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Metamorphosis and Persona in Ned Rorem's Poems of Love and the Rain

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THE COLLEGE OF
WOOSTER

METAMORPHOSIS AND PERSONA IN NED ROREM'S
POEMS OF LOVE AND THE RAIN

BY
JACOB L. BOCA

*An Independent Study in Music Theory
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Senior Independent Study Thesis in the Department of Music*

ADVISED BY DR. PETER MOWREY
SECOND READER, DR. ABIGAIL SHUPE

MARCH 13, 2015

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ABSTRACT

Ned Rorem's 1963 song cycle for mezzo-soprano, *Poems of Love and the Rain*, presents settings of texts by eight American authors loosely centered on the subject of unrequited love. The cycle's formal structure is particularly unique given that each text is set twice, with contrasting settings placed directly opposite each other along the cycle's temporal plane. That is, the sequential ordering of texts, one to nine then back to one, yields an overarching pyramidal or mirror form. The following study examines text-music relationships, both at various moments within the cycle and between contrasting settings, with the ultimate goal of proposing an extramusical framework from which to characterize a perceivable psychological metamorphosis that occurs within the cycle's primary dramatic subject across the work's duration. Particularly, aspects of motive, form, and musical climax are analyzed in conjunction with associated texts to identify aural manifestations of this metamorphosis throughout the cycle.

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INTRODUCTION

Ned Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain*, composed in 1963, is a song cycle for mezzo-soprano that features nine texts by eight American authors on the subjects of unrequited love and the rain.¹ Across the progression of the cycle, all but one of these texts is set twice and in a musically-contrasting manner. The overall form of the cycle is a result of a sequential ordering of the seventeen songs, where differing settings are placed in positions directly opposite to each other, creating an overarching pyramidal, or mirror form. Within the following independent study, I examine relationships between salient musical features and their associated texts and attempt to suggest constructs of extramusical meaning that could be represented by these relationships. More specifically, the study is rooted in a specific statement made by Rorem in the liner notes of his 1997 recording of this cycle with mezzo-soprano, Beverly Wolff: "I wished for the singer to arrive on the stage one person, and to leave it another. The metamorphosis would occur midway, through a new viewpoint on an old obsession."² By examining text-music relationships, both at various moments in the cycle and between contrasting settings of the same text, I postulate that aural manifestations of this dramatic metamorphosis can be perceived and analyzed. These analyses can then be used to characterize the nature of the metamorphosis to which Rorem referred.

Unlike the paradigmatic nineteenth-century song cycle which utilizes the setting of texts by one author, often from an established set (Schubert's *Winterreise*, D. 911, for example), *Poems of Love and the Rain* features texts by a wide variety of authors that, during their conception, were never intended to be associated with other texts. Given the disjunct origins of

¹ Rorem, Ned, *Poems of Love and the Rain* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1965).

² Wolff, Beverly & Ned Rorem, *Rorem: Poems of Love and the Rain; From an Unknown Past; Four Madrigals* (Phoenix USA, 1997).

this cycle's textual foundation, one might assume that the resulting cycle would be equally disjunct. However, given the cycle's dramatic implications and underlying portrayal of psychological metamorphosis, I suggest that these texts, though originating from differing times and places, function in the cycle, as one "macro-text" serving both the musical and extramusical discourse. Furthermore, I posit that the various subjects of these poems, though seemingly diverse in isolation, become one as a result of this macro-text. Therefore, the resulting "übersubject" can be interpreted as the cycle's primary voice, undergoing the emotions and events of all the texts in sequence.

Speaking now to the nature of this "übersubject", contrary to Rorem's note, I suggest that this metamorphosis, though represented through the singer, is fundamentally present in an implicit vocal persona who can be said to be the subject of this particular cycle's dramatic journey. The establishment of said persona recalls Edward Cone's conception of the implicit persona, as represented in his work *The Composer's Voice*. During an individual's reading of a given poem, Cone suggests the creation of a poetic persona who embodies the events and emotions of the text. Therefore, by setting a poem to music, "the poem can no longer be heard as independent, for it is modified by a vocal line requiring in its own turn further completion by an accompaniment that prepares it, explains it, and places it in a larger context."³ In that regard, the poetic persona can no longer be perceived as such, but instead is suggested now to take the form of a "vocal persona; a character in a kind of monodramatic opera, who sings the original poem as his part."⁴

³ Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, The Ernest Bloch Lectures (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 21.

⁴ Ibid.

In shorthand, Cone refers to this vocal persona as a “protagonist,” highlighting its ideological similarities to a character in an opera.⁵ Within the context of this independent study, I choose to abandon this label and instead refer to this persona explicitly as a vocal persona. The reason behind this choice lies in the nature of the dramatic events of this particular song cycle. Specifically, the term “protagonist” carries with it a number of narrative implications, whereas the dramatic events contained in Rorem’s *Poems of Love and the Rain* seem to suggest something other than narrative.

Rather than presenting a story in traditional narrative form, I suggest that the songs of this cycle represent subjective recollections in the memory of the implicit vocal persona. This is in part due to the implication of psychological metamorphosis across the cycle, as presented in Rorem’s liner notes, but also because of the cycle’s dual setting of texts. Whereas in Schumann’s *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42, for example, the sewing-together of poems works to depict the *story* of a woman traversing through love and loss, this cycle uses not only this melding together of texts, but also the exploitation of varying readings of the same poem to represent a transformation in the psyche of the implicit vocal persona. It should be said that this psychological metamorphosis or evolution is by no means identical with the concept of narrative. Such an evolution may take place over the course of an indefinite amount of time; perhaps two minutes, perhaps twenty years. Furthermore, subjective recollections that catalyze such a journey cannot be said to occur in a contiguous temporal plane, as can the events of a standard narrative.

Given the cycle’s central thematic material, it can be justly claimed that such subjective recollections and resulting psychological metamorphoses are centered on the emotional connotations surrounding an unrequited love. Though the cycle is sung by a woman, for the

⁵ Ibid.

purposes of this study, I choose to leave the gender of the vocal persona experiencing such events ambiguous. The decision to do so is the result of many factors, some historical, some cultural, and some purely linguistic. Though it can be syntactically cumbersome to avoid using gendered pronouns, I feel that automatically referring to the vocal persona as “she” would have an ultimately negative function in the following discourse. First, given the ambiguity of such a persona, I fear that referring to it as “she” would encourage perception of said persona as something just as ambiguous, like a Ship or the Statue of Liberty, which are both often colloquially referred to as “she.” Such a perception, I fear, would cheapen the argument. Furthermore, by choosing to keep the gender of the persona ambiguous, the universality of the cycle’s themes can remain just that, universal. Lastly, given the variety in sexual orientation of the cycle’s poets, as well as the fact that Rorem is openly homosexual, it seems inappropriate to pigeon-hole the gender of the cycle’s primary dramatic subject.

Though the entirety of this study is built on the examination of text-music relationships, the following chapters establish a musical focus from which to begin analysis. Particularly, the three primary musical aspects that will be examined are motive, form, and musical climax. Each chapter examines one of these musical elements in relation to associated textual components and then extrapolates on the potential extramusical framework represented by such elements. In an effort to avoid the immense subjectivity that accompanies investigation into music and meaning, the following analysis appeals to a variety of established scholarship, including works from music theory, philosophy, literary theory, and vocal pedagogy.

