*. They are the allusions to the first movement and speak of that greatest of all sorrows: "ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria." The last seven bars could perhaps best be described by the word *indifference*. Though Berg may not have achieved this state in his actual life, he is giving expression to it musically: "I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless." Baudelaire's *sommeil stupide*, Wagner's *Ur-Vergessen*, are at hand, while Time's spindle steadily unwinds.

* * * * *

Acknowledgements: It gives me pleasure to express my thanks to the staff of the Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek who were most cooperative during the initial stages of this study. I am especially gratefully grateful to George Perle for a number of significant contributions, only some of which have been noted in the text. Jessie Kneisel of the Humanities Division of the Eastman School of Music, Paul A. Pisk, and Karl Geiringer helped with the translations and offered other insights. Finally, thanks are due to the late Helene Berg for permission to examine the manuscripts and copy out portions of them. Examples from the published score of the *Lyric Suite* are reprinted with the permission of Universal Edition, Vienna, and Stefan George's translation of the poem is printed by permission of G. Bondi, Berlin.

NOTES

1. For the *Largo desolato* there are two pages of set forms, one page of preliminary sketches for mm. 31-32, and photostatic copies of four pages of sketches. In the Library of Congress there are four pages (two sheets, both sides) of preliminary sketches for the first movement.

2. Above and beyond the preliminary sketches and the *Studien-partitur*, there is an autograph fair copy in ink of movements I, II, IV, and VI. The Nationalbibliothek has only a microfilm copy of a complete autograph score, the original of which was said to be in the possession of Helene Berg.

3. Mosco Carner, *Alban Berg, the Man and the Work* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1975), p. 43.

4. Charles Baudelaire, *Die Blumen des Bösen*, trans. Stefan George (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1922), p. 48.

5. Typically, George used capital letters only at the beginning of each line. In copying the poem into his score Berg followed normal German practice. But due to Berg's omissions and abbreviations, the poem appears here as George published it rather than as Berg copied it.

6. Published in facsimile as "Neun Blätter zur 'Lyrische Suite für Streichquartett'" in W. Reich, ed., *Alban Berg, Bildnis im Wort: Selbstzeugnisse und Aussagen der Freunde* (Zurich: Die Arche, 1959), pp. 45-54.

7. Ibid., p. 53.

8. Alban Berg, *Briefe an seine Frau* (Munich/Vienna: Albert Langen & Georg Müller, 1965), Letter No. 133 of August, 1910, pp. 184-185.

9. W. Reich, *Alban Berg* (Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1963). The passage quoted is from the Cornelius Cardew translation (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965, reprint ed., New York: Vienna House, 1974), pp. 22-23.

10. Alban Berg, *Briefe an seine Frau*, Letter No. 133, p. 185.

11. Ibid., Letter No. 129, pp. 176-177.

12. The pre-1936 recording by the Galimir String Quartet was issued under the following labels: Vox Set 181 (U.S.); Polydor 595133/38 (old nos. 516659/62) (France); Decca CA 8244/7 (England).

13. Willi Reich, *Alban Berg*, trans., C. Cardew, pp. 147-148.

14. Mosco Carner, *Alban Berg, the Man and the Work*, p. 59, footnote 1.

15. Reinhard Gerlach, "Zemlinsky und Berg—'Lyrische Sinfonie' und 'Lyrische Suite'" in *Alexander Zemlinsky—Tradition im Umkreis der Wiener Schule*, Studien zur Wertungsforschung, Bd. 7 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1975), pp. 152-153.

16. Reginald Smith Brindle, "Symbolism in Berg's 'Lyric Suite,'" *Score*, No. 21 (October 1957): 60. Brindle rightly points out that the rhythm of this opening bar does not play a structural role in the movement and is therefore to be understood as an introductory gesture. Moreover, the preliminary sketch of the opening, in the Library of Congress, does not include this bar, indicating it was probably not part of the original conception.

17. Mosco Carner, *Alban Berg, the Man and the Work*, p. 18.

18. Willi Reich, "Alban Berg" in *Grove's Dictionary*, 5th Ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955), Vol. I, p. 637.

