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PART ONE

# BACKGROUND



Du bist, mein fernes Tal,  
verzaubert und versunken.  
Oft hast du mir in Not und Qual  
empor aus deinem Schattenland gewunken  
und deine Märchenaugen aufgetan,  
dass ich entzückt in kurzem Wahn  
mich ganz zur dir zurück verlor.  
O dunkles Tor,  
O dunkle Todesstunde,  
komm du heran, dass ich gesunde  
und dass aus dieses Lebens Leere  
ich heim zu meinen Träumen kehre!

(Hermann Hesse, 'Die Kindheit',  
set by Schoeck in 1914-15)



## CHAPTER 1

## SCHOECK'S LIFE

Othmar Schoeck was born in Brunnen, Lake Lucerne, on 1 September 1886, the youngest of six children (two of whom died in childhood) in a family whose musical connections may go back to the early seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> His father, Alfred Schoeck, was a painter; his mother could remember seeing Wagner in the days when he was working on Tristan in Lucerne. Of their other surviving children Paul, the eldest, became a poet and architect, Ralph a teacher and Walter a hotel proprietor.

Before devoting himself to painting, Alfred Schoeck had sung in public - he was a fervent Wagnerian and a friend of Johann Strauss - and at home, accompanied by his wife, he would sing lieder, especially those of Schumann and Brahms. His musicality communicated itself to his youngest son, who at the age of eight sang Schumann's 'Die beiden Grenadiere' at a family concert. At about the same time Schoeck began to attempt some small compositions. At school he wrote an opera based on a Karl May novel; there too he met Armin Rüeger, his future librettist. Schoeck also inherited from his father a love of nature which never

1) All biographical information, unless otherwise indicated, is from Corrodi's book. Bibliographies for the songs are given in Part II; for the dramatic works, in footnotes to this chapter. Fuller bibliographies appear at the end of the book. For opus numbers see the relevant index.

Schoeck's own recollections are recorded in G pp. 93-4, 122-5, 126-9, 132 and 147-8. See also the reminiscences of Annie Kälin-Fassbind (a relative) in W pp. 47-51; E.A.B. [unidentified], 'Die Künstlerfamilie Schoeck', SMZ 102 (1962); Martha Duperrex-Schneider, 'Jugenderinnerungen an Othmar Schoeck', SMZ 96 (1956); Hermann Hesse, 'Ein Paar Erinnerungen an Othmar Schoeck', in Festgabe; D passim. The last contains many beautiful photographs.



left him, and he later referred to the period when it seemed that he too might become a painter as an 'unutterably happy time'.<sup>1</sup> But the musical impulse was more vigorous, and at nineteen he was admitted to Zurich Conservatory on the strength of his songs.

By collating contemporary concert programmes Vogel has given us a fascinating picture of Zurich musical life around 1900.<sup>2</sup> Subscription concerts provided a lively diet of Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner on top of the usual classics, and after 1895 most of the Strauss tone poems could be heard, together with some Bruckner, Mahler, Wolf, Reger and Debussy. The atmosphere at the Conservatory, however, was less stimulating. The dominating influences there were Schumann and Brahms, and at least two of Schoeck's teachers composed in a Brahmsian style. A third teacher, however, Robert Freund - an exceptionally cultivated man, personally acquainted with Keller and Nietzsche - was a Liszt pupil and an admirer of Wolf. He introduced Schoeck to the music of the progressives.<sup>3</sup>

It was under Freund's influence that in 1905 Schoeck discovered Wolf's music, which seems to have burst on him with the force of a revelation. Wolf's is certainly the main presence in the compositions of these years, which besides many songs include a symphonic poem and the orchestral Serenade. A programme note Schoeck prepared for a performance of the latter reads like a description of Wolf's Italienische Serenade,<sup>4</sup> and comparisons have often been drawn. But the style is closer to that of the interludes in Der Corregidor (the piece was originally called Spanische Serenade,<sup>5</sup> though it was to be many years before Schoeck encountered that opera.

In January 1907 Schoeck was introduced to Reger by the singer Anna Sutter. Reger played through his songs, was impressed, and later in the year invited Schoeck to join his composition class

1) OS p. 13.

2) W pp. 51-2.

3) Ibid., p. 70.

4) Quoted in OS, p. 31.

5) Corrodi, 'Othmar Schoeck und Hugo Wolf', SMZ 96 (1956), p. 345.



at Leipzig.<sup>1</sup> This he did, but almost immediately certain differences arose between them. Apparently the lyricist in Schoeck rebelled at the contrapuntal regime, while to Reger's ideas about song-writing he 'could only shut his eyes'.<sup>2</sup> The following spring he returned to Zurich.

It is often said, regarding this episode, that Schoeck and his teacher were temperamentally opposed and that Reger could have taught him nothing. Certainly there is little sign of influence in the music of this period. (The closest resemblance Vogel can find concerns a song - the 'Psalm', Op. 11, No. 1 of 1906 - written before Schoeck went to Leipzig.)<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless Schoeck always retained his admiration for Reger, and something of the latter's contrapuntal ability is evident in Schoeck's instrumental works of the 1920s and, much later in the 'string quartet' textures of Unter Sternen. It may also be significant that one of Schoeck's favourite harmonic ideas - a descending sequence of alternating thirds and sixths - is anticipated in a Reger piano piece:<sup>4</sup>

1) Reger's letter is quoted in D, pp. 47-8. See also Corrodi, 'Othmar Schoeck und Max Reger', Bund, 19 April 1934.

2) OS p. 15.

3) W pp. 76-9.

4) Reger himself may have got the idea from Brahms (see the latter's C minor Piano Quartet, first movement, bars 90-1 and 98-9 - especially Schoeckian, this second passage). Vogel tells of a 'prominent contemporary composer' (Stravinsky?) who criticised Reger in Schoeck's presence, remarking that Reger's style consisted of 'lauter Kadenzen'. Schoeck rejoined that these were always dearer to him than 'lauter Dekadenzen' (G p. 37). Vogel also mentions the fact that Schoeck was in the habit of resting his manuscript on a Reger volume while composing (ibid., p. 11).







Two other important associations date from Schoeck's Leipzig year. Also through Anna Sutter he met Wolf's friend and patron Hugo Faisst; and there he fell in love with the young Hungarian violinist Stefi Geyer, whom he accompanied on a tour of Switzerland and to whom the Violin Concerto (1911-12) is dedicated.

As Schoeck returned to Zurich, his first published songs, comprising Opp. 2-15, were being welcomed by the critics. Looking through them now one is struck by the extent to which his artistic personality is already established. Naturally the music is more derivative than anything to come. But most of the major influences are there; all the familiar poets are present, Claudius alone excepted; and the poems are bound by a unity of feeling, a common sensibility, a sense of belonging to a particular world - that of early German romanticism.

What is meant by 'early German romanticism'? Its spirit is evoked in some lines written by Thomas Mann about Eichendorff's novella Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts (1826). For Mann the book was nothing but

music, departure, the sound of a passing posthorn, the sadness of distance, homesickness, a fireball falling in a park at night, foolish happiness such that one's ears ring and one's head buzzes with the sheet poetic enchantment and confusion. . . . health, freshness, innocence, courtly love, humour, drollery, fervent high spirits and a constant readiness for singing, for the purest, most refreshing, most wonderfully beautiful song. (1)

So in these early songs we find those peaceful landscape-descriptions which poets such as Uhland had made their own; poems of travel, homesickness and Waldeinsamkeit, Eichendorff being chief representative here; and tender expressions of love, often by Mörike or Lenau. Especially typical is the poem entitled 'Die Kapelle', which Schoeck set in his Sechs Gedichte von Uhland (1903-8). It tells of a chapel overlooking a valley where a shepherd-boy [Hirtenknabe] sings. Suddenly he stops: the bells are tolling a requiem. Up there they take to their graves those who enjoy themselves in the valley; and the poem ends:

1) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, in Gesammelte Werke, ed. H. Burgin (Frankfurt, 1960), XII, p. 376.



Hirtenknabe, Hirtenknabe!  
 Dir auch singt man dort einmal.

Schoeck's setting follows the poem, with an organum-like theme in the minor for the chapel, a theme in the major for the shepherd, and dissonances at the mention of the funeral. The song is not a masterpiece, but it serves to show Schoeck's interest in and identification with the emotions of an earlier time - and also his removal and remoteness from his own.<sup>1</sup>

But surely there is nothing unique in that? It is a distinguishing feature of early romanticism that, long after the historical period associated with it had closed, its impulse lived on as an ideal, a centre for the nostalgias of later generations. Thus we have Mahler, in his Des Knaben Wunderhorn settings, recreating an imaginative world of a hundred years earlier. Is it not the same with Schoeck?

Yes and no. Certainly Schoeck was of an even younger generation than Mahler; certainly his interest in early romanticism demanded imaginative recreation; and certainly nostalgia came into it. But there is nothing stylised or ironic about Schoeck's 'time travelling', as there is with Mahler's: so fresh is his view of the other world that it might almost be the natural continuation of it. And so in a sense it is, for one of the central points about Schoeck is his rejection of modern life in favour of an idealised absorption in the literary and musical past. There was no need for him to stylise this process because he saw no alternative: it was the only way he could go. As the book proceeds we shall examine his relation to each of his various poets and try to discover why this should be.

The musical influences, however, can be demonstrated at once. It is too simple to say that Schoeck went to Schubert for melodic inspiration, to Schumann for ideas about harmony and declamation, and to Wolf for thoughts on all three; but it will do as a means of approach. Schubert he was constantly praising for his richness of melody - 'The "Erlkönig",' he said, 'is not really a song but a

1) See below, p. 150.



song cycle'<sup>1</sup> - and his songs are full of Schubertian reminiscences; some indeed, like the 'Wanderlied der Prager Studenten' (1907), are interesting mainly because of them. The 'Wanderlied' begins with a theme not from Schubert but from the Siegfried-Idyll; but Schubert Trinklieder are recalled by little fanfares between the phrases. The main echoes, however, come in the song's middle section, with its Winterreise-like text:

etwas breiter *f*

Nun weht schon durch die

*molto cresc.*  
*rall.* *f*

Wäl - - der der kal - te Bo - re - - as, wir

strei - chend durch die Fel - - der, von Schnee und Re - gen

1) G p. 155.



naß, wir strei - chen durch die Fel - der, von

Tempo I.

Schnee und Re - gen naß.

The Neapolitan chord on 'Felder' has many Schubertian precedents ('Der Müller und der Bach' contains a beautiful one), as does the progression leading to the cadence (cf. 'Frühlingstraum'). The prolongation caused by the repetition of the text is itself of course very Schubertian. According to Corrodi, Schoeck deliberately cultivated a Schubertian style when he felt his music becoming too chromatic.<sup>1</sup>

Schumann's influence, by contrast, shows itself mainly in expressive slow songs (e.g. 'An meine Mutter', 1907). One particular sequence, from Schumann's 'Sehnsucht nach der Waldgegend' (1840), returns again and again in Schoeck:

1) OS p. 25.





If we compare this with the example on p. 348 below, we notice the strong Neapolitan harmony, emphasised by the leaps in the voice. Schoeck prefers a descending chromatic bass, but the point of the comparison is the sequence. Those many passages in Schoeck where the texture seems to open out like a fan (e.g. the end of 'Sommernacht' from the Hesse-Lieder) also derive from Schumann - perhaps from the seventeenth Dauidsbündlertanz.

Wolf's influence has already been noted in the Serenade, but it is felt even more insistently in the songs. Almost every early number contains some Wolfian feature - the dancing rhythms of 'Abschied' (1905), the tonal scheme of 'Marienlied' (1907), the integration of voice and piano in 'Peregrina' (1908) - and the next music example, given in another connection, makes the completeness of the assimilation clear. Coming directly after Wolf in time, Schoeck took over from him a whole literary and musical aesthetic (see below, pp. 84ff., 109). The sensitivity to the text, the 'art of compression' whereby Wagnerian harmony was adapted to a small-scale form, the chromatic vocabulary itself - all these went into the younger man's music with a conviction which both confirms the charge of derivativeness and renders it nugatory: as with his turning to early romanticism, there was simply no other way for him to go.

What is interesting about these influences is, first, the different intensity with which they affect his music - Wolf more than Schumann, Schumann more than Schubert - and secondly the way in which they exist as it were separately, forming a series of styles rather than a single homogeneous one. (Corrodi notes that Wolf is associated with Lenau and Hesse settings, Schubert with



Eichendorff.)<sup>1</sup> The latter phenomenon may be attributed to the lack of a strongly directed expressive drive. There is no consistency, either of character or of quality, about this early work. When a deep inner impulse is present, as in the Wolfian Uhland setting 'Auf ein Kind' (1908), the result is almost as good as Wolf himself; otherwise the music can be vapid.

The point is illustrated in Schoeck's next important work, his setting for male chorus and orchestra of Lenau's ballad Der Postillon (1909). The poem, which Schoeck considered one of the most beautiful in German literature,<sup>2</sup> is pure early romanticism, its mixture of pastoral and morbid recalling another cantata, Mahler's Das klagende Lied. The real model, however, was Wolf's choral ballad Der Feuerreiter (which Schoeck was too young to have conducted then, but which he must have known in its solo form): passages like the 'chorale' beginning at bar 139, or the coda, could have come straight from that work. Wolfian too are the modulations at bar 171, with their unusual use of Tristan-chords. The influence of the Swiss choral tradition may account for the squareness of vocal writing; melodically there are traces of folk song. All these influences result in an extreme inconsistency of style, ranging from the mild, Tchaikovskian harmony of the opening, too bland to sustain the variety asked of it, to the overheated chromaticism of the central tenor solo. This solo section, where the lied element is naturally to the fore, contains a vivid suggestion of maturity in the phrase 'Ein gar herzlieber Gesell' and the little islands of Elegie-like harmony surrounding it:

1) 'Othmar Schoeck und Hugo Wolf', p. 344.

2) G p. 47.



Nicht zu langsam.  
Tenor Solo.

189

*mf*

„Hal - ten muß hier Roß und Rad! mag's — Such nicht ge -

*etwas lebhafter*

194

*pp* *p* *espressivo* *espressivo*

fähr-den: drü-ben liegt mein Ka - merad in der kühl-en Er - den! Ein gar herz - lie -

200

*p* *rit.* *dim.*

-ber Gesell! Herr, sist e-wig scha - del! Kei-ner blieb das Horn so hell, wie — mein Ka-me-

G H 45'9

There may be another reason for this stylistic inconsistency, and that is an imperfect assimilation of Wagner. Commentators disagree on this point, but it seems clear that at some time during this period, possibly through the influence of Freund, Schoeck came to know Wagner's operas; was as fascinated by them as he was shocked by the lack of reticence; and, fearing for his own style, shied away again. 'I consciously held my distance from Wagnerian chromaticism and from Impressionism,' he said in later life. 'I love chromaticism, but I use it on a diatonic basis.'<sup>1</sup> Yet Corrodi makes it clear what a struggle it was for

1) G p. 88. See also *ibid.*, p. 175.



him to evade this influence, and how with almost every Wagner performance he would surrender anew.<sup>1</sup> With Wagner 'at second remove' - whether refined into Innigkeit, as in Wolf, or elevated into the sublime, as in Bruckner - he could contend (he would joke that the most beautiful Wagnerian music was written by these composers).<sup>2</sup> His favourite Wolf song at that time was 'Auf ein altes Bild', his favourite volume the Italian: in both the Wagnerian element had been purified into something fresh.<sup>3</sup> But whenever he was tempted into a vein of Wagnerian passion, as in the Hesse song 'Jahrestag' (1906), the result was a slightly hysterical rhetoric, and we are reminded how alien to his manner this kind of emotion is. Even the Tristan-chords in Der Postillon have a curiously cold ring.