CHAPTER 1

MOTIVE AS A DEVICE FOR ILLUSTRATING UNITY AND CHANGE

1.1 UNITY THROUGH MOTIVE SATURATION

The songs contained in Ned Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain* feature an exhaustive list of unifying elements, both conceptual and musical in nature. These elements work to provide a sense of unity across the entirety of the cycle. During the piece's conception, it is clear that Rorem chose to create unification on multiple levels, beginning with the coherent theme of unrequited love and the rain, then focusing further to include only texts by American authors, and finally choosing to set each text twice within the cycle. As if these were not sufficient, there are also distinct musical elements displayed within the piece that strengthen its continuity. Namely, greater unification is achieved through the use of a single primary motive that permeates the vast majority of the cycle's melodic material. For the purposes of this discussion, this technique of using a motive excessively to create unification across a large scale work will be referred to as "motive saturation." I postulate that Rorem's use of motive saturation across *Poems of Love and the Rain* creates a thread of continuity which serves as a large-scale musical "blank canvas" upon which to display change. Furthermore, I suggest that the unity achieved is not only a purely musical unity that provides a strand of sameness throughout a seventeen-song cycle, but also an illustration of an extramusical unity in personal identity despite a psychological transformation in the implicit persona.

This primary motive, shown below in Figure 1.1 and labeled Motive X, is first displayed in the Prologue. In its first appearance, the motive's intervallic content is comprised of a minor second followed by a minor third, both descending. Taking inventory of Motive X's appearance

in various songs, it quickly becomes apparent that, while the generic intervallic content remains constant (a second followed by a third), the qualities of those intervals, the direction in which they are moving, and the order in which they are presented are subject to modification. For example, Figure 1.2 illustrates an “original” X (in red), but directly preceding it is a melding of two X variants: an inverted form, with all intervals moving in an upward direction (in purple), and a version that has both presentation order and direction switched (in gold). In addition, looking specifically at interval content, the quality of the seconds differ from that of the initial X found in the Prologue.

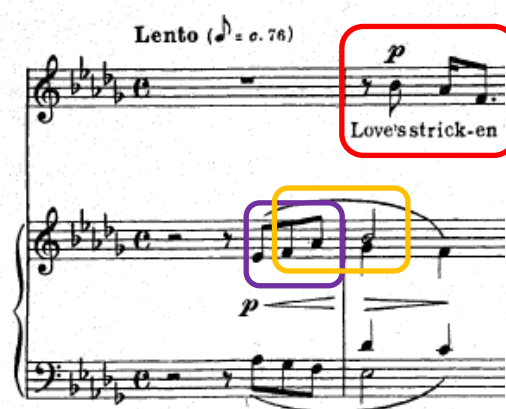
Figure 1.1. Motive X as it first appears⁶

“Prologue,” mm. 5-6



Figure 1.2. Excerpt displaying Motive X, X-I, and X-R1

“Love’s Stricken “Why”” (No. 4), mm. 1-2



⁶ All musical examples presented in this discussion were taken from: Rorem, Ned, *Poems of Love and the Rain* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1965).

In an effort to aid discussion and prevent confusion, I will be using Arnold Schoenberg's terminology for the various methods of tone-row manipulation to discuss varying forms of the X motive. Specifically, the symbols "R," "I," and "RI" will be used to signify the manipulations retrograde, inversion, and retrograde inversion, respectively.⁷ However, these tags are being used quite loosely; their use in no way implies serial tendencies in *Poems of Love and the Rain*. In addition, the tags are used without regard for the specific interval quality within the motive. That is, an X-R motive will remain one whether it begins with a minor or major third.

As exemplified in Figure 1.2, melodic and harmonic structures in both the voice and piano are commonly derived almost entirely from linked X variants. This statement holds true throughout the entirety of the cycle, excepting only a few songs which do better to mask X's influence on their melodic development.⁸ In other words, the cycle is quite literally saturated with various forms of X, to an extent that seems almost obsessive. To demonstrate this point, Figure 1.3 provides a motivic analysis of the first page of "Stop All the Clocks" (No. 2). In just these twelve measures, one can spot thirteen occurrences of X (in red) and eight occurrences of X-R (in green), totaling a staggering twenty-one X iterations.⁹ The melodic structure of the vocal line features only small number of fragments not directly included in an X variant. Even in these occasions though, one could make an argument for simple X-derived ornamentation of upcoming or preceding X variants. Across the entirety of the cycle, similar motivic usage abounds.

⁷ George Perle, *Serial Composition and Atonality: An Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern*, 6th ed., rev (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1991). pp. 46-47.

⁸ A small number of the songs do not make direct use of the complete X motive, but instead depend heavily on the descending minor third, an X fragment, for their particular melodic development. An example of this is the vocal line for song "in the rain" (No. 7), which makes use of the minor-third X fragment for phrase endings, among other things.

⁹ Please note that one example of X in an enharmonic spelling was included in this (m. 8, beginning on the "and" of beat one).

Figure 1.3. Excerpt highlighting motive saturation
 “Stop All the Clocks” (No. 2), mm. 1-12

4

2. Stop All The Clocks

W. H. Auden

Lento appassionato (♩ = 69) (*Rather Bluesy*)

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Lento appassionato' with a quarter note equal to 69 beats per minute, and the mood is 'Rather Bluesy'. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo), *f* (forte), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The lyrics are: 'Stop all the clocks, — cut off the tel-e-phone, Pre-vent the dog from bark-ing— with a juic-y bone, — Si-lence the pia-nos and with muf-fled drum Bring-'. Red boxes highlight motives in the vocal line and piano accompaniment, while green boxes highlight specific motives in the piano accompaniment.

Stop all the clocks, — cut off the tel-e-phone,

Pre-vent the dog from bark-ing— with a juic-y bone, —

Si-lence the pia-nos and with muf-fled drum Bring-

Poem © Copyright 1945 by W. H. Auden.

In music that is so personal and dramatic in nature, one could naturally assume that such a prolific motive may act as a *leitmotif* that is used as a reference point from which to portray change in mood or character development. Traditional western music shows a long history of this type of practice, most notably in the music dramas of Richard Wagner. Take, for instance, the infamous “Sword” *leitmotif* featured abundantly throughout *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Throughout this operatic cycle, this motive is used in association with the characters Wotan, Siegmund, and Siegfried, creating a multigenerational point of reference.¹⁰ The sword motive itself, first occurring as a two-measure brass fanfare in the fourth scene of *Das Rheingold*, is comprised completely of notes within a major triad. In various points throughout *Das Rheingold* and the following three operas, the theme is reiterated in variation, reflecting what a given character is thinking, doing, or feeling at a given time. For example, in an occasion of enhanced drama or tension, the *leitmotif* may be cast in the minor mode.

Contrary to the Wagnerian *leitmotif* technique, the X motive in Rorem’s *Poems of Love and the Rain* does not appear to be used as a reference point that is itself manipulated to portray development in the drama. Instead, the motive seems to be a type of underlying thread, weaving its way through the entirety of the cycle, serving as a unifying element over which change can occur. Though previous figures have made use of material from songs found early in the cycle, X-motive variants can be seen reaching all the way through the cycle’s seventeen songs. The second setting of “Stop All the Clocks” (No. 16) is just one of numerous examples. The song’s climactic ending features an indisputable iteration of an X-R motive before launching into the cycle’s epilogue. The music of “Epilogue” (No. 17), besides involving a minute shift in tonality from E minor to E-flat minor, is almost identical to that of “Prologue” (No. 1), both displaying emphasized iterations of the original X motive.

¹⁰ Ernest Hucheson, *A Musical Guide to the Richard Wagner Ring of the Nibelung* ([New York: AMS Press, 1972]).

These motivic analyses suggest that X-motive saturation encourages the perception of unity across *Poems of Love and the Rain*. The unity achieved can be interpreted both from musical and extramusical perspectives. In a musical sense, the motive abundance provides a thread of continuity through a set of seventeen highly complex songs that feature endless variety in mood, texture, harmony, rhythm, etc. In this way the X motive functions similarly to the famous four-note motive that permeates Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Each serves as a definitive and perceivable motivic foundation with which to both catalyze development and encourage unity. Viewed through another lens, the motivic unity can be used as a tool to speculate into the nature of extramusical elements surrounding the cycle. Following the assertion that the cycle works to portray metamorphosis in the psyche of an implicit vocal persona, the motivic unity can be seen to represent a unity in consciousness and identity of this persona across the cycle's duration.

