

played) passages of Beethoven's expressive rage and fury, the replicability of these sounds may have foreshadowed the seeds of music's reification.

To make a point like this, the *Tendenz des Materials* must be simplified so that it can be rendered quickly, enabling Adorno to fluidly develop a dialectical formulation. In summoning this Apollonian circuitry, one acknowledges the reified kitsch of the diminished-seventh chord with a transcendent critique about the ideological character of tonal harmony. Doing so, one can see why it is necessary in Adorno's view to fragment tonal syntax from within and create a music that mimics an absent nature, or a "life that does not live," with fractured and inconsumable punctuation.⁹⁴

2.5 THE IMMANENT CRITIQUE

No account of Adorno's view of music would be complete without an analysis of his most exacting vision. Mere dissonance, a clashing refusal of a key, is not enough, for dissonances, too, can become conventional and reified. For music to resist reification in late modernity, what Adorno requires is an explicit return to objectivity from expressive subjectivity, in which all the learnedness and formalism in the *Tendenz des Materials* develops opaque barriers to the sensory consumption of musical flux.

Thus, in hearing music as utopian with Adorno, we are no longer in a metaphysics of Bloch's ingenious event-forms, supported by the singularity of composers as subjects. The Wagnerian visionary of the nineteenth century, who bent all the rules of harmony and form to the will of his magisterial and all-encompassing vision of the human unconscious, has been reconfigured into a late style centered on the resistance of the object, of ordinary chamber music, of mechanisms, gasping subjects, and fractured compositional alienations.

Such a genuinely resistant musical work understands the problems it inherits from the *Tendenz des Materials*. Akin to a hermetic, gnostic, and dialectically twisted Platonism grounded in embodied practice, this anthropomorphism must be sustained, since musical objects, for Adorno, are themselves knowledge: "... the *character of cognition* is to be demanded of any music which today wishes to preserve its right to existence. Through its material, music must give clear form to the problems assigned to it by this material which is itself never purely natural material, but rather a social and historical product; solutions offered by music in this process stand equal to theories."⁹⁵ The properly resistant musical work can only arise out of a triangulated dialectic between the immanent and objective problems of musical form inherited from the *Tendenz des Materials*, the material itself, and the labor of the composer. It is the resistant musical

work's job to be something technically organized, autonomous, and monadic, but also something that is linked to society insofar as it is inconsumable, and refuses to comply with dominant social norms. It is an object of congealed cognition that contains a multitude of subjective remnants.

Famously, Schoenberg's music is a key exemplar that meets Adorno's narrow criterion, but not because the composer himself shared Adorno's condemnation of society's administered misery, dominated by the principle of exchange value. For Adorno, Schoenberg was actually quite politically naive, as he was single-mindedly focused on his "supposedly specialized" [area] of problems without respect for a presupposed social reality.⁹⁶ He virtuously composed resistance with techniques alone. Specifically, Adorno discusses two components of Schoenberg's compositions that reflect a critical relationship to the *Tendenz des Materials*: (1) the renunciation of the inherited language of tonality and (2) the recuperation of linear counterpoint.

Consider a composition of Schoenberg's that would meet many of Adorno's demanding criteria for an ethical work. In 1911, the composer wrote a song based on a German translation of a poem by the Belgian symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck. Bearing the title *Herzgewächse* (The Foliage of the Heart, or "Feuillage du cœur" in Maeterlinck's 1889 original), the short song is often seen as a minor precursor or preliminary study to Schoenberg's much more widely known song cycle *Pierrot Lunaire*, op. 21 (1912). Like *Pierrot* and the other works of Schoenberg's Expressionist or "free" atonal period, the song is short and economical and is heavily circumscribed by the form of the poem. Through-composed, and packed with arabesques and asymmetrical changes in direction, it bears an unusual if not surreal and ancient instrumentation: soprano, celesta, harmonium, and harp. Below is the poem in the original French, followed by Schoenberg's setting in German and an English translation that follows Schoenberg's German:

<i>Feuillage du cœur</i>	<i>Herzgewächse</i>	<i>Foliage of the Heart</i>
Sous la cloche de crystal bleu	Meiner müden Sehnsucht blaues Glas	My tired melancholy blue glass
De mes lasses mélancolies,	deckt den alten unbestimmten Kummer	covers old indefinite sorrows
Mes vagues douleurs abolies	dessen ich genas	From which I recovered