Only one aspect of Wagner appears to have gone permanently into Schoeck's style, and it is this, oddly enough, that brings him closest to Brahms (whose vocal music in general seemed to him too 'autonomous', i.e. too self-sufficient in relation to the text).<sup>4</sup> This is a gentle reflective sort of pastoral writing, with a slow alternation of tonic and dominant harmony, sometimes over a pedal, and a vocal line musing up and down the tonic triad. An example is the following from Siegfried:

Siegfried.

The musical score for Siegfried shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics: "Was ihr mir nützt, weiß ich nicht: doch" and "How ye may serve know I not; I". The piano accompaniment features a slow, reflective style with a tonic triad and a dominant harmony, marked "sempre pp".

1) See 'Wagner und Schoeck', Bund, 30 August 1936.

2) Corrodi, 'Othmar Schoeck und Hugo Wolf', p. 347.

3) Ibid., p. 346.

4) Letter from Werner Vogel, 26 August 1973.



S. nahm ich euch aus des Horts ge-häuf - tem Gold, weil gu - ter  
 took ye twain from the hoard of heaped - up gold, be-cause 't was

(35) Brep. zart dolce

(34) p immer Hr. weich dolce

S. Rat mir es riet. So taug' eu - re  
 coun - selled me so. These bau - bles will

p weich dolce

We know it was the 'nature' scenes in Wagner - the Rheingold Prelude, the Forest Murmurs, the Good Friday Music - that most impressed Schoeck<sup>1</sup> (Corrodi recalls him singing to himself the line 'Wie dünkt mich doch die Aue heut' so schön!');<sup>2</sup> and in Brahms, too, it is the songs about nature ('Feldeinsamkeit' and 'Die Mainacht' were among his favourites)<sup>3</sup> that his music most often evokes:

- 1) Corrodi, 'Wagner und Schoeck'. The Rhinemaidens' music is recalled in the theme of 'Angedenken' (see below, p. 146), the Forest Murmurs in the birdsong from Lebendig begraben.
- 2) 'Othmar Schoeck und Hugo Wolf', p. 345. It must be said that Vogel thinks Corrodi exaggerates the Wagnerian influence (conversation, 31 October 1971).
- 3) Letter from Vogel, 26 August 1973. Vogel adds that Schoeck also valued Brahms's folk-song arrangements.



Sehr innig, doch nicht zu langsam.

Joh. Brahms, Op. 71, N° 5.

*(With much tenderness, but not too slowly.)*

First system of the musical score for Brahms's 'Minnelied'. It features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo/mood instruction is 'Sehr innig, doch nicht zu langsam.' and the performance instruction is '(With much tenderness, but not too slowly.)'. The composer is 'Joh. Brahms, Op. 71, N° 5.' The lyrics 'Hol - der' and 'W'hen my' are written above the vocal line.

Second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'klingt der Vo - gel - sang, wenn die Eu - gel rei - ne, die mein Jüng - lingsherz be - ra - dant un - is - nigh. when she - roams the mea - - dows, sweeter ea - rols sound on'. The piano accompaniment continues with flowing sixteenth-note patterns.

In this example, from Brahms's 'Minnelied', we find the same motion up and down the tonic triad, the same diatonic harmony, as in the Wagner passage. And now let us see how, in the Elegie, Schoeck was to make these styles into something his own (the difference lies in the restrained, almost over-sensitive treatment of the voice and in the mixed harmony of the odd-numbered bars):

Ruhig und leise. *Calme et à demi-voix.*

First system of the musical score for Schoeck's 'Elegie'. It features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature has four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#) and the time signature is 8/8. The tempo/mood instruction is 'Ruhig und leise. Calme et à demi-voix.' and the performance instruction is 'pp'. The lyrics 'Ich wan.d're fort ins fer - ne Land; noch ein - mal' and 'J'a - vais, par tant pour d'au - tres cieux, je - té l'a -' are written below the vocal line. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings 'pp', 'ppp', and 'pp' and features asterisks (\*) in the bass line.



1 *poco espr.*

blickt' ich um, be . wegt, und sah, wie sie den Mund ge . regt, und wie ge - win - ket  
 dieu d'un long re . gard, et vu ses lè - vres me par . ler, et s'a - gi - ter long.

*pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp*

*Qd.* \*

But this kind of integration lay in the future; for the moment all was uncertainty.

\*

The 'search for a style' which occupied Schoeck over the next ten years is symbolised in the series of travels on which he now embarked. First to Italy; then to Salzburg for the festival; then to Vienna; and finally to Italy again (1912). His companions on this last trip were the composer Fritz Brun and the novelist Hermann Hesse.

Schoeck had met Hesse around 1906, and a friendship developed which was broken only by the musician's death.<sup>1</sup> In conversation with Vogel Schoeck repeatedly praised Hesse's simple, melodious language. 'Hermann Hesse has "perfect pitch" where language is concerned' . . . 'In the poetry I admire his simple language' . . . 'For me Hesse is the contemporary poet.'<sup>2</sup> Hesse acknowledged his friend's responsiveness to language in what has become the most frequently quoted of all comments on Schoeck:

Nowhere in Schoeck's settings is there the slightest misunderstanding of the words, nowhere can we fail to note the most sensitive feeling for light and shade, and everywhere he

1) See G p. 139. Hesse's memories of Schoeck were recorded in 'Ein Paar Erinnerungen an Othmar Schoeck', in Festgabe. Many of their letters to one another are quoted in D.

2) G pp. 24, 167, 77. See also *ibid.*, pp. 96, 150.



lays his finger with an almost alarming certainty on the central point where the experience of the poet has become crystallised in a word or in the vibrations between two words. It is this penetration to the germinal cell of each poem which had always been the surest indication of Schoeck's genius for me. (1)

In view of the sympathy between the two artists it is regrettable that nothing came of the opera they planned together, probably just before the First World War (the libretto is undated). Entitled 'Bianca: An Opera in Three Acts', it was, in Hesse's words, to be 'an attempt to renew romantic opera'.<sup>2</sup> But the setting - 'a mountain village in Central Italy, around 1400' - suggests a scenario more appropriate to Schreker, and it was some years before Schoeck possessed technique enough to sustain a full-length opera. Another product of his voyages, an 'Italienische Sinfonietta' which he played to his friends at the piano, was never written down.

Throughout his active life Schoeck supported himself by conducting. From 1909 to 1916 he ran the Männerchor Aussersihl-Zurich, and in 1911 he became director of the Zurich Lehrergesangsverein, his first concert with the latter being devoted to the male-voice choruses of Schubert. Schoeck left no recordings of his work as conductor, but seems to have had a remarkable capacity for identification with the composer at hand, together with the ability to convey it in such a way that his listeners felt they were hearing the music for the first time.<sup>3</sup> After performances, we are told, Schoeck and his circle would repair to his lodgings, where, in a room lined with portraits of Bach, Mozart and Wolf, he would sit at the piano and, with a cigar between his teeth, sing the lieder of his masters, or some new composition of his own, until dawn. Among those who attended these Schoeckaden, as they became known, were the connoisseur and patron Werner Reinhart, the conductor Robert Denzler, and the sculptors Hermann Haller and

1) 'Othmar Schoeck', SMZ 71 (1931), p. 61. Translation from Grove 5.

2) Letter from Werner Vogel, 6 November 1971. The libretto is in the Zentralbibliothek Zurich. See D pp. 70-2.

3) Corrodi, '"Alte unnennbare Tage!'", in Festgabe, p. 40.



Hermann Hubacher. Like his conducting, Schoeck's piano-playing was characterised by romantic freedom; no two performances were alike, and to strangers he seemed 'the purest incarnation of Sturm und Drang'.<sup>1</sup> Emil Staiger was particularly impressed by his interpretation of Die Winterreise.<sup>2</sup>

Schoeck's period as choral conductor left its mark in several pieces for choir and orchestra, notably Trommelschläge (1916), a setting of Whitman's 'Drum Taps' in translation by Johannes Schlaf. It is a work of protest, and its dissonance reflects Schoeck's growing unhappiness about the war. (Though Switzerland remained neutral, he served in the Zürchertruppen until demobilised on health grounds.) It was at this time that, in reaction to outward events, he began to look on his poets as a kind of refuge and to seek consolation in an imaginative world of the past. His other major works of these years, apart from the continuous stream of songs, were the music to Goethe's singspiel Erwin und Elmire (1911-16)<sup>3</sup> and the genial First String Quartet (1912-13).

In 1917, irked by the limitations of choral conducting, Schoeck became director of the symphony concerts at St. Gall, a post he held until 1944. There he could give his predilections full rein. Besides his performances of the classical repertoire (of which his Mozart was said to be especially fine) he gave the first complete Bruckner cycle to be heard in Switzerland and the first Swiss performance of Der Corregidor. He also played much contemporary Swiss music,<sup>4</sup> as well as works by other twentieth-century composers. Here, however, his choice was limited by

1) Willy Tappolet, 'Eine Erinnerung an Othmar Schoeck', SMZ 108 (1968), p. 387. See also Felix Loeffel, 'Erinnerung an Othmar Schoeck', SMZ 96 (1956), p. 353; OS p. 274.

2) Op.cit., p. 1.

3) See OS pp. 70-80; V pp. 70-8; G p. 157; David, 'Schoecks Opern', pp. 50-1; Hermann Spelti, 'Betrachtungen zu Othmar Schoecks Opernschaffen', SMZ 83 (1943).

4) Listed in Hans Baerlocher, 'Othmar Schoeck und St. Gallen', SMZ 85 (1945).



technical and economic considerations as well as by his own conservatism.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the war Schoeck became friendly with Busoni, who had moved to Zurich in 1915. It is hard to imagine two more dissimilar types, the introvert fascinated by romantic poetry and the intellectual pianist; moreover the Italian detested Wolf, while Schoeck later complained of finding the other's music too cerebral.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Busoni's conviction that the surest way forward lay in a return to the past touched a sympathetic chord in Schoeck, whose wish it then was to revive the spirit of opera buffa. At any rate it was Busoni who suggested Holberg's Don Ranudo de Colibrados, a comedy in the style of Molière, as an opera subject. Schoeck composed Don Ranudo<sup>3</sup> in 1917-18, to a libretto by his former school-friend Rüeger. Also in 1918 he wrote the music for Das Wandbild,<sup>4</sup> a 'Scene and Pantomime' on a Chinese theme to words by Busoni himself. The music of both pieces has a distressing thinness, reminiscent at times of Busoni's own opera Arlecchino, which shows that for Schoeck, at least, the Mozartian way was an impasse.

- 1) The Konzertverein der Stadt St. Gallen has supplied the following list of twentieth-century works conducted by Schoeck during the twenty-seven-year period of his directorship (each work was performed only once): Bartók, Second Suite; Debussy, La Mer, Nocturnes Nos. 1 and 2; Falla, Nights in the Gardens of Spain; Hindemith, Nusch-Nuschi Dances, Concerto for Orchestra, Kammermusik No. 5, Organ Concerto, Der Schwanendreher; Honegger, Prelude to The Tempest, Pacific 231, Rugby; Kodály, Háry János Suite; Křenek, Concerto Grosso No. 2, Variations for Orchestra, Fragments from Karl V; Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 1; Ravel, Ma Mère l'Oye, Piano Concerto in G; Roussel, Concert for Small Orchestra; Stravinsky, Firebird Suite, Petrushka, Pulcinella Suite, Suite for Small Orchestra, Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra. Letter from Hans Sturzenegger, 3 January 1972.
- 2) G p. 22. See also Busoni, 'Briefe und Widmungen an Othmar Schoeck', SMZ 106 (1966), p. 135.
- 3) See OS pp. 81-93; V pp. 79-83; G pp. 95, 125, 141, 179; D pp. 112-13, 127-30; David, 'Schoecks Opern', p. 51; Spelti, op.cit.
- 4) See OS pp. 94-5; V pp. 83-4; G p. 141; D pp. 121-2; S pp. 69-70; Busoni, op.cit., pp. 134-5; David, 'Schoecks Opern', pp. 51-2; Siegfried Goslich, '"Das Wandbild": Othmar Schoeck und Ferruccio Busoni', Musica 11 (1957).



If the dramatic works of this period seem to strain after classicism, the songs - the two Goethe collections, Opp. 19a/b, the Uhland and Eichendorff set, Op. 20, and the two volumes to words by miscellaneous poets, Opp. 24a/b - display the full range of Schoeck's interests. Published in 1917, these were the works by which his name first began to be known abroad; and anyone making his acquaintance through them must surely have been baffled by the diversity of aims and affinities. From the 'inconsistency' noted in Der Postillon has evolved a whole spectrum of styles. Wolf is still the strongest single influence, but the expansive, homophonic writing is now forced into irregular rhythms, as in 'Das Heiligste' (1914). Another song from this period, 'Stumme Liebe' (1913), unfolds almost entirely by triads a semitone apart, while a third, 'An die Entfernte' (1914), includes bitonal passages. Alongside this chromatic writing we find pages of pure diatonicism; yet even here there is no consistency. 'Ravenna' (1913) uses modal harmony for archaic effect; 'Mit einem gemalten Band' (1912) is an essay in Mozartian pastiche. There is also a wide variety of forms, ranging from improvisatory, recitative-like pieces to ostinato structures. But the greatest diversity is in the textures. Schoeck has discovered the evocative powers of the piano, and for the first time we hear those high, spidery ostinati ('Manche Nacht', 1911), those mysterious octave doublings ('Die drei Zigeuner', 1914) and those fluttery, fragmentary sounds ('Jünger des Weins II', 1915) which become the hallmark of his keyboard style. (Like Ravel, Schoeck always composed at the piano. He considered the expressive means available so varied and complex that he was unable to dispense with it.)<sup>1</sup>

An advance, then, even if the destination is still unclear. Six Eichendorff settings written in 1917 confirm the lack of direction; but the following year, moved by the suffering caused by the war, the influenza epidemic and the general strike,<sup>2</sup> Schoeck added a further six (Nos. 1-6 of the Zwölf Eichendorff-Lieder, Op. 30; the 1917 settings became Nos. 7-12) in which he

1) G p. 30.