Discussions of personal identity in the field of philosophy can serve as the grounds from which to investigate this conjecture. Some philosophers have focused initial investigation around the question of continuity in a person across time or, in other words, whether one person at different periods of time can be said to be the same person, persisting through time. To illustrate this query, scholars often cite Plutarch's "Theseus Paradox" from his *Life of Theseus*, ca. 75 AD.¹¹ In this work, Plutarch offers a thought experiment posing the following question: if a ship was to be restored and every physical part replaced, could the end result be regarded as the same ship?¹² The same question has been posed with various objects as the subject, including a sock that is continuously being repaired with patches, or an axe that has had its head and handle replaced. This query can also be extended to the world of human beings

¹¹ Christopher Hughes, "Same-Kind Coincidence and the Ship of Theseus," *Mind*, New Series, 106, no. 421 (January 1, 1997): 53–67.

¹² Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone, eds., *Just the Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy* (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

and human development. As a person grows through time, all the while enduring drastic physical, emotional, and psychological alterations, can the essence of that individual be said to be continuous through time? If the answer is yes, what makes this so?

Over the course of history, hundreds of notable philosophers have attempted to wrestle with this issue, including John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Gottfried Leibniz. Locke's conception of continuity of consciousness, as stated in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter XXVII¹³, offers an interesting perspective, and one that seems most fit to serve the current discourse. Locke conceives that consciousness, or memory, and not physical substance, is the foundation upon which personal identity is built. That is, personal identity, or self, is continuous through time by the consciousness of past, present, and future thought and action.¹⁴ Therefore, one person at two different time periods can indeed be said to be the same person given the continuity in consciousness that endures within the individual.

This explanation seems particularly fitting within the extramusical fabric of Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain*. As was mentioned, the cycle functions as a musical manifestation of an emotional or psychological transformation within the mind of a primary vocal persona. Here, the previously described X-motive saturation can be interpreted to represent the continuity of the individual. Furthermore, considering Locke's theory of continuity of consciousness, this motive saturation aids in the representation of continuity in the consciousness of the persona in question. As the subject of the cycle endures emotional and psychological transformation, continuity in thought and memory is also displayed, evoking an air of sameness between the subject at the beginning of the cycle and the subject at the end of the cycle. Though the persona has endured change (described later), it also displays continuity

¹³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Great Books in Philosophy (Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1995).

¹⁴ Galen Strawson, *Locke on Personal Identity: Consciousness and Concernment*, Rev. edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

in self as represented by the ubiquitous X motive that pervades melodic and harmonic structure throughout the entirety of the cycle.

1.2 UNREQUITED LOVE, THEME Z, AND IMPLICATIONS OF EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The function and importance of motive in music varies dramatically between different environments. While Bach used motive as a seed from which to grow intricate contrapuntal textures in *Das wohltemperierte Klavier*, Wagner used the same device (as *leitmotif*) for character identification and development in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Such dramatic disparities in function are not restricted to pieces of different composers, different stylistic periods, or even different moments within the same piece of music. In Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain*, it is clear that at least two important motives are present, each carrying different musical and extramusical functions. The second significant and very striking melodic structure at work in this cycle is one that functions differently from motive X. Unlike X, this secondary idea is only present in a few, but seemingly very purposeful settings; namely, song Nos. 2, 3, and 5, and two sparse iterations towards the cycle's conclusion. Furthermore, the complete statements that occur in the first half of this cycle, prior to what Rorem calls the "pivotal" Interlude,¹⁵ are written in a way where their presence is extraordinarily distinct. Because of this stark contrast in appearance and function, I propose that this secondary idea does not behave as a unifying element, but rather an indicator of change; a function completely opposite to that of X.

Figure 1.4 below displays the initial appearance of this secondary, circular idea from "Stop All the Clocks" (No. 2). As is displayed, this new idea is substantially longer than X and is therefore labeled as a theme. With its tight range and incessant turning around the notes A and

¹⁵Wolff, Beverly & Ned Rorem, *Rorem: Poems of Love and the Rain; From an Unknown Past; Four Madrigals* (Phoenix USA, 1997).

C, the theme exhibits obsessive and almost crazed qualities (discussed later). The theme itself can be divided into individual motivic elements, Z_1 and Z_2 . An analysis of the fragments reveals strong ties to X, most noticeably in the heavy utilization of seconds and thirds. Perhaps most striking is X and Z_2 's shared ending pattern of a descending minor third. This similarity causes increased ambiguity throughout the cycle. It is often difficult to distinguish exactly if a melodic structure is derived from an X variant or some sort of morphed Z theme. This is especially true when, as is often the case, the melodic structure does not present a complete iteration of either, but rather is comprised of fragments resembling both.

Figure 1.4. Circular Theme (Theme Z) and theme fragments

“Stop All the Clocks” (No. 2), mm. 17-19



From a formal perspective, “Stop All the Clocks” (No. 2) utilizes Theme Z as an interruption; a secondary idea that is used to divide the song into sections. This treatment is vaguely reminiscent of a baroque ritornello or classical rondo form, given that the Z material is repeated and offset by contrasting material. However, unlike these standard forms, what would be the rondo theme, or ritornello subject (Theme Z), is not stated first, but instead is initially introduced as secondary material. The following section diagram displays a rough thematic formal layout of the song, with A material first appearing in mm. 1-16 and B material in mm. 31-35.

A Z B Z-B'-Z₂ A'-B' Z

Some of the Z sections are linked back to other sections using material similar to A or C, as in mm. 29-30, in which A material is used to transition to B. In addition, the diagram does not account for mm. 23-28, a type of codetta bringing the initial Z material and corresponding *Più mosso* section to a close.

After analysis, it becomes apparent that similar treatment of the Z material is consistent between the few songs that utilize the theme in full. “The Air is the Only” (No. 3) and “The Apparition” (No. 5) both display this sort of “interrupting Z” scenario. In each song, initial melodic material is presented only to be stifled out of development by obstructing Z material. The specific treatment of the Z material, in terms of its infrequency in comparison to X and its interruptive tendencies, is highly intriguing from an extramusical perspective, particularly considering questions concerning perception, meaning, and the cycle’s underlying portrayal of psychological metamorphosis.

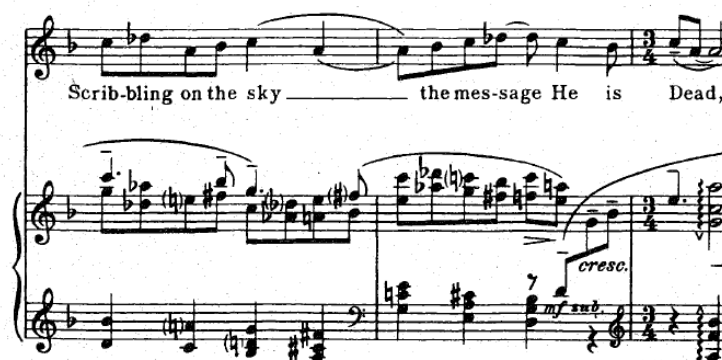
It is prudent to examine issues of function and meaning surrounding Theme Z by observing the specific words and phrases it accompanies and reflecting on their impact on overall perception. As previously described, the first iteration of theme Z in its complete form occurs in mm. 17-19 of “Stop All the Clocks” (No. 2). The theme is preceded by a fairly aggressive texture, marked *Lento appassionato*, that heavily utilizes X variants as building blocks for its melodic and harmonic design (see Figure 1.3). At the outset of Z, the accompanying texture thins slightly and a slight increase in tempo is indicated. The text accompanying the initial statement of Theme Z aligns with the second stanza of W.H. Auden’s poem, allowing the music and poem to share a perceivable formal signpost.¹⁶ The exact text that accompanies this first iteration is: “Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead...” Immediately following the first iteration are two measures of a morphed Z, seen below in Figure

¹⁶ Complete texts from the cycle are provided in Appendix B.