S'immobilisent peu à peu:	und der nun erstarrt in seinem Schlummer	and which is now paralyzed in its sleep.
Végétation de symbols	Sinnbildhaft ist seiner Blumen Zier:	Its lush flowers are symbolic:
Nénuphars mornes des plaisirs	Manche Freuden düstre Wasserrose,	some gloomy water lilies' joys,
Palmes lentes de mes désirs,	Palmen der Begier,	palms' yearning,
Mousses froides, lianes molles.	weiche Schlinggewächse, Kühle Moose,	supple vines, cool mosses,
Seul, un lys érige d'entre eux,	eine Lilie nur in all dem Flor,	A lily among all these flowers
Pâle et rigidement débile,	bleich und starr in ihrer Kränklichkeit,	pale and rigid in its sickness,
Son ascension immobile	richtet sich empor	arranges itself up
Sur les feuillages douloureux,	über all dem Blattgeword'nen Leid,	over all the foliage of grief.
Et dans les lueurs qu'il épanche	licht sind ihre Blätter anzuschauen,	Light is seen from its leaves,
Comme une lune, peu à peu,	weißen Mondesglanz sie um sich sät,	white moonlight sows around itself,
Elève vers le cristal bleu	zum Krystall dem blauen	to the blue crystal
Sa mystique prière blanche.	sendet sie ihr mystisches Gebet.	it sends its mystic prayer.

In Maeterlinck's poem a deep isolation, through the prism of a rare and alienated psyche, reveals the underside of historical reality. For Adorno, we might say this unnamed singer—not even a subject—experiences a profoundly melancholic solitude. On the face of things, there are no other people here; not a

single word links this singer to a friend, to a lover, to exchange, to society, to anything. If the first stanza speaks in the first person and openly testifies to solitary despair under the cloak of blue glass, the last three stanzas are impersonal or in the passive voice, as if the speaker of the poem has shifted into a trance, watching a bizarre animation without worldly consequence. We have only a small clue to the social world, giving us a backwards glance to something past: “De mes lasses mélancolies [of my weary sorrows] / deckt den alten unbestimmten Kummer [covers old indefinite sorrows].” In this line, the speaker articulates a “weary” or “indefinite” memory of an intractable sorrow, leaving her abandoned to symbolic hallucination. The melancholy speaks after the fact of abandonment, animating the singer’s testimony, setting free a strange play of unmoored and delusional signifiers.

In late modernity, society is deeply structured by symbols, exchanges, traditions, and conventions. But in this experience of melancholy, we touch a zone where nature carries symbols that embody a sorrow that has lost its means of reference. It is a form that has been abandoned by its own language. If nature in the Romantic tradition can serve as a transcendent or sublime escape from the fallen world, for this despairing modernist, symbolist escape is exorbitant. *Herzgewächse* sings without relation to the world now. The speaker in the poem is singular, hallucinating, praying with a self-arranging lily through a broken musical language, doomed to miscommunication.

The gestalt and the sonic details of *Herzgewächse* are openly fractured. The cosmic trio of instruments that accompanies the soprano is subdued, otherworldly, and disorderly. In example 2.3, consider the harmonium’s opening melody. It soars upward, hinting at the melodic drama to come in the next two minutes, but with characteristic disjunction, as if its commas, semicolons, and periods were misplaced, keeping it from landing on tonal cadences and achieving punctuated, consumable forms of closure.



EXAMPLE 2.3. Arnold Schoenberg, *Herzgewächse*, op. 20, mm. 1–2, harmonium part (right hand)

Then consider the opening vocal line, shown here in example 2.4. The first two stanzas combine speechlike declamation in a long opening phrase that mean-

EXAMPLE 2.6. Schoenberg, *Herzgewächse*, op. 20, m. 5, harmonium part

In example 2.6, five harmonium chords are isolated from the texture. A paragraph of formal details that points to this measure requires a series of leaps of the eye, the mind, and an imaginary ear.⁹⁷ But any loss of flow on the printed page is symptomatic historical evidence of the *Tendenz des Materials* in a late modern state of overdevelopment. In the right hand line of this measure, the two stacked intervals (P₄, d₅) collapse inward in a manner not dissimilar to a tonal cadence. The d₅ (B–F) resolves downward to a P₄ (B_b–E_b), the P₄ (F_#–B) resolves inward to a m₃ (G–B_b). The new chord is a major triad in first inversion, a stacked m₃ and P₄. Yet its harmonic functionality is absent because of what is happening in the left hand: a C-minor triad in second inversion (a P₄ beneath a m₃) that resolves to a first-inversion E major chord (a m₃ below a P₄) just as the right hand lands on E_b major. The harmonic verticals that result, both before and at the moment of this simultaneity, are chromatic and dissonant collections, not functional harmonies. The end of this short phrase jumps downward as the right hand moves to an augmented triad, (two stacked M₃s). And at the same time, a harp figure joins in on this last beat, with two trichords that move up a half step in parallel motion: a M₃ (D_b, F) stacked with a tritone (F, B):