2) See *ibid.*, p. 130.



struck a dark, almost baleful note typical of his maturity. The first song in the set, 'Waldeinsamkeit', illustrates the new manner:

**Singstimme** *Sehr breit pp träumerisch*

Wald - ein - sam - keit! Du grü - nes Re - vier, wie liegt so

**1**

**Klavier** *pp*

*poco espr.*

weit — die Welt — von hier! Schlaf nur, wie

**4**

*pp*

bald kommt der A - bend schön, durch den stil - len Wald — die

**8**

*pp dolce*



12 *pp*  
 Quel - len gehn, die Mut - ter Got - tes wacht, mit ih - rem Ster - nen - kleid be -  
 15 *pp*  
 Immer ruhiger  
 deckt sie dich sacht in der Wald - ein - sam - keit, gu - te  
 19 *pp*  
 Nacht, gu - te Nacht! Wald - ein - sam -  
 22 *ppp* Sehr langsam  
 keit! Wald - ein - sam - keit!  
*ppp* *verklingend*



The arpeggiation between upper and lower dominants in the voice (the gentle pastoral strain again), and the circling round the 6/3 chord in the accompaniment; the tonal ambiguity of bars 3-4, the climactic French sixth, and the harmonisation of 'Schlaf nur, wie bald'; the rocking tonic and dominant pedals, with the voice on a monotone; the chromatic neighbour notes in bars 10-11, which together cancel any effect of rising tension that either one of them, taken individually, might produce; the Neapolitan move towards G major, instantly called into question by the E major triad (another Neapolitan: E = F $\flat$ ); the 'timeless' modal oscillations on 'die Mutter Gottes wacht'; the progression by which the harmony returns to E $\flat$ , and the blending of dominants in bar 16; the lulling phrases of the conclusion, the flattened sevenths at the cadences, and the incipient 'Keller motif' (see below p. 348ff.) of the final bar - all these are Schoeckian 'fingerprints', and together they produce a characteristic mood: one of deep stillness, in which the occasional disturbance, immediately contradicted, seems only to emphasise the basic lack of motion.

What cannot be shown from this description is how the same mood hangs over all six songs of 1918 (for that, see below, p. 100ff.). The preceding collections dazzle by their disorderly inventiveness, by the multiplicity of styles applied to no clearly defined expressive end. Here variety is subordinated to the depiction of a single dominating emotion - that of a ruminative, resigned grief - which is never materially disturbed by the variations of light and shade. The emotion dominates because it is so strongly felt: it is Schoeck's response to an apprehension of death so vivid that it calls forth his most personal music to date.

This Bekenntnischarakter, the confessional nature of a work, was absolutely central for Schoeck. For him art was the vessel into which man poured his most intimate experiences, in order to bring solace to himself and understanding to others. 'Poetry must be experienced, must give simple, strong impressions,' he insisted;<sup>1</sup> 'music means something to me only when it moves me

1) Quoted in Emil A. Fischer, Schöpferische Leistung (Thalwil & Zurich, 1946), p. 166.



inwardly.<sup>1</sup> These impressions stemmed from the feeling of the verse, and to this feeling everything else, including literary quality, took second place. 'If the atmosphere isn't sympathetic, even the most artistic poem doesn't move me!'<sup>2</sup> It was natural that as a composer he should be drawn to the vocal genres, and in his maturity to the song cycle in particular, as the most appropriate vehicle for his ideas. The cycle provided him with ample scope to establish the theme at hand, in the language of poets whose outlook coincided with his own and in the song forms of which he was becoming a master; and, unlike the opera, it was a private domain where he could address the listener without the trappings and distractions of the stage. We see these strands beginning to converge in the Eichendorff-Lieder - his deepening emotional responses resolving in a mature and flexible technique, his need to communicate them pushing him towards the medium of their most effective realisation.

It was another five years before these strands met in Schoeck's first song cycle proper. Meanwhile he seems to have lost his bearings, for the intervening works, far from consolidating the achievement of Op. 30, develop ideas from the 1917 collections. The opera Venus (1919-21)<sup>3</sup> is at once the apotheosis of his early lyricism and the furthest elaboration so far of the chromatic/bitonal strain; the Zwölf Hafis-Lieder, composed concurrently, veer between a faux-naïf diatonicism and a gritty dissonance both unlike anything else in his writing. If the whimsical, aphoristic Hafez seems unlikely material for Schoeck - no doubt he came to him through Goethe's imitations in the Westöstlicher Divan, some of which he had set in Op. 19 - in Venus his seriousness found its

1) G p. 162.

2) Ibid., p. 180.

3) See OS pp. 119-34; V pp. 93-7; G pp. 125, 172-4; D pp. 131-52; W p. 141; S pp. 70-4; Corrodi, '"Alte unnennbare Tage!'", p. 55ff.; Othmar Schoeck: Zum Problem der modernen Musik', Zeitwende, October 1926, pp. 355-6; David, 'Schoecks Opern', pp. 52-6; 'Geheilte Liebesnot', in Festgabe; Othmar Fries, 'Schoeck als Opernkomponist', SMZ 97 (1957), p. 130; Schuh, 'Zur Harmonik der neuesten Werke von Othmar Schoeck', pp. 71, 101; '"Venus"', Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 3 September 1956, reprinted in Umgang mit Musik; Spelti, op.cit.



most substantial outlet so far. Of all his works it was the one whose neglect he most bitterly resented.<sup>1</sup>

Based on Merimée's story La Venus d'Ille, the opera has the Jamesian theme of a man obsessed by an ideal beauty, here symbolised by a statue of Venus. To this ideal he sacrifices first his marriage, then his life.<sup>2</sup> The tragic possibilities of this theme are lost on Merimée, whose story, written in 1837, mixes gruesome shocks with comic pedantry: his Alphonse is a foolish young man, who meets his fate almost by accident. In the opera, for which Rüeger again wrote the text, the character (now called Horace) is a romantic artist-figure, an idealist who in a series of monologues takes on a heroic quality recalling Wagner. Indeed there is much about the work that is Wagnerian, in concept if not in actual style - the monologues themselves, which bestride the structure like a huge song cycle, the symphonic dances in Act II (a masked ball, borrowed from Eichendorff, which provides the occasion for two simultaneous 'streams' of music, as in the second act of Wozzeck or Der ferne Klang), the storm interlude linking the second and third acts, and the superb closing scene ending with the hero's death:

**Sehr breit und feierlich (♩)**  
*Molto largo e solenne*

H. und Au - gen - blick! Die ar - me Welt träumt nur da -  
L'i - stan - te tu! Il bas - so mondo so - gna qua - sto

Fl.  
Ob.  
Cl.  
Archi trem. *p*  
Cor. *mf*  
C.B. Vel.  
B.Cl. C. Vg. *p*  
Arpa Piano  
*ppp*  
*pp* B.Cl. Vel.

1) G pp. 172-4.

2) Cf. James's story The Last of the Valerii, itself based on the Merimée. The James has been made into an opera by Thea Musgrave.



55

H. von zum letz - ten Glück - er - wachst sie nie! Und  
sol! Non si de - sta che al gio - i - re e - strem! Ed

*mf* *p* *mf*

Cor. 2  
Vel.  
Via.  
7 *mf marcato*

H. ich? Gib mir die  
io? Dam - mi il po -

*mf* *ff* *mf*

Tr.

Vel.  
Fg. C-B.  
Trb. *mf*

*molto rit.*

H. Kraft, in die - ser Ster - nen - luft zu at - men! Voll -  
- ter, per re - spi - rar in que - sto cie - lo! O

*mf* *ff* *pp*

Fl. Cel.

Arch. con la voce Tr. Cl. B. Cl. Arpa *pp* Archi trem.

Tutti

Bassi *ppp*

56

H. en - dung, wer dich ganz emp - fun - den den treibt die Sehn - sucht  
Per - fe - sion! chi t'ha pro - vato appien, de - sio l'at - tra - e

*mf*

Fl. 2  
Ob.  
Cing.  
Cor.



*espr.*

H. an dein göttlich Herz, den muß aus Lie - be Schön - heit  
al di - vin tuo cor, ma la - lia - d'a - mor l'uc -

Picc. Vl. *f*  
C. B. Timp. *ppp*  
Arpa Cor. *f*

**57**

H. tö - ten! O Ve - nus!  
- ci - de - rà! - ne - re!

*ff* *molto espr.*  
*sempre rit.*  
*molto espr.*

Fl. Cor. VI. Vel. Ob. Tr. Picc. Fl. Cl. Archi C. ingl. con 8va  
Tutti *ff* *espr.* Cor. Tba. Trb. Cor. *ff*

H. Warum riefst - du mich? Ich  
Poi.chè m'ap - pel - li, io  
con 8va *rallent.*

Archi trem. Tutti Ob. C. ingl. Cor. Tr. Arpa *f*  
*cresc.*  
C. B. C. Fg. B. Cl. *p*

**58** *a tempo*

H. kom - mel!  
tor - no a Te!

Arpa *p* *pp* *ppp*  
Piatti *ppp*  
Timp. C. B. *ppp*



It would be vain, however, to pretend that Venus marks a rapprochement with Wagner, despite the cross-references. The style is determinedly lyrical and unsymphonic, and in the later operas it is Strauss rather than Wagner who is suggested. Nevertheless by embracing music drama Schoeck has opened himself, however briefly, to 'the loftiest, most compelling possibilities that the nineteenth century had to offer'.<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps typical that the work that comes nearest to realising these possibilities is not an opera but a song cycle: Lebendig begraben, a Wagnerian monologue from beginning to end.

\*

While orchestrating Venus Schoeck had written some more Eichendorff settings. Soon they were joined by some Lenau; and he then had the idea of making them into a cycle, to be scored for chamber orchestra. Called Elegie, Op. 36 (1921-3), it is Schoeck's testament of an unhappy love affair and the first of his 'confessional' song cycles. In spirit it returns to certain qualities of the Eichendorff-Lieder: the genre of solo song, the gravity of mood, the harmony of chromatic flux. At the same time it contains a wealth of new techniques which turn the material of derivativeness to utterly unexpected uses.

With its twenty-four songs and its duration of an hour,<sup>2</sup>

- 1) Thomas Mann, 'Richard Wagner und der "Ring des Nibelungen"', in Gesammelte Werke IX, p. 526.
- 2) The singer in the first performance of the Elegie was the Swiss bass Felix Loeffel. Loeffel had met Schoeck in 1922, when he sang some Schoeck songs prior to a concert performance of Erwin und Elmire. As a result Schoeck asked him to premiere two of the Hafis-Lieder later that year. Thereafter Loeffel became the singer most closely associated with Schoeck's music, being entrusted with first performances of the Elegie, Gaselen, Notturmo and Unter Sternen. Other noted interpreters included the soprano Felicie Hüni-Mihacsek, the contralto Ilona Durigo and the tenor Ernst Haefliger. In the last years of his life Schoeck was impressed by the artistry of the young Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, and amended the vocal parts of Lebendig begraben and the Notturmo to suit his baritone range.



the Elegie is also Schoeck's first large-scale work to verge upon (it does not quite achieve) consistency of style; and having reached the point in his output where this study formally begins, we may find it useful to go over the background to this style and to anticipate some of the pieces to come.

The idea of tradition in music connotes a body of composers or works bound by common themes, customs and conventions: what is often called a 'musical language'. A composer who can enter a tradition is at an advantage over one who stands outside it, because to some extent he takes over the language ready-made. For a composer in the 'lieder tradition' this would mean conventions of word-setting, musical imagery and so on, such as evolved with Schubert and the other romantics.

But the 'lieder tradition' is only part of a much larger complex of influences, cross-currents and developments which began with the Viennese classics, went on to include Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Bruckner and Mahler, and culminated in Schoenberg and his contemporaries. We usually refer to this as the 'Austro-German tradition', though the label seems inadequate once we add composers such as Liszt, Tchaikovsky and Elgar - composers who were neither Austrian nor German but can be seen, as understanding of them increases, to stand in direct relation to the Austro-German line. Even Wagner, who was long thought to be too much of an 'original' to be placed with the rest, is gradually being recognised as having been as much a traditionalist as he was a revolutionary, and is being allowed to take his place in the general pattern. And this tradition is being seen more and more as the central one of its time.

This is the background against which we have to consider a composer like Schoeck. As has been shown, he borrowed heavily from his great predecessors in the lied. But these cannot be regarded in isolation: Schubert would not have been the same without Beethoven, Schumann without Mendelssohn, Wolf without Wagner. To say Schoeck 'derived from' earlier lieder composers is ultimately to say he derived from most composers working in the nineteenth century. In some cases, as we have seen, he borrowed directly as well as indirectly: aspects of Brahms, Wagner and Reger



went into his style, and shortly we shall be adding aspects of Bach and Richard Strauss. So 'a composer like Schoeck' could almost be said to incorporate all German music, provided we understand that 'all German music' is here refracted through the medium of the lieder tradition. What makes Schoeck's 'view of history' different from that of any other composer is that it comes to him through Schubert, Schumann and Wolf, particularly the last. Indeed, no other composer of comparable stature can have been influenced by Wolf as strongly as Schoeck was. What prevented this influence from being narrow and restrictive was the tradition behind it, and Schoeck's consciousness of that tradition.

Not that he was ignorant of other music or failed to perceive its qualities, simply that he knew it was not for him. He liked Puccini; La Bohème, it appears, was especially dear to him. But we should never suspect this if we did not have the conversations: it is as if Puccini was available to him as an indulgence, but precluded from entering his work. Only one Puccini melody, Rodolfo's 'Nei cieli bigi', is echoed from time to time in a certain alternating upward and downward movement - and this Schoeck could have got just as easily from Die Meistersinger ('Mein Freund, in holder Jugendzeit'), or even from the Reger example above. (On Schoeck and Puccini see also below, p. 209n.) Mascagni, too, he liked, even to the extent of praising the wretched Intermezzo at the expense of Reger;<sup>1</sup> but the world of Italian verismo could hardly be more remote from his own.

Of French composers only Berlioz and Bizet were to his taste. 'When Debussy emerged I said to myself at once, "Hands off!" Naturally it sounds lovely, Nuages and L'Après-midi, but - [feeling his heart] I go away empty here!'<sup>2</sup> He missed the counterpoint and the sense of 'die grosse Linie' that he loved in German music, and above all he found the French feeling for nature superficial and alien to his own. Once, after hearing Debussy's Jardins sous la pluie, he remarked: 'This music simply does not come from the Urquell of music!'<sup>3</sup> Vogel interprets this comment

1) G p. 86.

2) Ibid., p. 21.

3) Ibid., pp. 172, 79.



nationalistically - 'He meant: from the same source as the music of German- or English-speaking or Scandinavian peoples' - but there is also, surely, the implication that French music is spiritually inferior, that it must of necessity lack a dimension reserved for that of the great German masters.<sup>1</sup>

Such are the sources of Schoeck's mature musical language. Sometimes they change in relation to each other, receding from prominence only to appear again from a different angle. But after the Elegie, when the language is fully formed, there are (with the two exceptions mentioned) no significant additions to the list. Henceforth all the main pressures come from within.