1.5. The two measures feature the same range of pitches, but in a different order and with a distinct mid-phrase repetition of the descending minor third. Accompanying this phrase are the words “Scribbling on the sky the message He is Dead[.]”

Figure 1.5. Morphed Iteration of Theme Z

“Stop All the Clocks” (No. 2), mm. 20-22



Though not a strict repetition of Theme Z, the obvious ties to the Z melodic material that mm. 20-22 display allow the phrase to be interpreted as one of the few full iterations of Z. This notion is supported by the close association between the texts utilized. That is, the “scribbling” that is mentioned in mm. 20-22 is clearly being done by the aforementioned planes: “Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead / Scribbling on the sky the message He is Dead[.]”

The second appearance of Z material occurs in mm. 37-38 and is accompanied by the text “My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song[.]” Two measures later a quasi-Z₂ fragment is present accompanying the words “I was wrong.” Again, like the above example, this morphed Z₂ iteration is included in this analysis because of its ties to surrounding texts and their dramatic impact. The two measures preceding Z₂ in this instance accompany the text “I thought that love would last forever:” which is necessary to understand the secondary clause “I was

wrong.” The final iteration of Z occurs in the final measures of the song, mm. 56-60. Following the descending minor third that ends the motive, the piano concludes with descending X variants. This last occurrence of Z is particularly striking given its formal placement. Theme Z, which is initially presented following what appears to be the song’s primary material in mm. 1-16, becomes the song’s concluding vocal material. The text accompanying this occurrence is “for nothing now can ever come to any good.”

The texts accompanying each Z statement in “Stop All the Clocks” (No. 2) are listed below. The portion included in brackets does not accompany Z material but is included to provide background for the phrase directly following it.

*Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He is Dead,*

*My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
[I thought that love would last forever:]
I was wrong.*

for nothing now can ever come to any good.

In general, these texts carry dark and even resentful connotations. While it can be argued that the entire poem portrays such a mood, the particular words chosen to accompany Z seem to imply the essence of this darkness. Particularly, the phrases “He is Dead,” “I was wrong,” and the very last phrase seem to carry the most dramatic weight. Taking these textual interpretations into account, Theme Z begins to carry with it implications of darkness and

sadness. Or more generally, the theme seems to represent and emphasize the emotional connotations surrounding the cycle's most central theme: unrequited love.¹⁷

Further examination into the text-music relationships surrounding the various complete statements of Theme Z supports its interpretational ties to the theme of unrequited love. Figure 1.6 below lists every occurrence of Theme Z and its accompanying text yet to be discussed. Each text exhibits strong ties to various emotional connotations contiguous with the theme. This is particularly apparent in "The Apparition" (No. 5). In each case, the texts seem to evoke a period of emotional distress during or following a devastating personal trauma. Even the text utilized in "The Air is the Only" (No. 3), though not as striking as that found in No. 5, can still find resonance in the central theme.

Figure 1.6. Theme Z and its accompanying texts

<u>Song</u>		<u>Text</u>
"The Air is the Only" (No. 3)	mm. 8-12	"Forget / Its salty ranges: / Change changes."
-----	mm. 20-21	"[In] which we live / The dead and alive,"
"The Apparition" (No. 5)	mm. 9-13	"Who took my heart, whole,"
-----	mm. 18-22	"I twist, and I turn, / My breath but a sigh."

The correlation between Theme Z and the idea of unrequited love can be supported by examining musical elements of the theme itself. Both the tight range of notes around which the theme revolves and the descending minor third that serves as its compositional crux seem to suggest specific extramusical characteristics. The tight range of the theme and its constant

¹⁷ Wolff, Beverly & Ned Rorem, *Rorem: Poems of Love and the Rain; From an Unknown Past; Four Madrigals*.

circulation around the two central notes, A and C, seems to suggest obsessive characteristics. Obsession, by definition, implies persistent and unceasing thought over someone or something. The relentless turning around A and C within the theme can be interpreted as a direct illustration of the racing thoughts of an implicit persona experiencing the emotional distress that accompanies unrequited love. Though Rorem is frequently recorded stating his aversion to word painting, or in his own terms, “Mickey Mousing,”¹⁸ it is hard to look past this somewhat obvious example.¹⁹

Theme Z’s utilization of the descending minor third as a compositional crux seems to carry fairly innate extramusical connotations as well. When repeated, the descending minor third may recall cultural universals, such as juvenile mocking chants, i.e. “na-na na-na boo-boo,” or its more recent descendent, “air ball” at basketball games. Noting this, the descending minor third and therefore Theme Z itself can be argued to connote an air of juvenility or immaturity. Taken from another angle, the descending interval can be said to evoke a musical sigh, this being very obviously supported by Rorem’s choice to set the word “sigh” to the Z₂ fragment in m. 22 of “The Apparition” (No. 5). In this specific scenario, the sigh accompanies a poetic persona’s twisting, turning, and heightened anxiety while wrestling with the thought of the unidentified apparition. In a more general sense, a sigh often can express a person’s sorrow, weariness, or even a general feeling of personal defeat. Together the descending interval’s

¹⁸ Ned Rorem, “Writing Songs,” *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, Fall/Winter 1982 10, no. 2 (1983): 210–24.

¹⁹ As an aside, it is interesting to put Ned Rorem’s recorded comments regarding his compositional practices (as noted here and in the Literature Review) and his actual compositional yield into dialogue. In addition to the above example, there are numerous other moments within this cycle that could be interpreted as word painting, as discussed in later subsections and chapters. Why then, after making such efforts to denounce the practice, does Rorem incorporate it into his own writing? Such a question is impossible to answer in full, but perhaps Rorem allows certain occasions where the technique might be a viable compositional option, given it is done with great nuance and grace. The term “Mickey Mousing” implies a somewhat overdone, comical musical rendition of a physical event, whereas the examples of word painting found in *Poems of Love and the Rain* are much more sophisticated. Then again, perhaps what a composer says about the compositional process and what he or she actually executes in practice are destined to conflict. This is often understood to be the case regarding Igor Stravinsky’s discussions of his compositions and his actual compositional output, for example. Understanding that a composer can hardly be objective about his or her own compositions, it is no surprise that these conflicts arise.

implications of immaturity and the emotional connotations accompanying the act of sighing, like the textual influences previously discussed, seem to provide strong evidence for Theme Z's direct ties to the cycle's central theme of unrequited love.

Combined textual and musical analysis up to this point provides a clear picture of the meaning behind and interpretation of the cycle's Theme Z material. Now that this has been established, the question of this theme's manipulation and disappearance throughout the course of the cycle must be addressed. Speaking in terms of the implicit persona that is the subject of this cycle's journey, the manipulation and eventual termination of complete Z iterations could be seen to evoke some sort of similar emotional or personal transformation. As the cycle progresses from "The Apparition" (No. 5) – the last song to feature a full Z iteration on the cycle's first half – Z_1 begins to be neglected and Z_2 stripped naked of all ornamentation and reduced to a simple minor third. For example, in "in the rain" (No. 7), morphed Z fragments can be seen as present, given the melodies' similar contour and use of the minor third (i.e. mm. 4-5, 8-10, 13-14, etc.); however, no full iteration of the original Z exists. Recalling the X motive's construction utilizing a third, often descending, and its abundance throughout the cycle, any remnant of Theme Z beyond song No. 7 is virtually unperceivable in a texture thick with X. The distinct settings of the theme, as heard in song Nos. 2, 3, and 5, are eliminated, with the exception of a few sparse iterations towards the cycle's conclusion (discussed later).