EXAMPLE 2.7. Schoenberg, *Herzgewächse*, op. 20, m. 5, harp part

The smooth voice leading certainly helps the fingers move more easily between chords at the harp, and allows these instrumental parts to unfold with some sense of organization. Yet an important dimension of smooth voice leading—dissonance treatment—is essentially absent: Schoenberg's voices resolve intervals in ways that no longer verge towards consonance.⁹⁸ And this has a crucial consequence for the aural effect: without the predictable tonal punctuation, one is unlikely to hear Schoenberg's voice leading as rhetorically

effective in the same way as one would if one were hearing tonal cadences. For Adorno, this would in fact be the point: Schoenberg openly allows the ear's warmest teleological comforts to be sidelined while old-fashioned Apollonian formalisms that have outworn their historical moment puzzlingly remain behind, as symptoms of the "wrong world." Normative musical expectations are thus disrupted and yet preserved in outline as mere shadows of their prior functionality; this is why the "new art is so hard to understand."⁹⁹

Schoenberg, one might predict, saw it slightly differently—naively, almost of necessity. In 1911 the composer sent a copy of the autograph manuscript of *Herzgewächse* off to Wassily Kandinsky for publication in the *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac, a collection of Expressionist prints, children's art, primitive art, and folk art. Along with the manuscript, Schoenberg sent in a famous text entitled "Das Verhältnis zum Text [The Relationship to the Text]." The short essay discusses the composer's ideas about how the relationship between a poetic text and musical setting should be understood. Here, he asserts that there should be no strong correlations between the meaning of the words and the movement of the music. Music should be purified of programmatic, denotative, narrative parallelism in order that the essential idea embodied in the musical work may be spoken purely: "Thence it became clear to me that the work of art is like every other complete organism. It is so homogeneous in its composition that in every little detail it reveals its truest, inmost essence. When one cuts into any part of the human body, the same thing always comes out—blood. When one hears a verse of a poem, a measure of a composition, one is in a position to comprehend the whole."¹⁰⁰

If we followed Schoenberg's Romantic organicism too closely, there would be no immanent critique of *Herzgewächse* at all, for if the work actually carried such self-sufficiency and transparency, it would speak the musical idea immediately, in the manner of an autonomous monad.¹⁰¹ By contrast, of course, Adorno focuses on how the unity of the monadic work is structured by all that it is not. What makes it resistant is neither the singularity of the subject's ingenuity, nor the organic autonomy of its "inmost essence." Music's resistance comes through a tangled knot of relational *Kraftfelder*—technological force fields—that link the historicity of the *Tendenz des Materials* to the particularity of the music's technical puzzles. And, practically speaking, Schoenberg was indeed delightfully mistaken about the organic unity of his music; as many have noted, *Herzgewächse* is rife with text painting. In the second half of the song, a lily that arranges itself into the sky is set to a soaring vocal melody and clothed in pixie dust of harps and celeste plunks that gently descend beneath.

In example 2.8, the celeste, harmonium, and harp play 44 attacks in one

The image shows a musical score for Schoenberg's *Herzgewächse*, op. 20, m. 18. It consists of four staves: Soprano (Sop.), Clarinet (Ccl.), Horn (Hm.), and Harp (Hc.). The Soprano part has lyrics: "all dem Blatt ge". The Ccl. part features triplets and sextuplets. The Hm. part has a complex melodic line with many accidentals. The Hc. part has a sparse accompaniment with triplets.

EXAMPLE 2.8. Schoenberg, *Herzgewächse*, op. 20, m. 18. Source: Arnold Schoenberg, *Herzgewächse* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1920).

measure alone, structured by 3:4 polyrhythms at the level of the thirty-second note. The effect is something of an ornamented carpet of sound, of nocturnal dust settling beneath the stars. While the text painting is somewhat loose and nonsynchronous, Schoenberg's text setting nonetheless entails echoes of a kitschy referentiality, as native to Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* (1892) as it would be to a mid-century film score. Schoenberg's resistance is never simply that of the cloistered formalist. Broadly speaking, a latent history of surface-level mimesis in music was as central to the *Tendenz des Materials* as were harmony and counterpoint. One might even say that the colorful pictorial qualities of these passages lend credibility to the inconsumability of its surface, by keeping Schoenberg moored to a legible form of historical fidelity.