'Maturity' notwithstanding, it would be hard to predict what follows on the basis of the last pieces described. The confusion of styles in the 1917 collections; the coherence and subtlety of the Eichendorff-Lieder; the new extravagance of Venus and the Hafez songs; the sober ripening of the Elegie - these contradictions are repeated throughout the entire output, giving a sense of aimlessness to a 'development' in which the difference between successive works or groups of works are at least as noticeable as any unifying trends.

Yet even the compositions just mentioned yield something of a pattern: that of an alternating advance and retreat, the former showing itself in an expansion of resources (the 1917 sets, Venus, the Hafis-Lieder), the latter in a period of concentration which may itself provide material for another exploratory phase (the Eichendorff-Lieder, the Elegie). This pattern reproduces itself in more or less complex variations throughout the whole of Schoeck's career. Thus in the years following 1923 he develops the bitonality of Venus in what are his harmonically most adventurous works: the song cycles Gaselen and Lebendig begraben, the opera

1) Vogel told me (conversation, 31 October 1971) that Schoeck knew no Duparc and little or no Fauré; yet Duparc's music in particular often comes surprisingly close to Schoeck's. 'Erinnerung' (1909) contains a striking reminiscence of 'L'invitation au voyage', and 'Ravenna' has a flattened supertonic motif similar to that of 'Testament'. Connections with Fauré are suggested below, pp. 226-7, 425, 436.



Penthesilea. The next pieces - the Bass Clarinet Sonata and the Wandersprüche cycle - take up the thematic procedures of those works, but in the context of a simpler harmony (they are also a return to chamber music after the massive preceding scores). Then, as this style in turn becomes more chromatic and complex, reaching its peak in the song cycle Notturmo, the Hesse-Lieder have started a simultaneous process of harmonic simplification.

The latter process continues throughout the 1930s, with some of the simplest writing occurring in the Wandsbecker Liederbuch; but even in the same volume, with songs like 'Der Krieg', the harshness of the twenties is being revived. Schoeck's wartime opera, Das Schloss Dürande, is brutally dissonant. The dark colouring persists in the songs of Unter Sternen, but the harmony is already more restrained; and the next cycle, Spielmannsweisen (1944), is one of his simplest works. By contrast Der Sänger, begun later the same year, shows an almost desperate mobilisation of compositional means: in some ways his most complex work since the Notturmo, it could be said to synthesise all the elements of his maturity. In the remaining works simplicity is again achieved, but only at the cost of a secure claim on our attention. Yet even at the last - Nachhall, a Lenau cycle of 1954-5 - there are attempts to make the harmony more interesting which suggest a belated awareness that too much may have been sacrificed.

This account is of course highly selective and compressed, and refers only to general style. Nevertheless the point is perhaps made that the history of Schoeck's development is one of contrasts: even glancing through the thematic catalogue, we are struck by a lack of continuity, a restless shifting from one style to another, such as we find in few other composers. Perhaps such contrasts are natural in a song-writer; different texts call for different treatment, and the result is an output of great diversity. But there is an element of compulsiveness in these changes where Schoeck is concerned which surely tells us something about his nature. On one hand we have the proud traditionalist, determined not to lose touch with the past; on the other, the artist who is an innovator despite himself, constantly seeking some new application for his craft. We can imagine Schoeck setting out



with some fixed idea of what he wanted his work to be, venturing almost involuntarily beyond it, and drawing back - only to start all over again. The work that epitomises this process is the Elegie, with its mixture of forward- and backward-looking elements. Schoeck's 'innovations' here, as in his later works, have little to do with broader musical developments current at the time; they are self-generated and thus idiosyncratic. They show a kind of 'radical conservatism' more convincing than that which Willi Reich finds in Schoenberg; for composers who have it (Fauré is another), in their intense wish to preserve the language as it was in the past, succeed only in transforming it almost out of recognition.

\*

The period from Venus to the Notturmo, taking in the Elegie, Lebendig begraben and Penthesilea as well as a host of lesser works, is the most brilliant in the oeuvre. Nowhere else is the revolution more thoroughgoing, the retrenchment more fruitful with new possibilities; and these extremes are symbolised by extreme contrasts of mood. In particular the works of the mid-twenties - Gaselen (1923), a Keller cycle for baritone and ensemble, Penthesilea (1924-5), an opera based on the Kleist tragedy, and Lebendig begraben (1926), another Keller cycle - have a violence unparalleled in Schoeck's output. To understand this violence we must resume our account of his life.

In common with many other artists of his generation, Schoeck had watched the progress of the war with alarm, both at the physical devastation and at the destruction of highly cherished cultural values. After raising a somewhat hollow protest in Trommelschläge he turned back to the world of his poets, which in the Eichendorff-Lieder provided the means of a more personal response:

Es wandelt was wir schauen,  
Tag sinkt ins Abendrot;  
die Lust hat eignes Grauen,  
und alles hat den Tod.

('Ergebung')



H.H. Stuckenschmidt says that the revolutions in Russia and Central Europe increased Schoeck's tendency to criticise the bourgeois society to which he himself belonged.<sup>1</sup> After the war he found himself in what Corrodi, doubtless echoing his phrases, called 'a soulless and godless new world, a world delivered up to the idols of materialism and dancing heedlessly round the golden calf'.<sup>2</sup> He hated the spirit of industrialisation, with its rallying-cry of 'Utility' and all the vulgarity for which the latter served as excuse, and what seemed to him its inevitable corollary in the arts: on one hand, excessive abstraction and systematisation (cubism, modern architecture, serialism), on the other, the 'frivolity' of a culture which gave prestige to works like Jonny spielt auf.<sup>3</sup> Like Hesse he felt 'oppressed between the world of machines and the world of intellectual industry as if in a vacuum, and condemned to suffocation'.<sup>4</sup> When in 1923 he visited Paris and met the members of Les Six, he returned to Zurich more than ever conscious of his traditionalist responsibilities and of the isolation in which they placed him.

These were lonely years for Schoeck in other ways too. At thirty-six he was still single, despite several love affairs, and becoming increasingly sceptical about marriage. He literally shut himself off from the light, going to bed at dawn and rising at two or three in the afternoon. At weekends he would travel to St. Gall to rehearse the weekly concert; otherwise he would meet his friends in the famous Pfauen cafe, formerly the haunt of Boecklin and Keller, and indulge his pessimism about what he saw as the 'monstrous danger' inherent in the relationship between men and

1) 'Othmar Schoeck', in Twentieth-Century Composers II: Germany and Central Europe (London, 1971), p. 169.

2) 'Othmar Schoeck's Songs', Music and Letters XXIX (1948), p. 130.

3) OS p. 186.

4) Quoted in Corrodi, 'Othmar Schoeck: Ein Rückblick auf sein Schaffen', SMZ 90 (1950), p. 243. Schoeck's and Hesse's common dislike of technology was later to issue in the choral Maschinenschlacht, Op. 67a (1953). See G pp. 118-19, 178. The tone of some of these remarks is astonishing for someone living in the mid-twentieth century.



women.<sup>1</sup> It was around this time that he began to conceive of an opera on the subject of Penthesilea.

The effect of these changes was to force upon Schoeck an attitude of sharp protectiveness towards his tradition, which must at all costs be preserved. This attitude is explicit in the aggressive conservatism of his spoken comments, implicit in the subject-matter of his works. Gaselen opens with Keller's sardonic motto 'Unser ist das Los der Epigonen', and closes with an affirmation of the status quo in the shape of a battered old hat which everywhere attracts mockery - yet 'der Chapeau war doch im ganzen gut'. Keller supplied another valuable symbol in his lyric cycle Lebendig begraben, dealing with the thoughts of a man buried alive. Art and culture lay stifled beneath a dead civilisation; he who sought to revive them was doomed to failure - 'condemned to suffocation'. Lebendig begraben, with its obvious applications to Schoeck himself, attests to his growing sense of isolation. His indignation was giving way to deep melancholy, which found relief only in contemplation of the past. Nostalgia already dominates the Elegie, and it recurs with growing intensity in nearly all the major works to come.

The exception is Penthesilea,<sup>2</sup> in which other feelings were

- 1) Corrodi, 'Wie Othmar Schoecks "Penthesilea" entstand', Bund, 1 September 1941. See also David, 'Geheilte Liebesnot'; Hesse, 'Ein Paar Erinnerungen an Othmar Schoeck', pp. 81-2.
- 2) See OS pp. 152-69; V pp. 115-18; G pp. 106, 144-5, 181; D pp. 163-9, 184-9; S pp. 74-7; Corrodi, 'Wie Othmar Schoecks "Penthesilea" entstand'; Corrodi, Ringger and Schuh, 'Beiträge zur Neuaufführung der Penthesilea' (Othmar-Schoeck-Gesellschaft, Berne, 1968); David, 'Schoecks Opern', pp. 49-63; Eidenbenz, 'Über Harmonik und tonale Einheit in Othmar Schoecks "Penthesilea"'; Fries, op.cit., p. 130; Günther Hausswald, 'Plädoyer für eine Oper', Musica 11 (1957); Ernst Isler, Othmar Schoeck, "Penthesilea": Führer durch die Musik des Werkes (Zurich, 1928); Willi Reich, 'Die "Penthesilea" von Schoeck', Musica 22 (1968); Schuh, 'Zur Harmonik der neuesten Werke von Othmar Schoeck'; 'Othmar Schoecks "Penthesilea"', Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 27 May 1968, reprinted in Umgang mit Musik; 'Marginalien zu Othmar Schoecks Penthesilea-Melodik'; Spelti, op.cit.; Staiger, op.cit., pp. 2-3; Jürg Stenzl, 'Heinrich von Kleists "Penthesilea" in der Vertonung von Othmar Schoeck (1923/25)', in Dichtung und Musik: Kaleidoskop ihrer Beziehungen, ed. G.



involved. Schoeck's misogyny here inspired the most sustainedly dissonant music he ever wrote (ironically - or perhaps predictably - it was during his work on it that he met and married Hilde Bartscher). The libretto, which Schoeck himself adapted with the help of various collaborators, is a triumph of compression - 'the piece must rush by like a tempest,' he insisted<sup>1</sup> - and he translates this compression into the music by inserting spoken passages or passages of semi-recitative, which carry the action along at a terrific pace and ensure that almost all the words are heard. Schoeck said before composing the work: 'The opera will be homophonic throughout; Kleist's lines constitute the real melody, the music only gives them harmony and rhythm. . . . The music is as it were the counterpoint to the melody of Kleist's lines.'<sup>2</sup> For long stretches the orchestra remains in the background; but at the climaxes, as when Achilles departs for the final phase of the battle, Schoeck unleashes his full resources (the largest he ever used, including quadruple brass, two pianos and ten clarinets), with shrill woodwind figures, heavy brass chords, string tremolandos and trumpet fanfares cutting through the cries of female choruses on- and offstage:

Schnitzler (Stuttgart, 1979); Ernst Thomas, '"Penthesilea"', Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, April 1957. The work is recorded on Harmonia-Mundi, 49 22 485-6.

1) OS p. 107.

2) Ibid., p. 152.



(Alle Amazonen dringen auf Achilles ein.)

M. Bo - den!

S. unis. Faßt ihn! Greift ihn! Ah!

1. H. a. d. Sz. unis. Faßt ihn! Greift ihn! Ah!

2. H. a. d. Sz. hu hu a!

Trp. h. d. Sz. Str. glissando

Picc. Fl. Klav. Klar. Klar. Hr. str. Xyloph. Br. Vel. Viol Br. Vel. pizz. Klav. arpegg.

Pos. Tuba gr. Trl. kl. Trl.

Penthesilea (mit drohender Gebärde gegen die Amazonen und Meroe.)

Dem ist ein Pfeil ge-schärft des To-des, der mir sein Haupt be-

S. 3 2

1. H. a. d. Sz. 3 2

2. H. a. d. Sz. 3 2

Trp. h. d. Sz. 3 2

Fl. Klar. Str. Quart. Ob. Klar. Pos. Blech ab!



133

143 (Die Anstürmenden stützen und senken ihre Bogen, Achilles geht noch einige Schritte nach rechts, alle fest im Auge, und bleibt nochmals stehen.)

P. rührt! Achilles (siegesbewußt, sehr deutlich)

Nach Phtya! Königin!

S. Pen - the - si - lo al Ho! Ho!

1. H. Pen - the - si - lo al Ho! Ho!

2. H. Pen - the - si - lo al Ho! Ho!

Trp. 1. & 2. Klav.

Br. Vel.

Fl.

Ob.

Vel. B. Klar. Pos.

K. B. trem.

gr. Tri.

(Achilles rasch nach rechts ab) *molto* 144

S. Ah! Tri - umph!

1. H. Ah! Tri - umph!

2. H. Ah! Tri - umph!

2. Hälfte des Frauenchores von links auf die Szene! Oberpriesterin und Priesterinnen folgen alle undrängen freudig Penthesilea und Prothoe. *unis.*

Ah!

Fl.

Ob.

Trp.

Klar. Hr. etc. im Rhythmus Pos. wie Pos.

*stringendo*

Klar. Hr. Br. trem.

Hr. Br.

144

Wild bewegt!

Klav. col 8va bassa

Klav. gliss.

Str.

Str. etc.

Klav. etc.

8. Baß K. Fg. Tuba

205



As the example makes clear, both the 'expressionistic' character of Penthesilea and many details of its style - the tumultuous orchestration, the dissonance, the vocal writing, the 'exultant' dotted rhythms - derive from Strauss, specifically the Strauss of Elektra (a work Schoeck much admired, particularly the Clytemnestra scene).<sup>1</sup> I say 'the Strauss of', because here we have an example of the phenomenon mentioned above, when an influence disappears for a while only to resurface in a different form. All his life Schoeck was alternately attracted to and repelled by Strauss's music - a parody-variation of the Wagner problem - and we see him drawing on whatever aspects of it could be useful to him at any given time. In Penthesilea, as we have seen, he drew on Elektra; in Gaselen and Wandersprüche, on thematic techniques from the tone poems; in his next opera, Massimilla Doni, on the bland triadic harmony of Der Rosenkavalier; and in his late orchestral cycle Befreite Sehnsucht, on the melodic amplitude of the Four Last Songs. What is interesting about these parallels is that they mostly occur in correct chronological order, so that on internal grounds one could make out a case for Schoeck's self-identification with that composer who, after the 'breakdown' of tonality, had continued to cultivate the old style with most success.

Now comes an astonishing volte-face. In the past, Schoeck's attitude to baroque music had been one of respectful indifference; now, just as he had once sought relief from chromaticism in Schubert, he turned away from expressionism in search of clarity and grace - and found them in Bach. There were signs of a contrapuntal tendency in the Second String Quartet (1923). Now the Bass Clarinet Sonata (1927-8) shows a substantial paring away; it also incorporates a fugue, a principle put to even more effective use in the dramatic cantata Vom Fischer un syner Fru (1928-30).<sup>2</sup> Wandersprüche, an Eichendorff cycle compelled in 1928,

1) G p. 57.