Considering the established extramusical characteristics of Theme Z, its disappearance has implications for its meaning and function within the cycle. Due to the theme's obsessive and juvenile quality, as discussed earlier, its manipulation and eventual disappearance might imply a maturation in the implicit persona, developed while overcoming the emotional distress associated with an unrequited love. Though the entire cycle relies heavily on the minor third for its melodic and harmonic development, as seen in the discussion of Motive X, these thirds

are often isolated. The interval in isolation does not evoke the same extramusical associations that accompany Theme Z itself. The obsessive repeating and circling around the interval, which characterizes Theme Z, dissipates over the cycle's progression. Therefore, it can be suggested across the cycle, childishness and obsession within the implicit persona transform into something more mature, perhaps wistful regret or jaded acceptance.

Further speculation is possible when comparing the way the aforementioned Z-associated texts are set in their partner songs in the latter half of the cycle. Rorem's choice to set each text twice within one cycle – a cycle which he himself claims to represent a perceivable psychological transformation in the implicit persona – provides the analyst with an interpretational roadmap. Taking advantage of this road-map as a tool for comparison, one notices distinct differences between contrasting settings of the Z texts, most notably the difference in melodic contour between the settings. Moving chronologically through the work, the first occurrence of a Z-associated text on the cycle's second half occurs in "The Apparition" (No. 13); Figure 1.6 provides the exact texts. As is shown in Figure 1.7, the melodic content of this setting is drastically different than that of the first.

Figure 1.7a. Z-Associated Text from "The Apparition" (No. 13), mm. 10-13

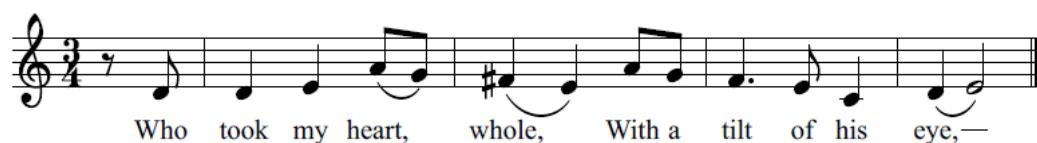
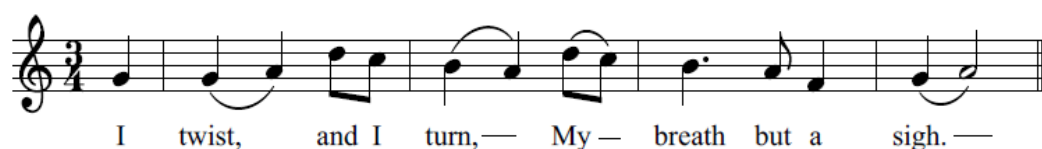


Figure 1.7b. Z-Associated Text from “The Apparition” (No. 13), mm. 18-21



The most distinct difference between the two settings of these texts seems to be the contour of the melody and harmonic structures. Whereas the Theme-Z settings from the cycle's first half are strikingly circular and tight in range, the second-half settings feature a flowing melody with a greater breadth in range. Furthermore, the original Z-settings end with a descending minor third, giving the overall impression of downward motion in the vocal line. In contrast, the above second-half settings end with an ascending major second, giving the overall impression of upward motion. This perception is supported by the fact that the latter Z-associated text (displayed in Figure 1.7b) is set to the same flowing melody but transposed up a perfect fourth. Taking both phrases in time, one would undoubtedly perceive this cross-phrase upward momentum, as opposed to the downward motion being emphasized in the settings of the cycle's first half.

This observation is supported by analyzing contours of the settings of Z-texts in the remaining two songs that feature complete iterations of Theme Z in their first-half partners. As seen in the following examples, each resetting of the Z-associated texts feature somewhat obvious upward motion in the melodic contour.²⁰

²⁰ Note that one Z-text, i.e. “My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;” was omitted from this inventory. This will be discussed separately given its uniqueness and interpretational weight.

Figure 1.8a. Z-associated Text from "The Air is the Only" (No. 15), mm. 8-12



Figure 1.8b. Z-associated Text from "The Air is the Only" (No. 15), mm. 16-20

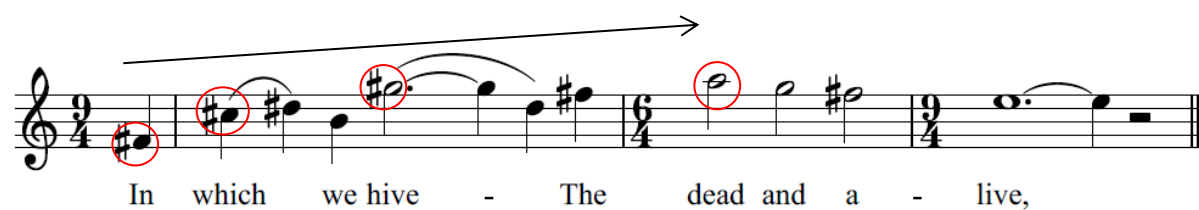


Figure 1.9a. Z-associated Text from "Stop All the Clocks" (No. 16), mm. 14-18

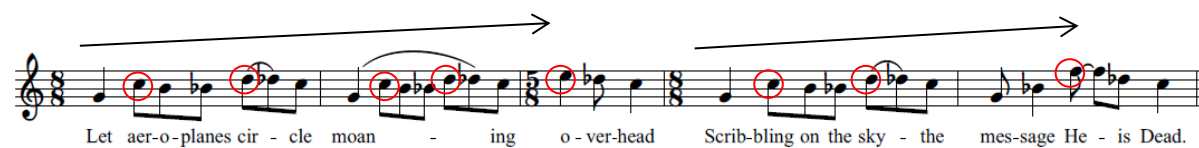


Figure 1.9b. Z-associated Text from "Stop All the Clocks" (No. 16), m. 37



Figure 1.9c. Z-associated Text from “Stop All the Clocks” (No. 16), m. 52-59



The upward momentum achieved by these melodic contours is undeniably perceivable, especially when compared to their obsessively circular Theme-Z counterparts in the cycle's first half. Such thoughtful contrast in melodic contour demands consideration when examining extramusical connotations surrounding the work. The idea that melodic contour can serve as a type of interpretive signifier is not something that is new to vocal music; for example, such compositional strategies have been in use in opera for centuries. Though not always consciously perceived as such, the general contour of a line provides strong interpretational clues to the listener.²¹ Rising lines are often thought to indicate tension-building interpretational implications, such as feelings of expectancy, arousal, exertion, or anxiety, whereas descending lines often evoke lethargy, sadness, or defeat. Observed from this perspective, the striking upward momentum established in the vocal lines of the cycle's second-half, Z-associated texts could be argued to represent a variety of different extramusical connotations.

The interpretational correlation between rising lines and exertion seems to apply well when attempting to investigate the extramusical components of Theme Z and its related texts. As was established, Theme Z seems to carry direct implications towards the negative emotional connotations surrounding unrequited love. Perhaps a sort of liberation of the Z-associated texts

²¹ Seth Monahan, "Negative Catharsis as Rotational Telos in Mahler's First *Kindertotenlied*," *Integral* 28 (forthcoming 2015).

from Theme Z is being evoked by these second-half, rising melodies and, in turn, the liberation of the implicit persona from mental obsession over an unrequited love as well. This interpretation could be supported by observing the specific words upon which notes key to these climaxes in melodic contour depend. Referring back to Figures 1.8-1.9, distinct melodic climaxes occur on the words “Change,” “dead,” “He,” “wrong,” and “any.” Each of these words, with the exception of “any,” display unequivocal ties to the thought processes involved in dealing with an unrequited love. Interpreting ascending lines as a musical representation of exertion, as proposed above, the melodic content of Z-associated texts in these examples represents a perceivable evocation of the emotional exertion occurring in the mind of the implicit persona when liberated from the negative emotional connotations associated with personal trauma. Climaxes on words such as “Change,” “He,” or “dead,” could be read as a catharsis or celebration in the persona upon finally overcoming emotional distress. This type of catharsis can be tied to the maturation occurring in the persona represented through the manipulation and elimination of Theme Z.