To be sure, such mimetic traces were typically fragmentary, and often outnumbered by the historicity of learned techniques.¹⁰² In a matter analogous to Karl Kraus's view of language, which attempted to eliminate the unnecessary and superfluous in order to arrive at a language that showed itself to be the proper medium of thought, and not unlike Adolf Loos's reduction of decoration in architecture in favor of function, Schoenberg's atonality undeniably

prioritized motivic and formalist development over decorative mimesis. Yet for Adorno, ultimately, the virtue of Schoenberg's compositional method was his singular sense of dialectical balance. In his view, the composer "never behaved 'expressionistically,' superimposing subjective intentions upon heterogeneous material in an authoritarian and inconsiderate manner. Instead, every gesture with which he intervenes in the material configuration is at the same time an answer to questions directed to him by the material in the form of its own immanent problems."¹⁰³

It is the immanent problem of musical organization. How can one, increasingly, after the collapse of a normative *Versprachlichung*, write resistant music but ensure organization? Schoenberg's refuge was the old-fashioned and historically systematic domain of counterpoint. According to Adorno, the composer "is *emancipated* and produces that form of polyphony known as 'linearity'" by using contrapuntal techniques that allow the music to retain order, even after the "vertical" language of tonal sonorities has been exhausted. This ensured Schoenberg's link with the *Tendenz des Materials*:

... an alert polyphonic thinking is required at every moment, as is also that capacity for transparency, for classifying the individual parts into main event, secondary event, and mere background, that shows Schoenberg the contrapuntalist to have been a polyphonic composer in the narrower sense. All counterpoint also has an analytical function, the dissection of the complex into distinct parts, the articulation of simultaneous events in accordance with the relative weight of its components and according to similarity and contrast.¹⁰⁴

What Adorno describes here as an "alert polyphonic thinking" would be dramatically codified in the twelve-tone technique after 1923. But in the early atonality of *Herzgewächse*, Schoenberg's polyphony is strikingly dialectical; his formalism is crosscut with mimetic kitsch, fused with pixie dust and dramatic gestures, and set to mind-altering, even woozy poetry. A recent generation of music theorists has ventured more systematic analyses of Schoenberg's free atonal period.¹⁰⁵ But on the whole, the polyphony of this period was typically less systematic than the twelve-tone method (which, incidentally for Adorno, flirted with the danger of pedagogical reification). And, from Adorno's point of view, precisely by virtue of its intuitive simplicity, Schoenberg's early atonality exemplifies resistance all the more powerfully. For key to Adorno's immanent critique of the musical work is the degree to which historical musical language is not completely shattered; *Herzgewächse*'s resistance was based in

its twofold link to the past—one of both rejection and continuity. Its historically aware formalism was always a contradictory one.¹⁰⁶

Looking back to Bloch at this moment of heightened technical specificity, one notices a striking parallel with the *Ereignisformen*. For Bloch, we can recall, the archaic fugato became an anticipatory citation of historical material in Mozart and Beethoven's hands, a formal technique stuck in a nonsynchronous context, where it was repurposed as a carrier of latent potentiality as opposed to hierarchical order. By comparison, we might say that Adorno's immanent critique enacts a more specified form of Bloch's nonsynchronicity. From an Adornian point of view, *Herzgewächse's* mellifluous voice leading devoid of tonal cadences is evidence of consistent Apollonian procedures from a past that is no longer present, outwardly bent on expressing an alienated sense of freedom. In this way, Schoenberg's music harnesses a utopian resistance against modern reification by simultaneously disrupting and maintaining remnants of the conventional circuits of musical consumption, circuits that have been denuded of their ideological functionality. The narrowness of the immanent critique prescribes how music "speaks" utopian truth without speaking; it is an elaborately dialectical version of Schopenhauer's paradox of the ineffable, attuned to the failures of a reified world.

2.6 THE PARADOX OF MAHLER'S VERNACULAR

It is not easy to compose music as strikingly and as dialectically resistant as Schoenberg's. Unquestionably, by way of what Shierry Weber Nicholsen has called an "exact imagination," Adorno often maintained an exceptionally narrow range of what would constitute resistant art.¹⁰⁷ The many kinds of music that failed to meet this high standard of resistance are well accounted for in the secondary literature on Adorno—jazz, Tin Pan Alley, primitivism, neoclassicism, the hyperformal atonality of total serialism, and the like.

Stranger, however, are murkier cases where Adorno's criteria for resistance seem to shift around with a sense of ambiguity and indecision. A key example is Adorno's 1960 monograph on Gustav Mahler. Mahler represents a very different case study than that of Schoenberg. Mahler's music is late Romantic, not modernist. It is full of tonality and of references to vernacular song. To our modern ears, his music can sound somewhat redolent of film music. It is often imitative, though for Adorno it imitates strange totalities like universal history.¹⁰⁸ It contains narrative and characters, even epic sweep. It seems more unabashedly Wagnerian, trafficking in clichés that are products of nineteenth-century ideologies of the *Volk*, of nationalism, of the subject, of all that is with-