2) See OS pp. 202-10; V pp. 129-31; G pp. 107-8, 111, 153; D pp. 190-4, 199-202; S pp. 77-81; David, 'Schoecks Opern', pp. 60-3; Schuh, 'Othmar Schoeck', SMZ 97 (1957), pp. 127-8; 'Othmar Schoecks "Vom Fischer un syner Fru" an der Hamburgischen Staatsoper', SMZ 102 (1962); Spelti, op.cit., p. 84.



uses counterpoint more decoratively, but the next cycle, Wanderung im Gebirge (1930), is often spare. The Zehn Lieder nach Gedichten von Hermann Hesse (1929) combine a three-part texture with melodic and harmonic patterns from the Bach Inventions. 'The three-part texture always seems to me like a symbol for the elements of music - melody, harmony and rhythm. A three-part texture contains everything. . . Listen, how perfect it sounds!':<sup>1</sup>

Othmar Schoeck, Op. 44 Nr. 2

Anmutig bewegt (♩: 100)

2

*poco rit.* *a tempo*  
*p sempre legato*

Got - tes A - tem hin und wie - der,

Him - mel o - ben, Him - mel un - ten, Licht - singt tau - send - fa - che

7

*poco f* *poco rit.* *a tempo*  
*mf*

Lie - der, Gott wird Welt im far - big Bun - ten. Weiß zu schwarz und

14

*poco f* *poco rit.* *a tempo*  
*legato* *mf*

There is nothing self-consciously 'neoclassical' about Schoeck's interest in Bach. The idiom is absorbed spontaneously into his own style, and one of the most rigorously contrapuntal of these works, the Notturmo (1931-3) for bass voice and string quartet, is also one of the most passionate.

1) G p. 137.



This, perhaps Schoeck's finest composition of the thirties, has a mood which signifies a new deepening in his pessimism. The recent death of his parents had depressed him, and he was troubled by political events. 'Not only is the situation dangerous,' he said, 'but the catastrophe is already with us - we are right in the middle of it. Our life is wrecked.'<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the years that followed saw the summit of his material success. At last his works were being performed abroad, especially in Germany, while at home he enjoyed growing prestige. The triumphant reception of Penthesilea had led to an honorary doctorate from the University of Zurich, and Corrodi's book brought him still further notice. In 1934 the city of Berne devoted a week-long festival to his music, a festival which was to be surpassed by the fiftieth birthday celebrations two years later, with their inundation of performances and praise. He had a happy marriage - a daughter, Gisela, was born in 1932 - and a large and admiring circle of friends. Yet the works he wrote between 1931 and 1944 labour the themes of loneliness and neglect with an insistence which seems irrational in the face of these successes.

Of all the paradoxes in this composer none is harder to explain. Corrodi's biography lacks any statement by Schoeck that might clarify his state of mind at that time, and until further documents are published our understanding of it must remain incomplete. But the crux of the matter would seem to lie in Schoeck's relation to tradition. Reading between the lines of Corrodi's book, one suspects that Schoeck was unusually dependent on critical endorsement. Before fifty songs of his had been published he had been hailed as 'Schubert redivivus'.<sup>2</sup> After the war, however, he found himself and all he admired brought into question by the prominence given to the avant garde, notably to the Schoenberg school. The result was to thrust him back more than ever on his own resources, reinforcing his traditionalist ideals

1) OS op. 182.

2) Corrodi, '"Alte unnennbare Tage!'", p. 38.



and increasing his hostility to anything that seemed to threaten them. The more he came to see himself as the main living embodiment of those ideals, the greater was his resentment at not being recognised as such - and the greater his jealousy of those who were so recognised. For years he had tried to hold the tradition together; now he had been ousted by men who seemed bent on destroying it. Because of them he would always be consigned to a backwater.<sup>1</sup>

\*

Schoeck's fourth opera, Massimilla Doni (1934-5),<sup>2</sup> after the novel by Balzac, was premiered at Dresden in 1937. His song cycle on Matthias Claudius poems, the Wandsbecker Liederbuch, dates from the same year. He now started work on another opera, Das Schloss Dürande,<sup>3</sup> based on Eichendorff (Hermann Burte wrote the libretto). The choice of subject was bound to attract comment. In Eichendorff's novella, set at the time of the French Revolution, a girl

- 1) There is a comparison here with Pfitzner, who also regarded himself as the last romantic, an attitude already implicit in his opera Palestrina (1916). The comparison goes deeper: both composers had a predilection for Eichendorff (cf. Pfitzner's cantata Von deutscher Seele), and both disliked analysis and the idea of Kunstverstand. Schoeck admired Pfitzner, though it is unlikely he read Pfitzner's aesthetic writings (letter from Werner Vogel, 11 August 1974).
- 2) See OS pp. 247-62; V pp. 146-51; G pp. 81, 153, 179-80; D pp. 222-33; S pp. 81-9; Corrodi, 'Othmar Schoeck's "Massimilla Doni"', Music and Letters XVIII (1937); David, 'Über Othmar Schoecks "Massimilla Doni"', SMZ 77 (1937); Fries, op.cit., passim; Gerhard Pietsch, '"Massimilla Doni"', Die Musik, March 1937; Schuh, 'Zwei Schoeck-Miszellen', pp. 120-7; Spelti, op.cit.
- 3) See OS pp. 296-314; V pp. 159-63; G pp. 117, 126; D pp. 238-48, 254-9; S pp. 89-93; Corrodi, '"Das Schloss Dürande": Von Eichendorffs Novelle zu Hermann Burtes Textbuch', SMZ 83 (1943); H.R. Hilty, 'Bomben auf Schloss Dürande', Die Weltwoche, 3 March 1976; Schuh, 'Idee und Tongestalt in Schoecks "Schloss Dürande"', SMZ 83 (1943); 'Betrachtungen zu Othmar Schoecks "Schloss Dürande"', SMZ 83 (1943); Spelti, op.cit.; Stuckenschmidt, op.cit., pp. 172-3; Vogel, 'Othmar Schoeck: Ein Schweizer Eichendorff-Komponist', Aurora (1956), pp. 65-6.



is pursued by her brother to the castle of the aristocrat who he thinks has wronged her. When he learns of her death he blows the castle sky-high. As Schoeck was to recognise, the work portrayed the end of an era.<sup>1</sup> The composition sketch was finished on 31 August 1939. The day that war broke out, Schoeck sent cards to his friends with a line from one of his Claudius settings ('Der Krieg'): 'Und ich begehre, / nicht schuld daran zu sein' ('and I desire to have no guilty part in it').

War, which had already overturned so much of what he held dear, had a shattering effect upon Schoeck. It was two years before he completed the scoring of his new opera. Then he turned to Keller again, and in the songs of Unter Sternen (1941-3) mingled a longing for a lost world with apprehensions of the next. Now followed the controversy over Das Schloss Dürande.

Schoeck was unpolitical by nature. Although openly critical of the Nazi regime, he continued to visit Germany for performances of his works and indeed welcomed the interest in his music there. His wife was German, with relatives living in Germany. How could he separate himself from a culture which was the very lifeblood of his work? Nevertheless he was surely naive if he thought that Das Schloss Dürande would not be criticised. In fact the German premiere, in 1943, was a success; but then Goering read the libretto, denounced it as rubbish, and the Zurich performances were hotly condemned.

Schoeck lapsed into a long depression. 'What was the sense of celebrating a world which was now a sea of blood and hate?'<sup>2</sup> Desultorily he contemplated further operas, including one on Timon of Athens, but he composed nothing.<sup>3</sup> His night work declined into sterile sleeplessness, during which he would study scores of Mozart's chamber music, the Messiah and the St. Matthew Passion, and amuse himself by writing out the chorales from memory.

1) G p. 117.

2) Corrodi, 'Othmar Schoeck: Ein Rückblick auf sein Schaffen', p. 246.

3) See G p. 18.



Eventually his health snapped. On 9 March 1944, while conducting Schumann's Spring Symphony, he had the heart attack which brought about his retirement from the concert platform.

As if his life had been relieved of a burden, the two cycles that followed on his recovery - Spielmannsweisen (1944) and Der Sänger (1944-5), both to words by Heinrich Leuthold, the forgotten Swiss poet whom Hesse had drawn to his attention - are among his most cheerful works. In 1931 the French Riviera had provided a peaceful holiday for the composer and his wife; and 'Riviera' is the title of a Leuthold song whose words seem to describe the new change in his music:

Unstät und finster war ich einst im Norden;  
wie dieser Himmel fließen nun die Tage  
mir blau und sonnig hin, und selbst die Klage  
ist mir zu lieblicher Musik geworden.

This should not be taken as a Nietzschean 'farewell to the damp world . . . of the Wagnerian ideal',<sup>1</sup> but as a final repudiation of modern life and culture. In the pieces of this last period passion and conflict fade away until, at the end, a kind of optimistic lucidity is reached reminiscent of Berlioz's L'Enfance du Christ. The comparison is made advisedly, for it seems as though the Teutonic side of the Swiss character is yielding to the French; at time, as in the Meyer song 'Das Ende des Festes', we might be listening to a German Fête galante:

Mäßig langsame, gleichförmige Bewegung  
*sotto voce*  
*p* 3

Da mit So - kra - tes die Freun - de

*p sotto voce* *sim.*

1) The Case of Wagner, trans. A.M. Ludovici (London, 1924), p. 3.



tran - - ken und die Häup - ter auf die Pol - ster

san - - ken, kam ein

Jüng - - ling, kann ich mich ent - sin - nen, mit zwei

However, this impression is illusory, for never had Schoeck been less receptive to foreign influences.

So, perhaps is the optimism. Slowly his health improved, only to succumb to relapses, and soon he was no longer able to accompany his songs. Vogel's diary leaves the impression of a bitter, disappointed man, devoured by feelings of neglect. While working on a setting of Hesse's poem 'Im Nebel' (published posthumously) he drew Vogel's attention to the lines: 'Leben ist Einsamsein. . . . Jeder ist allein.'<sup>1</sup> He railed against serial and atonal music, and when a concert of his unpublished pieces was given under the title 'Der unbekannte Schoeck' he became angry, declaring that his whole life-work could be performed with that motto.<sup>2</sup> The deaths in 1949 of Strauss and Pfitzner, fellow

1) G p. 100.

2) Ibid., p. 157.



exponents both of the same archaic language, seemed to complete his isolation.

Meanwhile, however, partly because of a belated enthusiasm for Brahms, whose symphonies he was coming to love like his own works (especially the Second - again the 'pastoral' Brahms), he was composing more prolifically than at any time since the twenties. As a companion-piece to his Keller and Leuthold songbooks he embarked on Das stille Leuchten, twenty-eight Conrad Ferdinand Meyer settings which were performed among his sixtieth-birthday celebrations in 1946. These songs were conceived for low voice; it was years since he had written anything for soprano. He began secretly collecting Mörike settings for his wife to sing. Previously he had fought shy of a poet set so extensively by Wolf, but he found increasingly that Wolf's was only a partial view. Wolf, he felt, had missed much of Mörike's simple piety, which he lacked the proper means to express: a sustained melodic line.<sup>1</sup> In the event this became his biggest cycle, comprising forty numbers; and of these only one, 'Gebet', duplicated Wolf - this merely because he needed a phrase from it as a general title: Das holde Bescheiden (1947-9).

The longer songs among this collection - pieces of a scale and complexity never attempted by Wolf (the final song alone lasts eighteen minutes) - are some of Schoeck's noblest creations, full of a seeming boundlessness of invention absent from his music since Penthesilea. But in general there is a falling-away of Phantasie, a decline in imaginative powers for which simplicity alone is insufficient compensation. Signs of this impoverishment were already evident in the 1930s; from now on the descent becomes headlong. It is especially noticeable in Schoeck's last 'Straussian' work, the orchestral cycle Befreite Sehnsucht (1952). Here the attenuation of content is partly redeemed by the Schwung of the climaxes, with the soprano cutting through a luminous orchestral texture:

1) Corrodi, 'Othmar Schoeck und Hugo Wolf', pp. 347-8.



23 *cresc.* *f dolce espress.*  
 Le-ben taucht in die Mu-sik der Ster-ne, ein ew-ig Ziehn in

137 *cresc.* *f dolce espress.* *rall.* *a tempo*

24  
 wun-der-ba-re Fer-nel

141 *f espress.*

In Nachhall (1954-5) a more complex harmony is restored. This, Schoeck's last cycle, is to some extent a survey of the themes that had occupied his career. It glances back to the landscapes of the Elegie, takes in pictures of foreign scenes and presents a bleak, Mussorgskian portrait of the migrant crane - another symbol - before reaching a chromatic chorale prelude, half yearning, half elegiac, on Claudius's poem about a 'land of truth and essence'. Schoeck called this poem his requiem.<sup>1</sup>

Schoeck was gratified but exhausted by the celebrations organised for his seventieth birthday. A performance of his Cello Concerto (1947) revived his affection for the instrument - his brother Walter had been a cellist - and he began writing a sonata. He told Vogel that in the coda to the first movement he had attempted 'ein bisschen etwas Neues', a way of combining two themes in a single new idea.<sup>2</sup> Then, on the morning of 8 March 1957, he

1) Schuh, 'Othmar Schoeck', p. 128. The poem is inscribed on Schoeck's gravestone in Zurich.

2) Vogel, 'Othmar Schoecks letztes Werk', SMZ 98 (1958), See also G p. 182.



was taken ill, and he died before the ambulance reached hospital.

Two years later a memorial stone was unveiled outside Brunnen. A statue of Venus surmounts a tablet on which are inscribed the words 'Ergriffen-sein'. In the opera they stand for the only virtue to which one should aspire: the capacity to be moved, possessed, carried away. It is a fitting epitaph.



## CHAPTER 2

## THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SONG CYCLE

'There are pretty things of the sort in a certain older German period, and much can be expressed in the form.' Thus Goethe, writing to Schiller in 1797.<sup>1</sup> Although Goethe referred to the poem cycle, or lyric cycle, rather than to the song cycle proper, he might well have been predicting the rise of what Charles Rosen has called 'the most original and perhaps the most important of Romantic forms'.<sup>2</sup> But of what did this 'form' consist?

In her study of the lyric cycle in German literature, Helen Meredith Mustard acknowledges the problems involved in writing about something which 'is not a time-honoured genre that follows the prescriptions of a stylistic or aesthetic code' but rather 'a structural device that admits of the most varied adaptations'.<sup>3</sup> The very word 'cycle', she continues, is often used so loosely as to lack any definite meaning, and few critics attempt to define those qualities which distinguish a set of poems that has been 'composed' (i.e. conceived from the beginning as a group) from one that has merely been 'arranged' from work written previously. Yet the impression one gets from her book is that, on the whole, poets have been as free as critics in their use of the term, which they

- 1) Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe I (Leipzig, 1912), p. 394. Quotation and translation from Maurice Brown, Schubert Songs (London, 1967), p. 33. Goethe was probably thinking of the sonnet cycles in imitation of Petrarch written during the seventeenth century. His own sonnet cycle was consciously based on the same model.
- 2) The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven (London, 1971), p. 403.
- 3) The Lyric Cycle in German Literature (New York, 1946), p. 1. It is surprising that there has never been a similar book on the song cycle.



apply to works of widely differing intention and complexity. This impression is not surprising when one considers that any subject a poet might choose clearly creates its own structural conditions. No two lyric cycles can ever be quite alike, so naturally the form resists classification except at a very broad level.