In contrast to the interpretation above, the rising lines could also be justly argued to evoke increased distress or anxiety in the implicit persona. The original Theme Z settings feature primarily stagnant and downward motion, suggesting lethargy, sadness, or defeat. From this perspective, the persona can be argued to display a sense of emotional tranquility. In this reading, the manipulation of Theme Z and eventual replacement by strikingly ascending melodic fragments could represent a disruption in the emotional stability that was present at the cycle’s outset. Seen this way, the same climactic words that in the previous reading implied catharsis, could be said to represent a climax in anxiety or distress. Overall, however, this reading seems less fitting than the above argument for liberation given the emotional connotations associated with Theme Z. It is difficult indeed to argue for lethargy given the

obsessive and immature qualities that are said to be present in the musical construction of the theme.

Before indulging further in interpretational queries, it must be noted that there is one outlier in regards to Z-associated texts that has yet to be accounted for. The example in question is the re-setting of the text from Auden's "Stop All the Clocks" that occurs in mm. 32-34 of song No. 16, i.e. "My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song[.]" Whereas each other re-setting features expansive reworking of the melodic content, involving more fluid and wide-ranged melodies, this text does not reset the melody at all. Instead, the text is set with the exact same melodic content as in song No. 2. After a long period of neglect, an almost exact reiteration of Theme Z is presented with identical pitch classes to those found in its mirror texts from song No. 2! Upon first listening, this reiteration of Theme Z is not as obvious, given the time since a full statement of Theme Z; however, after melodic analysis, it becomes apparent that this is in fact a rhythmically-morphed Z theme. Figure 1.10 below displays this occurrence.

Figure 1.10. Rhythmically-morphed Theme Z

"Stop All the Clocks" (No. 16), mm. 32-34



Given the implications of a “disappearing” Theme Z, this reiteration is unbelievably striking. Taken into dialogue with the previously suggested interpretations, this reiteration could be argued to represent a number of different things. However, in the context of the reading emphasizing liberation from emotional distress and resulting catharsis, this final Z iteration carries somewhat obvious implications; the reiteration could be read as one final relapse back to the old, whatever that may be. This last relapse, if read in that regard, is then stifled by reemergence of ascending Z-associated texts, the final of those being the last few measures of the cycle proper, considering the Prologue and Epilogue could be viewed outside the extramusical journey of the cycle.

Acknowledging that attempting to reach an exact and “correct” interpretation of Theme Z and associated texts is impossible, and frankly futile, one can go no further than utilizing musical evidence to propose and support various readings of the cycle. That being said, it is difficult to ignore the extramusical connotations associated with the musical structure of Theme Z, its manipulation and disappearance, its associated texts, and finally the resetting of its associated texts. Given the theme’s musical structure and textual associations, it appears to display strong interpretational ties to one of the central themes of *Poems of Love and the Rain*: unrequited love.

CHAPTER 2

DRAMATIC IMPLICATIONS AT SIGNIFICANT FORMAL SIGNPOSTS

2.1 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SECONDARY PERSONA

It has been established that Ned Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain* carries with it a number of dramatic overtones regarding the psychological evolution of a vocal persona. Given the cycle's clearly defined numeric formal structure, it seems appropriate to investigate aspects of this drama at each of the significant formal signposts, namely the Prologue, Interlude, and Epilogue. Though brief when compared to the breadth of the entire cycle, the Prologue that opens Ned Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain* seems to carry great significance as a musical introduction to the extramusical foundations of the cycle. I postulate that, similar to staged dramas that utilize a detached narrator to establish and drive elements of the story, the dramatic aspects of this particular song cycle are introduced by an omniscient secondary persona in "Prologue: from 'The Rain'" (No. 1). This secondary persona (or narrator), who seems to function independently from the persona who is the subject of the cycle's journey, can be perceived through close analysis of significant musical elements as well as a juxtaposition of its corresponding texts with the texts of the cycle proper.

The text of the Prologue is highly ambiguous in nature. It was extracted by Ned Rorem from the novel *Emblems of Conduct* by Donald Windham²²: "Everywhere, the impossible is happening; two things, the rain and the landscape, are occupying the same place at the same time." Given this text's function as the opening statement of this extensive, complex, and dramatic song cycle, it seems fitting to investigate aspects of its meaning in relation to the

²² Donald Windham, *Emblems of Conduct* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

work's central theme: unrequited love. Perhaps the most obvious is observing the correlation between the text's subjects, the rain and the landscape, and the nature of love itself. Stripped of its specificity, the text's implication of "something and something" existing together in one place displays a direct tie to the subject of love, which in most cases involves two parties enduring together and occupying the same emotional space. Furthermore, the evocation of this dual existence as an impossibility suggests a negative perception of love, or perhaps doubt in its existence. Finally, the use of the term "Everywhere" implies that the poetic persona is *observing* this phenomenon of love occurring all around, suggesting that the persona is no longer necessarily experiencing said phenomenon. Varying interpretations of the text are obviously plausible, though given the current context, perhaps this fairly negative perception of love can be said to represent a similar sentiment in the cycle's underlying dramatic foundation in relation to the establishment and development of an implied vocal persona.

Speaking now to the text's implications for a secondary persona, one notices, whereas many of the poems that follow are deeply personal in nature, recounting in detail a person's devastation through a troubling period of time, the excerpt cast in the Prologue provides an impartial statement, as if from an observer. Take for example, the third stanza of Auden's "Stop All the Clocks," which is set in song Nos. 2 and 16: "He was my North, my South, my East and West, / My working week and my Sunday rest, / My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song; / I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong."²³ These words are presented as if recited directly by the victim of an emotional trauma, utilizing a first person perspective to evoke the internal grief of the vocal persona. Windham's text, featured in the Prologue, similarly echoes the theme of love, though this time not in a first-person lament but rather in a third-person contemplation. This suggests that this particular song's vocal persona is not experiencing the same emotional distress that is exhibited by the texts of later songs. The impartial nature of the

²³ Rorem, Ned, *Poems of Love and the Rain* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1965), pp. 6-7.

text itself lends one to posit that this moment is perhaps separate from the drama that is soon to unfold, and in turn that perhaps the persona involved in the Prologue is, in some way, different from that of the cycle proper.

Analysis of some of the Prologue's most salient musical elements supports this claim. What is initially most striking is the Prologue's harmonic language. At the song's outset, though tonal grounding seems to be established on E, the use of exotic harmonic structures (i.e. quartal and quintal harmonies rather than the tertian structures that predominate the rest of the cycle) suggests a perceivable aural ambiguity. The accompanying opening piano gestures feature bass movement by fifth in each iteration as seen in Figure 2.1, which together with the exotic harmony in the right-hand, affirms said ambiguity. Furthermore, the opening vocal line begins with a descending perfect fourth, solidifying an initially non-tertian harmonic climate.

The quintal movement in the bass is complemented by a rhythmically and somewhat harmonically ambiguous figure in the right-hand. If analyzed in a traditional sense, one can argue that the sonority presented is an E minor-minor seventh chord with a split ninth. Viewed more closely, one also observes that first three pitch classes presented, if displaced by octave where appropriate, are a version of the X-motive. As an aside, this again speaks to the unifying characteristics of X; however, given the manner in which this is presented as well as a listener's initial unawareness of the significance of this motive, its presence is unlikely to be perceived. What is more aurally obvious is a general sense of ambiguity in rhythm and harmony, mirroring the ambiguity of the chosen text and perhaps representing the implied secondary persona, one that is detached from the primary vocal persona.²⁴ The detached nature of this implied secondary persona is amplified by the composer's instructions, i.e. "blurred and limp" and

²⁴ As an aside, it is likely that many listeners may also hear the opening gestures as a musical evocation of falling rain droplets, given the cycle's title and central theme – yet another occasion of word painting in Rorem's work.