19. T. Adorno, *Alban Berg* (Vienna: Verlag Elisabeth Lafite; Oesterreichischer Bundesverlag, 1968), pp. 111, 117.

20. Alban Berg, "Neun Blätter . . .," in Reich, *Alban Berg, Bildnis im Wort*, pp. 45-46.

21. Berg's belief in the significance of numbers was far from being a peculiarity of his own. The final chapter of Christopher Butler's *Number Symbolism* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970) discusses the deep concern with numbers, viewed both as symbols and as means of arriving at an aesthetic of proportion, of several well-known scientists and artists of Berg's day, among them Yeats, Jung, Joyce, and Le Corbusier. Freud's friend Wilhelm Fliess, a doctor and biologist, was deeply immersed in theories of numbers, one of his strongest beliefs having to do with periodicity in all vital activities. For females, the number 28 was the key to this periodicity, for males, the number 23. (I am indebted to George Perle for pointing out to me this latter fact, discussed in Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. I (New York: Basic Books, 1953) pp. 290-291 and elsewhere.)

22. For instance, in the *Studienpartitur*, at the end of the third movement, Berg has written "138 = 6 × 23." There are many such examples of Berg's arithmetic to be found in the margins.

23. George Perle, "Die Personen in Bergs *Lulu*," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* (November 1979): 288.

24. Ibid., pp. 287-288.

25. Alban Berg, "Neun Blätter . . .," in Reich, *Alban Berg: Bildnis im Wort*, p. 49.

26. To Mr. Perle's comments might be added the importance of the four-note group in the first violin at m. 44 of the *Adagio appassionato*—leading into the Zemlinsky quotation—and its recurrence at m. 59.

27. Etymologically, the German word *Kunst* does derive from *können*. At the end of his article of 1920, "Two Feuilletons—a Contribution to the topic 'Schoenberg and Music Criticism,'" Berg very amusingly discusses this saying in connection with its misquotation by a Vienna journalist of the time. Reprinted in W. Reich, *Alban Berg*, trans. C. Cardew, pp. 225-226.

28. Alban Berg, "Neun Blätter . . .," in Reich, *Alban Berg, Bildnis im Wort*, p. 46.

29. The letter, in the Library of Congress, is undated and seems to have been an enclosure with the letter dated July 13, 1926. (See "Berg's Notes for the *Lyric Suite*" by Donald Harris and Mark DeVoto in the *Newsletter of the International Alban Berg Society*, No. 2 [January 1971], in which the entire letter appears in translation.)

30. All versions are cited in George Perle, *Serial Composition and Atonality*, 3rd. Ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 73-74.

31. Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Knopf, 1956), p. 198.

32. "De Profundis Clamavi" was written in 1851 and originally entitled "La Béatrix." It is part of the so-called Cycle of Jeanne Duval, poems written to Baudelaire's mistress. A cigar-smoking mulatto, said to have had lesbian tendencies, Duval was the cause of both joy and grief for Baudelaire, not only during the decade of their living together, but for many years after. Not for nothing did he speak of her, in "Sed non Satiata," as "bizarre déité." Their relationship was complex and is by no means clear even today. His passion for her amounted to an obsession, yet it is thought that with her he was close to, if not completely, impotent. She seems to have often despised him, being guilty both of cruel trivialities and gross infidelities. Given, like Baudelaire, to drugs and drink, she was also uninterested in his work. Yet they had moments of happiness together, and the most shattering blow of Baudelaire's life came when she left him in 1855. Thereafter, though in desperate financial straits himself, he gave her the greater part of his earnings and, in a letter to his mother of 11 October 1860, confessed that, though he longed for death, it was only the thought of her and of Jeanne's welfare (for she had become ill and nearly paralyzed) that prevented him from doing away with himself. (Information about Baudelaire's life and poetry is to be found in numerous books. I have consulted those by Starkie, Shanks, Turnell, and Leakey. The letter is quoted in Charles Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: a Self-Portrait*, trans. & ed. L.B. and F.E. Hyslop (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 162-164.)

33. H. F. Redlich, *Alban Berg: the Man and his Music* (London: John Calder, 1957), pp. 153-154.

34. Mosco Carner, *Alban Berg, the Man and the Work*, pp. 109, 120.