Even so, there are two kinds of work which by their special character set themselves apart from the rest. These are what Mustard calls the narrative cycle and the variation cycle. A narrative cycle tells a story. Many of the earliest examples had a prose framework. Des Jünglings Liebe (c. 1803), the lyric cycle by Tieck on which Brahms's Magelone-Lieder are based, consists of sixteen poems taken from a novel; Müller's Die schöne Müllerin had its roots in a play. A variation cycle, on the other hand, has no action, but presents a theme from a variety of different angles. One of the most famous is Novalis's Hymnen an die Nacht (1800), six poems on various aspects of night (one of them was set by Schubert in 1820). More relevant to this study are the variation cycles of Lenau, whose Schilflieder (1832) may stand as an example. In each of the five poems Lenau describes a scene of nature, then identifies the mood with his own: the landscape reflects his state of heart. Schoeck's Elegie and Notturmo both contain several poems of this kind.

If the lyric cycle resists classification, so does the song cycle. Since every work hangs on a literary text, there are naturally as many different types of song cycle as there are lyric ones - more, in fact, since we now have the additional dimensions of sound and time. The various forms of lyric cycle, as numerous as there are poets and themes, join with all the varieties of musical treatment to make an infinite number of possibilities.

A situation in which every work is sui generis has several implications. It means that during the nineteenth century no line of development such as sustained the classical forms could be established, so that the actual number of song cycles is smaller than that of symphonies or string quartets; it means one cannot point to schools of musicians specialising in the genre, as one can in the fields of choral and instrumental music; and it means there is no composer who is associated exclusively with song cycles, as



Verdi is with operas or Chopin with music for the piano. What there is, instead, is a body of individual works by some of the greatest nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers: Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Berlioz, Wagner, Brahms, Mussorgsky, Fauré, Debussy and Schoenberg all wrote cycles, and still the list is not complete. Yet all these works are in a sense eccentricities (the cycles of Schubert and Schumann possibly excepted), standing apart from the composer's main output and often forming something of an experiment. Very few cycles by lesser composers - even composers as good as Cornelius - have survived. This is obviously a matter of quality, but there may be an underlying reason in the absence of conventions by which a minor figure might, like Mendelssohn in the field of the string quartet, produce pieces of enduring value. To the romantic the song cycle was a problem to be confronted afresh with every new work.

Thus the history of the genre has a kind of glittering arbitrariness about it, taking in many illustrious names yet never achieving continuity. Though dependent to some extent on literary trends, it is influenced far more by musical ones, of which it provides a sort of conspectus. This is noticeable even in its beginnings.<sup>1</sup> The first lyric cycles of any complexity were by Goethe. One of his largest, the Westöstlicher Divan, was designed to consist of thirteen books grouped symmetrically round the central Book VII (it was left unfinished at his death). While no musical setting could have encompassed the whole of this scheme, one might have expected the form to be taken up in some way - but no. Even the Sonette (1807-8), which Mustard describes as 'one of the few

- 1) I refer to the late eighteenth century, but it is well known that song cycles in a literal sense can be found in earlier periods, even in the Renaissance. 'The cycle of madrigals, taking its cue from a fundamental poetic experience rather than from a preconceived musical structure, and reaching an early climax in cyclic creations such as Palestrina's Vergini, Monteverdi's Sestina and Lassus's Lagrime di San Pietro, paves the way for the cycle of songs, culminating [?] in the famous works of Beethoven and Schubert.' H.F. Redlich, 'The Choral Music', in Benjamin Britten, ed. Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller (London, 1952), pp. 83-4.



true cycles in the sense that the construction is circular'<sup>1</sup> (i.e. the end refers back to the beginning), had no imitators. It is true that Beethoven's An die ferne Geliebte (1816) had a similar design, but this was coincidence: the sonnets were not published complete until 1827. In fact the complexity of Goethe's cycles was at odds with the formal naiveté of much early romantic music, and only those small groups of poems with a simple, well-defined situation, such as Mignon's songs from Wilhelm Meister, evoked a musical response.

With the next generation of poets - Schubert's contemporaries - the narrative form was developed, often at considerable length. Müller's Schöne Müllerin was exceptional in its subtlety of organisation: often these 'cycles' were little more than an excuse to assemble some previously unpublished verse. Just such an 'afterthought', though on a high level, was Heine's Lyrisches Intermezzo (1827), from which Schumann was to draw the poems for Dichterliebe. Influenced by Müller, Heine sought to present a narrative not of events but of emotions: what he called a 'psychological picture' of the poet himself.<sup>2</sup> The themes and the language of these works were excellent material for music, and the cycles of Schubert and Schumann perhaps come closer to the spirit of their poetic originals than do those of any other period. They remain the high point of the genre.

After 1840, Schumann's Liederjahr, the cycle went into temporary decline. Oddly, this was a time of great activity in the literary field. Except for a few isolated examples<sup>3</sup> the narrative form was disappearing, to be replaced by relatively short, tightly-knit works of a kind one might have thought more amenable to musical treatment (Lenau's Schilflieder have been mentioned). Nevertheless, due to the lack of a major song-writer - Schumann was composing fewer and fewer songs, Brahms had not yet begun - the

1) Op.cit., p. 63.

2) Letter of 16 November 1826, quoted in Mustard, op.cit., p. 112.

3) E.g. Gedanken eines Lebendig-Begrabenen by Gottfried Keller (1844, publ. 1846), the first version of the cycle later set by Schoeck.



song cycle lapsed, and the concept of vocal soliloquy passed into music drama. In a sense the long monologues in the third act of Wagner's Tristan, with their widening spirals of perception and recollection in the hero's mind, carry a Schubertian idea to its logical apotheosis.

In the 1860s the fashion was for small groups of songs which could be performed either separately or together, sometimes using the same poet, sometimes not. A real cycle, like Brahms's Magelone (1861-8), was rare. Gradually terms such as Liederzyklus became merely generic. It was left to Hugo Wolf, whose songbooks appeared in the 1880s and 1890s, to restore to such collections the literary and musical distinction that had been lost. Meanwhile Mussorgsky in Russia was infusing the cycle with new dramatic strength (Sunless, 1873-4; Songs and Dances of Death, 1875).

The revival which took place in the 1890s coincided with the rise in literature of what Mustard terms the complex cycle, enormous constructions sometimes running to hundreds of pages. As well as works by Rilke and George there was the megalomaniac Phantasus of Arno Holz, conceived as 'a colossal cycle-complex which would literally [?!] encompass the whole world'.<sup>1</sup> To my knowledge no one tried to set such efforts to music (though one can imagine a kind of super-Gurrelieder); composers drew their texts from more conventional sources. Mahler, in his Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (1896), even went so far as to write his own - a new development this, taking the song cycle briefly near to the total art-work imagined by Wagner. In a sense Mahler's later orchestral cycles (Kindertotenlieder, 1901-4; Das Lied von der Erde, 1907-8) are a 'gigantification' of the genre analogous to the lyric cycles just mentioned; but out of their complex textures grew new compositional techniques, and in the cycles of Schoenberg and Berg the form underwent a remarkable regeneration.

Another development at this time was to enrich the dramatic possibilities of the cycle by the use of techniques borrowed from other vocal forms, so that it became a kind of cantata or melodrama. We see examples in hybrids like the ensemble version of

1) Mustard, op.cit., pp. 185-6.



Debussy's Chansons de Bilitis (1901) and Janáček's The Diary of One Who Disappeared (1917-19). But it was another work, Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire (1912), that proved the most fruitful inspiration to later composers. Its chamber scoring and its evocative, fragmentary textures were quickly taken up by Stravinsky and others, and there has been a host of imitations since.

In the twentieth century many composers have been drawn to the cycle. Temperaments as diverse as Dallapiccola, Poulenc and Britten have found their most personal expression in the genre, and hardly a year goes by without some valuable new contribution. This is another testimonial to the versatility of the song cycle form.

In fact to speak of the song cycle as a form, as if it carried with it a fixed set of rules, is to evoke a chimera. For each composer it is something different, so frequently owing its success to external factors as to make generalisation impossible. Regarded at a modest level, it is simply a convenient method of arranging songs; at a more exalted one, an example of the romantic obsession with simultaneous extremes of contrast and unity - others are the late Beethoven quartets, the Liszt symphonic poems, the music drama, Wozzeck - like the fugue in the baroque, less a form than an ideal, as plastic in its expression as the controlling imagination.

What does he do, the composer who wishes to write in a certain genre and finds himself faced with too many choices of approach? He looks for a model, or a series of models. For someone of Schoeck's convictions these could only be the works of the lieder composers of whom he felt himself the successor - works which, though they do not form a direct line of development, are nevertheless related by features inherent in the tradition (common concepts of tonality, thematic development and so on) as well as by their inspiration in German romantic verse. Indeed, even if he had not needed models, he would have used them almost as a matter of principle. By examining these models we can obtain some insight into his use of the song cycle as a genre.

In this chapter I consider four cycles - An die ferne Geliebte, Die schöne Müllerin, Schumann's Eichendorff Liederkreis and Wolf's Italienisches Liederbuch - which represent the choice



of models open to him. The Beethoven has a continuous quality and a kind of tonal scheme emulated by Schoeck in several works. Die schöne Müllerin sets a ready-made narrative cycle (I discuss it rather than Die Winterreise because its formal devices lie nearer the surface and we can be more certain that Schoeck saw the same things in it as we do). The Liederkreis makes a musically coherent structure out of poems not originally intended to go together (comments on other Schumann cycles are also included here). The Italienisches Liederbuch is a large miscellaneous collection of a type later revived by Schoeck (it is discussed in preference to the other Wolf songbooks because at one time it was Schoeck's favourite). I do not attempt a complete account of these pieces; my concern is merely with the general design and with what I think Schoeck learned from it.

We should remind ourselves that, his historical relation to them apart, Schoeck's knowledge of these composers, though extensive, was of necessity rather more limited than ours. At the time when his tastes were being formed, many of Schubert's songs, for example, had only recently been published and were not yet widely known. Moreover there was not the interest in comprehensiveness that musicology has enabled us to take for granted today. This was the period of albums and anthologies; people were content with what they knew. Though it is no longer possible to discover exactly which Schubert songs Schoeck was familiar with, we can probably assume his knowledge did not go much beyond what are now the first three volumes of the Peters edition. The same applies to Schumann. (Wolf, most of whose music was published soon after it was written, he would have possessed almost complete.)

But the songs that he knew - and among these the cycles took precedence - he knew profoundly well. He accompanied them in public, he sang them to his friends, he discussed them with Vogel; many of them he knew by heart. He understood them with the percipience of a composer and the sympathy of one steeped in the same literary tradition. For Schoeck, Schubert and the rest were not merely 'predecessors' but the very air he breathed (there are more references to these composers in Vogel's journals than to any



others except Mozart and Wagner). With his commitment to romantic poetry, Innigkeit, voice and piano, he valued their song cycles as the central canons of the language.

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### Beethoven, An die ferne Geliebte

Beethoven based his only song cycle, composed in 1816, on six poems by the now forgotten amateur Alphons Jeitteles. Peering through the mist towards the meadow where he first met his mistress, the solitary lover reflects in song on the landscape that divides them,

Denn vor Liedesklang entweichet  
jeder Raum und jede Zeit

- finally dedicating his songs to her, in lines which hark back to the beginning, as a symbol of their love.

Beethoven might have set the poems as separate songs, but instead - whether because he needed a quasi-operatic framework to project the situation most effectively, or because he felt the texts were too flimsy to stand up independently - he made a closed structure of them, on the same general principle as a solo cantata. All six numbers have their own themes and tonalities,<sup>1</sup> but he links them by interludes so that a continuous movement is maintained. At the end, as befits the text, the opening material returns in the original key. Thus the two outer sections, dealing with the power of song to triumph over separation, act as a frame to the middle group, with their invocations to nature. The devotional, deeply-felt idiom of the outer pair, sometimes reminiscent of Florestan, contrasts with the folk-like simplicity of the central group, and this stylistic discrepancy, which serves as it were to place quotation marks around the central poems, also heightens the pseudo-dramatic character of the piece.

1) In his study of the work, Joseph Kerman finds interesting 'lower-level' similarities between the melodies of songs I and VI ('An die ferne Geliebte', in Beethoven Studies I, ed. Alan Tyson, London, 1974).



The idea of presenting a series of poems in a continuous musical sequence was a novel one, and commentators have rightly emphasised the work's forward-looking aspects. But for Beethoven it represented only a single stage in his pursuit of formal unity, and as such looks to the past as well as to the future. Since the form was to become a favourite of Schoeck's, it is worth studying its origins. It derives from the classical vocal forms, ranging from the standard concert aria, often depicting doubt, hope and resolution in a recitative-Andante-Allegro format, to big sectional scenas capable of portraying complex psychological states - Haydn's Scena di Berenice (1795) is an example. Ah, perfido (1796) was Beethoven's only attempt at the latter.

His way to the song cycle was long and indirect. Fidelio absorbed the techniques with which Mozart in his opera finales had fused several movements into a whole; the sonatas of 1815-16 (opp. 101 and 102) have an improvisatory quality. In 1815 Beethoven also composed a song which embodied certain procedures to be used in An die ferne Geliebte. Superficially 'An die Hoffnung' (second version, Op. 94)<sup>1</sup> is a da capo aria with recitative; but why the da capo - the repetition is not in the text, and the mood of optimism could have been restored to the poem's concluding lines - unless a rounded, almost cyclic, form was in Beethoven's mind? On closer examination the second part of the song turns out to be less a conventional middle section than an arioso passing through many keys and textures. Furthermore the introductory recitative has sufficient continuity to qualify as a separate episode in its own right. The result is a four-part structure wresting from a single poem the kind of cantata design that the real cycle more successfully achieves. The cycle appeared the following year, together with the first of the five late piano sonatas (Op. 101). With these works Beethoven embarked on the decade of experiment which was to culminate in his last quartets; and that in his song cycle he was chiefly concerned with the formal aspect is borne out by his subsequent neglect of the genre, as if, having used it once,

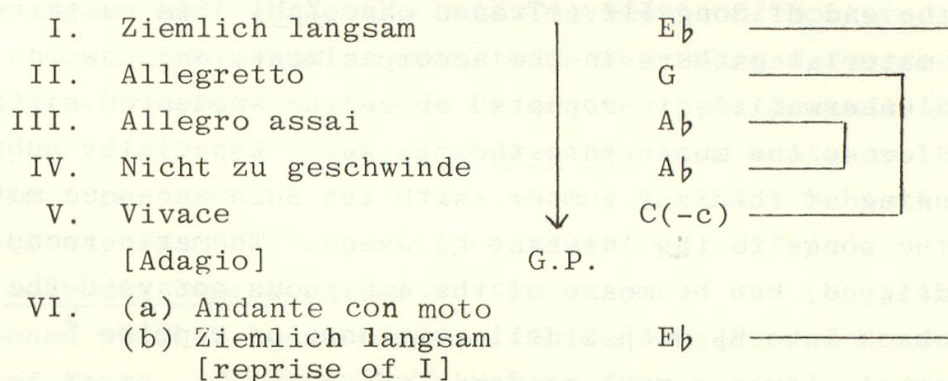
1) An earlier setting had been published in 1805 as Op. 32.



he was discarding it so as to pursue his discoveries in the forms where his deeper sympathies lay.