“bathed in pedal,” and “Unbearably slow.”²⁵

Figure 2.1, Opening of “Prologue: from ‘The Rain,’” mm. 1-3

The musical score for the opening of "Prologue: from 'The Rain'" (mm. 1-3) is presented in two staves. The top staff is for the Voice, and the bottom staff is for the Piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo/mood is marked "Unbearably slow (♩ = 40 or less)". The dynamics for the Voice are "p (soft, but with intense projection)". The lyrics for the Voice are "Ev-ery - where, the im -". The Piano part is marked "blurred and limpid", "ppp", and "(bathed in pedal)". The score shows the first three measures of the piece.

The established ambiguity prevails through the first five measures of the Prologue. It is not until the setting of the words “two things” in m. 5 that a sense of rhythmic and harmonic clarity is introduced. Upon first listening, this moment is striking and somewhat satisfying following the exoticism of the opening phrase. As the vocal line transforms from a recitative-like opening in the first four measures to a more melodious second phrase in m. 5, a rhythmic pulse is naturally more present. Harmonically, a shift from quartal/quintal to distinctly tertian harmonies is present in mm. 5-6, solidifying one’s initial classification as E for the song’s tonal center. Though satisfying, this glimpse of clarity quickly passes. After an echo of the “two things” figure by the piano, the arhythmic, drop-like figures resume underneath the vocal line.

After taking into account the function of motive and theme within the context of this cycle, one notices the presence of the X-motive as well as a Z₂ fragment in the vocal line of the Prologue. Specifically, the X-motive is associated with the phrase “two-things” in m. 5-6, and Z₂ follows in mm. 7-8 on the words “the rain and the landscape.” When compared to their use in

²⁵ Rorem, Ned, *Poems of Love and the Rain*. p. 2

the cycle proper, the presence of these two thematic ideas in the Prologue suggests ties to the vocal persona, unrequited love, and emotional transformation. Recalling the comparison to staged dramas utilizing a detached narrator, these brief musical moments may serve as introductions to the persona involved in the cycle proper by the secondary persona of the Prologue.

Though a perception of a detached secondary persona can be adequately supported by a combination of textual and musical analyses, its nature and identity are unclear. Similar to many staged dramas or narratives that utilizes an omniscient narrator, is this persona someone separate from the “real-time” events of the drama, only there to provide setting and drive the plot? Or, if one were to speculate more provocatively, perhaps this secondary persona is simply another version of the primary persona, conceivably one who is pondering over a past emotional tragedy (as investigated in later discussion). In this scenario, perhaps the execution of the cycle proper is the evocation of a mental relapse as the persona gets lost in memories of such a tragedy. Regardless, how one conceptualizes this secondary persona has the potential to dramatically shape one’s interpretation of the remainder of the cycle.

2.2 THE EFFECT OF TONAL SHIFT AND RE-COMPOSITION ON PERCEPTION IN THE EPILOGUE

As previously discussed, the Prologue and the Epilogue are comprised of virtually identical music. The only disparities occur in minor re-compositions of select phrases and in the song’s tonal center. In his liner notes for the 1997 recording of this cycle with mezzo-soprano Beverly Wolff, Ned Rorem makes note of these changes, but only clarifies that “while each poem is repeated, none of the music is.”²⁶ Though it seems that Rorem says this simply to

²⁶ Wolff, Beverly & Ned Rorem, *Rorem: Poems of Love and the Rain; From an Unknown Past; Four Madrigals* (Phoenix USA, 1997).

highlight the cycle's structural conceit, it must be assumed that every decision made during the compositional process was done so with great thought about its effect on perception, especially given a composer as thoughtful as Rorem. I propose that the minute discrepancies that exist between the Prologue and the Epilogue, when put into dialogue with the cycle's previously discussed extramusical assertions, add to the perception of a vocal persona experiencing cross-cycle transformation.

The first of the musical deviations that occurs in the cycle's Epilogue can be seen in the drop-like piano figures at the song's opening. These iterations, observed as a minor-minor seventh chords with a split ninth, lack an indication to prolong the fifth of the chord through the end of the measure, whereas in the Prologue this voice is sustained with the rest. In contrast, an indication for sustain is present on the doubling of the fifth in the bass whereas it is neglected in the Prologue. Additionally, where the Prologue indicates a sustained quarter note on the second beat with a quarter rest on the third, the Epilogue indicates a half note held through both beats. It could be argued that by following Rorem's indication to utilize the damper pedal, any aural effect created by these revoicings might be negated. To that effect, one can refute by observing that while phrases like "bathed in pedal" and "blurred" are used alongside these figures, the indicator *sempre pedale* is never mentioned. It can be assumed then that an experienced pianist would likely pedal heavily throughout the movements, but still observe which voices are prolonged and which are not and therefore pedal accordingly. Regardless of specific performance details, the choice to sustain the fifth in the lower octave and then omit its continuance in the upper octave would give the sonority a strikingly darker color. Furthermore, the omission of a quarter rest leaves no room for questioning whether or not this darker sonority should be held all the way to the downbeat of the next measure. Taken as a whole, these changes suggest a darker and more brooding atmosphere.

The despondent atmosphere created by the re-composition of these sonorities is furthered by the tonal shift between the Prologue and the Epilogue. Though both numbers utilize a somewhat exotic tonal language, key signatures and emphasis on triadic notes provide enough evidence in each to suggest harmonic grounding. As mentioned previously, the Prologue is in E minor while its mirror, the Epilogue, is in E-flat minor. This half-step descent in tonality alone suggests a subtle darkening in the tone color, but when taken in context with the physiological characteristics of the female voice, the tonal shift takes on even greater significance. It is common for many mezzo-sopranos to experience a register break somewhere between E4 and F4²⁷, a shift often referred to as the lower or *primo* passaggio. As outlined in Richard Miller's *The Structure of Singing*, this register shift achieves a break between a woman's middle/head voice and her chest voice. With this comes a significant timbral change, making available the heavier, darker, and more dramatic colors that are characteristic of the chest voice. Acknowledging Rorem's aptitude for vocal writing, he was certainly well aware of this registrational break and its timbral effects during this cycle's composition. Therefore, with the Epilogue in E-flat minor, the performer would be inclined to make more frequent use of the chest voice during performance, adding to the overall darkness in timbre present in the resetting.

Rorem clearly took pains to establish this contrast in tone color between Prologue and Epilogue, presumably because he believed that it would affect perception, if only on a subconscious level. This general transformation to a darker timbral climate could suggest a similar transformation in the vocal persona, albeit a nuanced one, perhaps perceived only unconsciously.

²⁷ Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 1996). pp. 134-135.

The final major discrepancy between the cycle's bookends occurs in mm. 6-8 of the Epilogue. As displayed in Figure 2.2 below, the treatment of the "two things" phrase and its subsequent Z_2 fragment feature a fairly dramatic re-composition of the piano accompaniment. As one can see, the Z_2 fragment, accompanying the phrase "the rain and the landscape," is directly foreshadowed by an identical passage played by the piano one octave higher (in yellow). Furthermore, the X-motive, "two things" phrase is no longer directly echoed by the piano, but rather is replaced by a rhythmically-morphed Z_1 fragment (in red). Together these segments create a full iteration of Theme Z, which was not present in the Prologue.

Figure 2.2 "Epilogue: from 'The Rain,'" mm. 6-8

The image shows a musical score for measures 6-8 of the Epilogue. The vocal line is in 4/4 time, with lyrics "two things, — the rain and the land-scape,". The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, with a treble and bass staff. A red box highlights a rhythmically-morphed Z_1 fragment in the piano's right hand, and a yellow box highlights an identical passage one octave higher. The tempo is marked "mp" and "mp clear".