Formally the work operates on three levels. First there is the ternary element supplied by the reprise of the opening music at the end. Whereas the first song is a set of variations, the final song breaks the melody up, repeats it sequentially and develops it into a stretto (perhaps to its detriment - the melody is essentially lyrical and does not bear symphonis treatment).

The tendency towards an arch-shape is reinforced by the second formal element, the tonal scheme:



In relation to the outer sections songs III and IV constitute an extended episode in the subdominant. These are flanked by the two remaining numbers, in the interrelated keys of G and C. Beethoven makes the transitions from songs II to III and from IV to V as smooth as possible (III and IV are already in the same key); but where the outer numbers are concerned he draws attention to the breaks - hence the semitone drop to the 6/4 chord at the beginning of song II (a trick borrowed from the Emperor Concerto) and the hollow octave C which initiates the last song. This has the effect of binding the inner songs together, while setting them off from the surrounding frame.

The third unifying factor is the use of tempo. From Ziemlich langsam the speed gradually quickens through Allegretto to Allegro assai, slows to Comodo, then gathers momentum again for the rustic Vivace. It is only at the end of song V that Beethoven allows the tempo to slaken, which it does in a long ritardando ending with an Adagio cadence in the minor, before the Andante of VI and the final rodomontade. The main purpose of the Adagio,



following on the general acceleration, is to prepare the seriousness of the Andante, but it also provides a kind of Generalpause,<sup>1</sup> corresponding to the two fermatas at the juncture of songs I and II. These pauses further underline the separation of central group and frame. At the internal divisions, on the other hand, Beethoven arranges his rhythms so as to play down the shift from one metre to another. Thus the 6/8 quavers of II continue as triplets in the common time of III, and though normal quavers quickly take over, triplets return in time for the transition to IV (also in 6/8).

Apart from these rhythmic overlappings, consider how the high E $\flat$  at the end of Song III ('Tränen ohne Zahl') is sustained while fresh material gathers in the accompaniment; and how the last word of IV, 'unverweilt', is repeated above the augmented sixth chord which forces the music into the new key. Especially subtle is the beginning of the last number, with its Schumannesque motif of offering the songs to the 'distant beloved'. Thematic recapitulation is delayed, but by means of the ambiguous octave C the music slips back into E $\flat$  with a delicate sense of reprise:<sup>2</sup>



- 1) It is also possible to see the Andante itself as a G.P. on a larger scale, or even the phrase 'und du singst' as the expressive climax of the work.
- 2) Schumann himself was to quote this melody for its associations during a period of separation from Clara Wieck.



Although Schoeck found the strenuous aspect of Beethoven's music uncongenial, preferring the greater 'spontaneity' of Mozart of Schubert,<sup>1</sup> he admired his formal mastery without reservation. To Vogel he constantly pointed out felicities of structure and modulation, such as the transition from slow movement to finale in the G major Piano Concerto.<sup>2</sup> He knew An die ferne Geliebte well, and in his early and middle years often accompanied it at the piano.<sup>3</sup> Several of his cycles make use of its ideas. Gaselen, Lebendig begraben, Wandersprüche, Wanderung im Gebirge, Spielmannsweisen and Befreite Sehnsucht run continuously from beginning to end, while the outer movements of Notturmo group the songs together similarly. Sometimes the reasons for continuity seem purely musical, but more often the theme demands the impetus of an unbroken flow. Lebendig begraben, for instance, benefits greatly from its continual forward drive, which Schoeck actually uses to express the subject (see below, pp. 218-19).

Lebendig begraben is also the only one of the cycles mentioned which - again because of its subject - does not use some kind of frame. This can be anything from a simple formal device (Befreite Sehnsucht) to a motto summing up the spirit of the work (Spielmannsweisen, where the opening theme returns as a token of 'Lebensfrühling, Blütendrang, . . . blaue Luft, . . . Jugendklang . . . wie lange, ach, seid ihr vorbei!'). Wandersprüche and Wanderung develop the idea into a system of refrains. The former superimposes an instrumental ritornello on the general ternary design; the latter splits up the theme into fragments, which recur at key points. Perhaps Gaselen comes closest to Beethoven from a formal point of view. Not only does the opening return in the last song, but this final number is in two parts, the first consisting of new material which the second resolves.

The arch-like tonal schemes of Gaselen and Wandersprüche

1) See Fischer, Schöpferische Leistung, p. 170. See also OS p. 271.

2) G p. 99.

3) Letter from Werner Vogel, 26 August 1973.



are modelled on that of An die ferne Geliebte. Beethoven's interludes are recalled in those of Gaselen; those in Lebendig begraben are more sophisticated, and from Wandersprüche onwards they usually combine with the motto theme or refrain. The most elaborate examples, such as those in Notturmo, derive from Schumann rather than Beethoven and are consequently discussed in the next section but one.

From Beethoven Schoeck inherited a specific musical form. Schubert's legacy was less specific but no less generous.

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### Schubert, Die schöne Müllerin

Wilhelm Müller's lyric cycle was the outcome of certain domestic plays fashionable around 1816 at the Stägemann house in Berlin.<sup>1</sup> The poet wrote five sets of Müllerlieder, in which the dramatic content was progressively reduced by eliminating all the roles except that of the miller. The final version was the one known to Schubert, who composed his setting in 1823.

Müller was not a great poet, but his cycle is a work of finely balanced structure. The miller's progress makes a perfect arch, while simple verbal links between the poems ('War es also gemeint' etc.) give way to ominous idées fixes (ribbon, horn, the colour green) as his obsessions reach their climax. Schubert preserved these elements in his setting. He set twenty of Müller's twenty-five poems, omitting a prologue and an epilogue and one poem each of joy, jealousy and despair. As in Müller, 'Mein!', the song in which the miller rejoices in the illusory possession of his sweetheart, stands at the centre, and the cycle makes an ascent and descent of striking regularity.

In the light of An die ferne Geliebte, we might expect Schubert to reinforce the arch-shape with a suitable tonal scheme, but he is less concerned with inventing a rounded form than with

1) See August Closs, The Genius of the German Lyric (London, 1962), p. 325.



finding the musical equivalent of a narrative. Keys are not used in a classical way: the work begins in B $\flat$  and ends in E, and what symmetries do occur seem to arise from poetic rather than from formal considerations. As I have said, 'Mein!' (in D) marks the climax of the miller's hopes. The next song, 'Pause', which launches his descent, is in B $\flat$ , the key of the opening song. Although Schubert has touched on this key twice in the meantime (even in 'Mein!'), its return as a tonic has a recapitulatory effect, linking the imminent, painful widening of the poet's emotional experience with his confident stepping out into the world at the outset. Usually, however, the connection is simpler. 'Mit dem grünen Lautenbände', the song that follows 'Pause', is also in B $\flat$ , but this is merely because both songs are about a ribbon. Similarly the two songs about the colour green, 'Die liebe Farbe' and 'Die böse Farbe', share an uneasy B minor/major. As well as highlighting Müller's poetic themes, such connections give a sense of forward movement.

It is well known how Schubert manages to suggest the presence of the brook in almost every song, by means of semiquaver figuration. As the cycle progresses, the brook, which has reflected the poet's moods throughout, becomes a troubled background for his jealousy, and within its textures gather motifs corresponding to what upsets him. Perhaps motif is too strong a word. The major-minor change, first heard in 'Tränenregen', which becomes so important in the second half of the cycle; the F $\sharp$ s symbolising green in 'Die liebe Farbe' und 'Die böse Farbe'; the horn music in the latter which floats by as the brook finally sings the drowned miller to rest - these are not motifs but types, and it is certain that, if he thought about the matter at all, Schubert was aiming at allusion rather than direct recall. But in this very lack of directness lies the greater part of the effect, for these ideas seem to generate in the miller's unconscious, and as they fall into place we feel ourselves drawn into the vicious circle of his obsessions.

One problem facing song cycle composers is how to convey a sense of finality sufficient to round off the work. Schubert was fully alive to this point. Neither of the closing songs of Die



schöne Müllerin and Die Winterreise would make a good recital piece, but in context each provides a superb culmination. Both use repetition and a slow tempo to give an impression of great breadth. In 'Der Leiermann' the repetition takes the form of an ostinato supporting a seemingly endless series of tonic and dominant chords. In 'Des Baches Wiegenlied' repetition is applied on several levels: the same music is repeated for all five verses, every line of text except the second is heard twice, and the material in the piano is largely self-repeating. Finally the harmony expands in one of Schubert's warmest progressions, bringing the cycle to an end.

'The unique thing about Schubert,' Schoeck once said, 'is that one forgets one is listening to music.'<sup>1</sup> Many years earlier, on the occasion of a Schubert centenary, he had written: 'We may fly to Bach as to a strong father. Schubert comes to us like a loving mother or like nature itself.'<sup>2</sup> Though Schoeck's devotion to Schubert is not in doubt - Vogel speaks of the reverence with which he mentioned the cycles<sup>3</sup> - these comments indicate our difficulty in illustrating it beyond the sort of quotation given in Chapter 1. Schoeck's admiration for Schubert, though not uncritical, was of a more instinctive kind than that which he felt for Beethoven (the kind one might have for a parent rather than for a teacher), and Schubert's influence shows itself in certain general usages whose application was not confined to narrative cycles alone.

But first the narrative method itself. Schoeck made only two settings of pre-existing narrative cycles, Lebendig begraben and Wanderung im Gebirge, and both are continuous. Yet the idea of a 'story' plainly fascinated Schoeck: the narrative tendency emerges again and again, giving continuity even to relatively disparate texts. For the Elegie, he takes twenty-four miscellaneous poems and makes them into a narrative with a clear sense of progression. This sense of progression is strengthened

1) G p. 99.

2) 'Über Franz Schubert', Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 18 November 1928; quoted in OS p. 269.

3) G p. 52.



retrospectively by the final song, a radiant climax for which the previous numbers are made to seem a preparation. So too with the Notturmo: Schoeck was constitutionally incapable of ending on a note of depression, and all his pessimistic works conclude with an Aufhellung, a brightening or spiritual resolution. Even when, as in Nachhall, no narrative is possible, the presence of this Aufhellung adds a causal element, an effect of consequentiality, such as we associate with a story. The order of the four sections of the Wandsbecker Liederbuch, ending with the one entitled 'Death', is no more than we should expect of this predilection for putting things in their natural, 'human' connection.

Now the general usages culled from Die schöne Müllerin. Schubert's idea of a caesura at the middle, after which the cycle continues with what is both a hastening to a climax and a new beginning, returns in the Elegie, and traces are found in Lebendig begraben. Key-symbolism has a part in both these works, as also in the Notturmo; even the songs in the late collections tend to group themselves in particular keys. As for the use of a single dominating texture - Schubert's brook - none of Schoeck's texts provides for a moto perpetuo of quite that kind; but the poems of the Elegie, with their invariable woodland setting, evoke a perpetual 'rustling' which unifies the work in a similar way. The sleighbells and jogging hooves in Wandersprüche are a variation of the same idea.

Schubert's principle of 'finality through repetition' survives in Schoeck's many ostinato conclusions. Schoeck's awareness of the finale problem is evident from his earliest collections onwards, and the range of his solutions is almost worthy of Schubert himself. These solutions are considered in their proper place; to say they include the recapitulations and motto-devices already mentioned, a passacaglia and a chorale prelude, aphoristic Sprüche and nostalgic reminiscences, indicates their range. Not only the formal function but also the poetic content of these endings, with their typical surrender to night and death, stems from Schubert.

For our next example we turn to Schumann. Both the continuous cycle and the narrative cycle have a certain built-in



unity, due in the first case to the musical form, in the second to the narrative itself. How do composers fare with cycles on miscellaneous texts?

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### Schumann, Liederkreis, Op. 39

Schumann's Eichendorff Liederkreis was written in April-May 1840, after the Heine Liederkreis and Myrthen, and immediately before Dichterliebe. The Heine work sets a pre-existing cycle, drawing on the unifying techniques developed by Schumann in his piano works. Myrthen, on the other hand, is an anthology of poems by different authors, comparable in size and scope to a Wolf songbook.

The Eichendorff Liederkreis brings together twelve miscellaneous poems by a single author. As Schumann arranges them, they do not tell a story but present a series of moods, evoking the poet's wonder in his natural surroundings, scenes of loneliness and festivity, mysterious nocturnal premonitions - in short, all the typical moods of early German romanticism. The balance of these moods is as important to the work's success as any purely musical devices.

The poems are arranged as follows:

	<u>Motifs</u>	<u>Keys</u>	
I. In der Fremde	<u>A</u>	f#	_____
II. Intermezzo	<u>A,C</u>	A	_____
III. Waldesgespräch	<u>B</u>	E	_____
IV. Die Stille	<u>B</u>	G	_____
V. Mondnacht		E	_____
VI. Schöne Fremde	<u>A,C</u>	B	_____
VII. Auf einer Burg	<u>D</u>	e(-E)	_____
VIII. In der Fremde	<u>D,C</u>	a	- - - - -
IX. Wehmut		E	_____
X. Zwielficht	<u>C</u>	e	_____
XI. Im Walde	<u>B</u>	A	_____
XII. Frühlingsnacht	<u>C</u>	F#	_____



The poetic themes complement each other and provide happy contrasts. The melancholy of 'In der Fremde' is relieved by the tenderness of 'Intermezzo'; after the warmth of 'Schöne Fremde', 'Auf einer Burg' brings desolation; the second 'In der Fremde' seems to refer back to the opening song; 'Wehmut' describes the loneliness of artistic creation (this poem was set by Schoeck in the Elegie); in 'Zwielicht' the shadows deepen again; but 'Frühlingsnacht' brings hope of requited love.

Seen from a dynamic point of view, 'Schöne Fremde' and 'Frühlingsnacht' stand out as the two climaxes towards which the other numbers move. The two slowest songs, 'Mondnacht' and 'Wehmut', fall roughly one-third and two-thirds of the way through. Around these points the remaining songs are placed like so many scherzi or intermezzi. Analysis of the texts would show many correspondences of phrase and idea which tie the poems together even more closely.

Schumann must surely have taken his tonal scheme from An die ferne Geliebte, a work of some significance for him. The keys form an arch. The cycle begins and ends in F# (minor and major respectively); the second and penultimate songs are in A; within this span there is another, larger group in E (major and minor); and at the centre is 'Schöne Fremde', in B. The inner sections of this arch give the progression A-E-B-E-A, a double dominant ascent and descent. More specifically, the tonics of the first two songs are separated by the interval of a third; thereafter - we must exclude 'Die Stille' - the songs succeed each other at the interval of a fifth, until 'Schöne Fremde', after which they drop down again by fifths; finally the last two songs restore the original interval of a third.<sup>1</sup>

What is the significance of this scheme? The dominant ascent ensures that we hear 'Schöne Fremde' as a tonal as well as an emotional climax, which 'Frühlingsnacht' both intensifies and resolves (a final dominant ascent and a return to the original

1) Cf. the more schematic arrangement of Chopin's Twenty-Four Preludes (1838).



tonic). Otherwise it is hard to find connections between keys and texts. Both the cycle's 'slow movements' ('Mondnacht' and 'Wehmut') are in E major - but so is 'Waldesgespräch'. Both 'Intermezzo' and 'Im Walde' are in A - yet the poems have little in common. Schumann's purpose seem to be, first to establish a firm musical structure, then to let other connections emerge as they may. It is sufficient for musical unity that so many songs share the same keys (five are in E, three in A, two in F#). Any poetic resonances that arise are less important than the feeling of the keys, and our feeling of revisiting familiar ground.

In his use of thematic cross-reference, similarly, Schumann seems more concerned with musical unity than with suggesting links between the texts. Thus the opening phrase of 'Auf einer Burg' (D in the chart), with its characteristic falling fifth, becomes the principal idea of the next song, though there is no obvious connection between the poems. Another motif based on the interval of a fifth occurs in the piano at the words 'Wie bald, ach wie bald kommt die stille Zeit' in the opening song (A). This motif appears in canon in 'Intermezzo' and again, with its interval modified, in 'Schöne Fremde'. The emphasis on the interval of a fifth underlines the dominant progression noted above, even though the motif is not present at all the stages of that progression. A third motif (B), first heard at the beginning of 'Waldesgespräch', returns modified in 'Die Stille' ('wohl über das Meer und weiter'); and this modified version, shorn of its 'horn sixths', becomes the basis of 'Im Walde'.

The little flourish of semiquavers in 'Intermezzo' (C) undergoes even more interesting changes. It returns first, with its intervals enlarged, in the coda of 'Schöne Fremde'; then, with its intervals compressed, in the second 'In der Fremde', where it acts as a kind of ritornello. Its rhythm even invades the desolation of 'Zwielicht'. Finally, in 'Frühlingsnacht', it is used as a counter melody:



# Variants of C

'Intermezzo':

[Langsam]

sieht so frisch und fröh-lich

This musical score is for a piece titled 'Intermezzo'. It is marked '[Langsam]' (slow). The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics 'sieht so frisch und fröh-lich' are written below the melody. The piano accompaniment is written on two staves (treble and bass clef) with a grand staff. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more complex, flowing line in the left hand.

'Schöne Fremde':

[Innig, bewegt]

This musical score is for a piece titled 'Schöne Fremde'. It is marked '[Innig, bewegt]' (earnest, moved). The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment is written on two staves (treble and bass clef) with a grand staff. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more complex, flowing line in the left hand.

'In der Fremde' (VIII):

[Zart, heimlich]

This musical score is for a piece titled 'In der Fremde' (VIII). It is marked '[Zart, heimlich]' (tender, secretly). The key signature has two sharps (F#, C#). The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment is written on two staves (treble and bass clef) with a grand staff. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more complex, flowing line in the left hand.

'Zwielicht':

[Langsam]

This musical score is for a piece titled 'Zwielicht'. It is marked '[Langsam]' (slow). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment is written on two staves (treble and bass clef) with a grand staff. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more complex, flowing line in the left hand.

'Frühlingsnacht':

[Ziemlich rasch]

Jauch—zen möcht' ich, möchte wei—nen, ist mir's

This musical score is for a piece titled 'Frühlingsnacht'. It is marked '[Ziemlich rasch]' (moderately fast). The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment is written on two staves (treble and bass clef) with a grand staff. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more complex, flowing line in the left hand. The lyrics 'Jauch—zen möcht' ich, möchte wei—nen, ist mir's' are written below the melody.



Just as the tonal scheme refuses to align itself with the text, so the motifs range over the whole canvas, cutting across categories of keys and subject-matter alike. Two of the songs closest in subject, 'Auf einer Burg' and 'Im Walde', have no explicit musical connection; two songs with no apparent motivic relation to the others, 'Mondnacht' and 'Wehmut', have an important part in the tonal scheme; and 'Die Stille', the only song excluded from the latter, is included in one of the strongest motivic links. Such a state of affairs might be thought perverse if it were not such a good way of dealing with this kind of cycle, where the texts are only loosely related. Unlike Müller's themes in Die schöne Müllerin, Eichendorff's are not such as need special articulation, and Schumann's aim is not to make distinctions between the poems but to draw them into a unity. He overlaps the structural levels so as to blur the distinctions between the texts. The result is 'confused' and 'meaningless' only when viewed through the spectacles of a more literal-minded age. For Schumann, confusion is the means of bringing the poems into harmony with each other, as if encircling them with a mist; and in the means, meaning resides.

Schoeck cited 'Mondnacht' when he said to Vogel, 'Schumann's music lets itself be derived from nowhere; it is an enigma.'<sup>1</sup> His admiration for Schumann the song-writer was unbounded (he had reservations about the symphonies). When Hesse criticised Frauenliebe und Leben as sentimental, Schoeck rushed furiously to the defence. 'I find it striking how few people really recognise Schumann's greatness. . . . A song like "Mondnacht" contains as much emotional tension as a symphony.'<sup>2</sup> His debt to Schumann sounds through his music in a hundred mannerisms of harmony, declamation and keyboard writing, as in its early romantic sensibility rooted in the poetry of Eichendorff and Lenau (see above, p. 19ff.).

What did he owe to the Liederkreis in particular? Above all, a means of arranging miscellaneous texts to the best

1) G p. 148.

2) Ibid., p. 139. See also p. 59 et passim.



advantage, securing unity of mood while allowing for ample contrast on the way. The arrangement of poems in the Elegie (and to a lesser extent in Unter Sternen, the Notturmo and other works) shows a subtlety which could have been learnt from no other source.

Works employing an arch-like tonal scheme were mentioned in the Beethoven section. To these we must now add the Eichendorff-Lieder, Op. 30, in which the keys rise and fall by dominants. The Eichendorff-Lieder also exemplify another practice derived from Schumann, namely the use of a limited number of keys for evocative effect; there are many other examples in the cycles. Recurring motifs are found of course in almost every work.

Schoeck also took over from Schumann an idea not present in the Liederkreis: that of the instrumental postlude-cum-recapitulation. Schumann himself probably got the idea from Beethoven, for if the closing pages of Frauenliebe and An die ferne Geliebte are worlds apart emotionally their formal function is much the same. Schoeck uses the postlude in three of his late song-books. More often, however, he writes an interlude, which conventionally sits between the last two songs (as in Das Lied von der Erde). We see these interludes growing from the brief transitions in Gaselen to the long string quartet movements in the Notturmo, before returning to brevity in Der Sänger and Nachhall (in the final work the interlude comes two songs before the end). Schoeck gives these interludes an expressive value as well as a formal one, for even when there is no recapitulation there is usually some significant musical event - perhaps a tamtam stroke, if the words are about death - and this makes it the emotional climax of the work.

Where formal ideas are concerned, it is doubtful that Schoeck was influenced by the Magelone-Lieder of Brahms, which for all their inventiveness added little to Schumann in the treatment of the cycle as a genre. If Vogel's memory is correct, the work was never once mentioned at their meetings, much less studied or played.<sup>1</sup>

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1) Letter from Werner Vogel, 26 August 1973.



Wolf, Italienisches Liederbuch

The idea of the songbook probably originated in volumes arranged for publication - in the case of Schubert's Schwanengesang, arranged posthumously - from previously written work. Among Schumann's cycles Myrthen most nearly approaches the Wolfian type, but here the composer takes his texts from many sources. With Wolf it is absolutely central that only one poet be used. His works are essentially anthologies, which with the care of the old madrigalists he has arranged in the best possible way. They are also tributes. Wolf's veneration for his poets is well known - his first major collection was entitled Gedichte von Eduard Mörike - and the songbook was an ideal vehicle for him to pay his respects. Not surprisingly the notion was one that later endeared itself to Schoeck.

Wolf's cyclic techniques are simple and recur in nearly all his songbooks. Each work begins and ends with a song of special importance. The opening number is usually to be taken as a motto - in the Mörike set we find an 'Ode of Thanksgiving' for the renewal of creative strength which Wolf felt he owed to the poet - while for conclusion there is a song of exceptional length, or seriousness, or applause-bringing quality. Within this framework the songs fall into groups according to the poetic themes (the Mörike set includes groups about nature, religious feeling and love) or according to the volume from which the poems are taken (the Goethe set). These groups may be unified thematically or by the use of related keys.

The Italienisches Liederbuch, consisting of forty-six lyrics in Paul Heyse's translations, was published in two volumes (1892 and 1896 respectively), and it is interesting to see each volume acknowledging these laws. Thus, referring to the miniatures to come, the opening song reflects that 'Auch kleine Dinge können uns entzücken', while the corresponding piece in the second volume (No. 23 in the Peters Edition) speaks of 'a song that neither man nor woman heard or sang before today'. Book I closes with a humorous serenade, which Wolf, with his fondness for such gestures, must have chosen with his concert audience in mind; Book II ends with the scintillating 'Ich hab' in Penna'.



The bulk of the collection consists of soliloquies by a girl and her lover. There is with one exception no dialogue as such, and there is no 'plot'. Love-songs alternate with querulous, sometimes bitter outbursts or with lighthearted numbers; it would be false to claim a more rigorous scheme. Book II contains a particularly beautiful series of love-songs.

There is no all-embracing tonal plan. Many of the love-songs are in very flat keys - E $\flat$ , A $\flat$ , G $\flat$  - but there are exceptions. Sometimes the relation between consecutive songs seems to count. Nos. 17 and 18 both refer to the girl's fair hair, and both are in A $\flat$ ; and, following on 18 with its fourfold declaration of love, the tonal uncertainty at the start of 19 might be said to symbolise the lovers' quarrel. Towards the end of the cycle as many as six songs group themselves in closely related keys:

39	A
40	a
41	d
42	a
43	a
44	e

Here we find the dialogue referred to above (Nos. 42-4). In 'Nicht länger kann ich singen' the man debates to a doleful chromatic countermelody whether he should continue singing beneath the girl's window: his voice is being drowned by the wind. "Schweig' einmal still!" is her testy reply, and the chromatic theme is parodied in a prelude which presents the song as it sounds to her - whining, insistent and full of wrong notes.<sup>1</sup> Finally 'O wüsstest du', in which he reproaches her for what he has suffered in the rainy night, takes up the first notes of his serenade as an ostinato.

But to dwell on these unifying effects is really to miss the point. The essence of the songbook is its diversity, its ability

1) The lute-like staccato chords and the pseudo-baroque character of the melody derive from Die Meistersinger. The weak harmonic movement of 'Nicht länger', resulting from the halting presentation of the tune, suggests that the parody was written first (both songs were composed on the same day).



to embrace as many aspects of the poet as the composer wishes. All the small-scale procedures Schoeck could have learnt from Schubert or Schumann. What he learned from Wolf - apart from a whole vocabulary of style and technique - was the idea of doing honour to a poet in this way. Closer to Wolf in time and musical language than to any of the earlier song-writers, Schoeck revered him not only as a composer - whenever criticisms arose he would finish, 'Yet Wolf was the last of the great musicians with whom one forgets all questions of "art"',<sup>1</sup> - but as one who shared his devotion to the classics of German literature. Indeed, convinced that he himself was the last composer whose music stemmed from a poetic ideal, he felt a special affinity with Wolf on that account.<sup>2</sup>

Yet as I have tried to show, Schoeck's admiration for his poets was more than simple devotion to literature. It was an escape from problems personal and political, a link with a vanished world, a means of existence which made his music possible. What more natural than that he should place his art at their service? In his later cycles, especially Der Sänger and Das holde Bescheiden, the poets are not merely a source of subject-matter but the subject-matter itself. Here he tries to gather together poems representing very facet of the poet's personality<sup>3</sup> - in the case of less familiar authors like Leuthold, with the additional, quasi-didactic intention of making them better known. The 'literary' aspect of the songbook has become an end in itself.

In their ordering of the poems, Schoeck's five songbooks - Wandsbecker Liederbuch, Unter Sternen, Der Sänger, Das stille Leuchten, Das holde Bescheiden - follow their Wolfian models with only slight variations. The texts are arranged according to what Schoeck considers the central ideas in the poet's work, his choice naturally being influenced by his preoccupations at the time. Thus Unter Sternen, written in a period of depression, is about night

1) Corrodi, 'Othmar Schoeck und Hugo Wolf', p. 348. The statement may be Corrodi's paraphrase. See also G p. 144.

2) See G p. 87; OS p. 44.

3) See W p. 95; also p. 114.



and death (Schoeck had already set some of Keller's 'lighter' verse); Der Sänger is a chronological review of Leuthold's life and art; Das stille Leuchten celebrates the Swiss landscape. As always with Schoeck the final song is crucial - consider 'Besuch in Urach' from the Mörike set, almost a cycle in itself - while the opening number serves as motto. The first song of Wandsbecker Liederbuch apostrophises the power of love; that of Der Sänger, the passion underlying artistic creation; that of Das stille Leuchten, the fire of poetic inspiration; and that of Das holde Bescheiden, art and those who serve it. In the first song of Unter Sternen the world is compared to a sleeping peacock whose tail is the stars.

Schoeck's unifying devices in these works draw on everything he learned from the composers discussed, and are dealt with below. In each case, however, comprehensiveness, not unity, is the guiding motive, and an appreciation of the cyclic techniques should not make us lose sight of this Whitmanesque striving to 'contain multitudes'. In the Mörike set, especially, we are reminded of what one critic has called that 'propensity for transformation', that quality of 'endlessness' which compelled the romantics - we see it in their musical, literary, scientific and philosophical works alike - to 'go beyond any limitation to ever new transformations. This tendency does not complete and exhaust its object through multiplicity, but opens it out in limitlessness.'<sup>1</sup>

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Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Wolf: these are the great innovators in the cycle, and from them most of the formal ideas in Schoeck derive. The fullness of his obligation will be even more apparent after we have examined his own cycles. Let us leave our conclusions until then and turn straight to these works, his homage to the masters of the past.

1) Fritz Strich, Deutsche Klassik und Romantik oder Vollendung und Unendlichkeit (Munich, 1928), p. 286ff. Quoted in Mustard, op.cit., p. 58; her translation.