Unlike the revoicing of the opening piano figures and the overall tonal shift which seem to encourage a subconscious perception of change, the presence of Theme Z seems to beg for conscious consideration. Its significance is highlighted by the high register in which it is placed, as well as the composer's indication to make the phrase "clear." Recalling the function and meaning of Theme Z, this reiteration has the potential to carry noteworthy extramusical implications. Similar to the final reiteration of the theme in "Stop All the Clocks" (No. 16),

perhaps the most obvious interpretation of this restatement is a recalling of or relapse into the past, though given its tessitura and highly intimate voicing, an innocent recollection seems more likely than a relapse. Acknowledging that any further interpretation can only be speculative, one might posit that this return is suggesting that, though the vocal persona has experienced change (perhaps maturation, as described in Chapter 1, Section 2), remnants of the past are forever trapped in memory and, therefore, forever part of one's existence. This interpretation can be furthered by recalling Locke's theory of consciousness in relation to personal identity. Though the persona has undergone change, the same identity can be seen as persisting through time by virtue of an ongoing consciousness.

2.3 ROETHKE'S INTERLUDE, UNFULFILLED ANTICIPATION, AND SUBJECTIVE RECOLLECTION

In the liner notes for the 1997 recording of *Poems of Love and the Rain* with mezzo-soprano, Beverly Wolff, Rorem refers to "Interlude" (No. 9) as being "pivotal" within the context of the cycle.²⁸ Furthermore, the transformation that occurs in the implicit vocal persona is described to occur "midway, through a new viewpoint on an old obsession." Given the brevity of these notes, it seems significant that Rorem chose to mention the song at all, let alone with such emphasis. Inspired by Gustav Freytag's conception of dramatic structure, the analyst might posit that this Interlude acts as the dramatic climax of the cycle, one that directly follows an exposition and period of rising action and precedes a period of falling action and a *denouement*.²⁹ Given the cycle's overall mirror form as well as its utilization of a prologue and epilogue, Freytag's pyramid seems fit to serve the dramatic evolution of the cycle. The decision to cast the track list in the 1997 recording of this cycle in a triangular shape (seen below in

²⁸ Wolff, Beverly & Ned Rorem, *Rorem: Poems of Love and the Rain; From an Unknown Past; Four Madrigals*.

²⁹ Gustav Freytag, *Die Technik Des Dramas*, trans. MacEwan Elias J., Third Edition (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1900).

Figure 2.3 juxtaposed with Freytag's Pyramid), visually highlighting the cycle's double-settings, further suggests a rising and falling in the dramatic structure with the Interlude serving as its climax.³⁰ Calling to mind the cycle's evocation of a persona undergoing emotional change, I would maintain that "Interlude" (No. 9) serves as a dramatic climax in the psychological journey of said persona as manifested through various salient musical and textual elements housed within the song.

Figure 2.3. Freytag's Triangle and the 1997 recording's track list



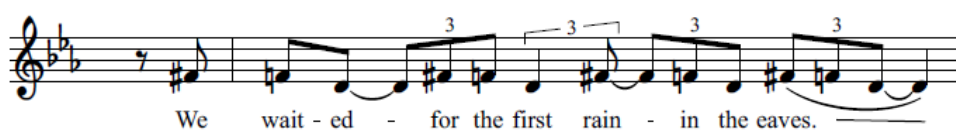
Theodore Roethke's 1941 poem "Interlude" serves as the text for this number. Taken from Roethke's 1941 collection, *Open House*, the text seems to focus on a situation characterized by unfulfilled anticipation. The imagery depicts a pair or group anxiously awaiting a seemingly imminent storm. Violent winds overwhelm the landscape and darkness rapidly consumes the

³⁰ The 1965 publication of this cycle by Boosey & Hawkes Inc. features this same visual representation on its table of contents.

day, yet in the end the rain stays in its cloud and, as the poem states, “What [they] had hoped for had not come to pass.”³¹

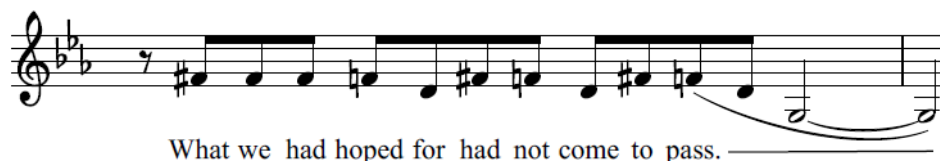
The poem’s central notion of unfulfilled anticipation is emphasized by Rorem’s musical setting of the text. As seen in the following figures, the lines “We waited for the first rain in the eaves” and “What we had hoped for had not come to pass” are set to what at this point in the cycle has become a familiar musical idea. Though an enharmonic spelling of the figure’s core intervallic content (a second followed by a third) suggests the X-motive, the obsessive repetition of this motive seems to recall Theme Z. Furthermore, ties to Theme Z are reinforced by the interruptive function of these figures; both occur directly following phrases featuring an enormous range. For example, the end of m. 2 into m. 3, the phrase directly preceding Figure 2.4a, features a melody, congruent with the text “And flung them in confusion on the land[,]” which tasks the vocalist to rise from F-sharp-3 to G5 within a meager three beats. The close proximity of the overwhelmingly circular Z-associated figure provides an immediately striking contrast.

Figure 2.4a “Interlude” (No. 9), mm. 3-4



³¹ Theodore Roethke, *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke*, 1st Anchor Books ed (New York: Anchor Books, 1991).

Figure 2.4b “Interlude” (No. 9), m. 11



Juxtaposing the extramusical connotations that accompany Theme Z with the nature of the text that it is set with in “Interlude” (No. 9) seems to suggest various interpretations involving the emotional journey of the vocal persona. More specifically, recalling Freytag’s triangle, the pairing of unfulfilled anticipation with unrequited love could be representative of a dramatic climax in the emotional journey of the vocal persona in the form of a realization of this unfulfillment. Though the exact nature of and meaning behind this unfulfilled anticipation is, at this point, unclear, the musical evidence suggests certain possibilities. Acknowledging Theme Z’s ties to unrequited love, perhaps its pairing with the above texts represents the persona’s realization of the fruitlessness of a previous relationship, or that nothing has come of the emotional distress accompanying a personal tragedy.

The notion that this Interlude is the cycle’s dramatic climax can be supported by calling attention to the various other components of Freytag’s conception of dramatic structure, namely the idea of rising and falling action. The songs that frame “Interlude” (No. 9) are taken from Kenneth Pitchford’s “Song for Lying in Bed during a Night Rain.” The last stanza of the five-stanza poem is set immediately following the Interlude, while the initial four stanzas are set immediately before. Speaking in terms of content and imagery, Pitchford’s poem seems to be the most emotionally devastating of the cycle’s texts. The work seems to represent the

mental toiling of a poetic persona who is lying in bed next to his sleeping partner.³² Though its exact nature is unclear, the mental toiling seems to evoke jealousy, distress, impatience, paranoia, and resentment over some negative aspect of a personal relationship, perhaps past lovers or recent conflict. The text paints a harrowing picture of the incessant mental distress that occurs in the mind of a persona undergoing emotional hardship within the context of an intimate relationship.

The raucous musical setting of Pitchford's text in "Song for Lying in Bed during a Night Rain" (No. 8) seems to mirror this emotional distress. Set in 6/8 time, the song is highly rhythmic and melodically disjunct. Its energy is in part a result of relentless syncopations against a trudging pulse in the pianist's left-hand, mm. 5-24, 51-65, etc. Intensity grows continuously until the setting's boisterous completion, at which point the performers are instructed to take a "very long pause." Given the song's formal placement, these elements together provide a culmination of the dramatic events of the cycle's first half directly preceding its dramatic climax in the Interlude.

Similarly, it can be suggested that the concluding stanza of Pitchford's poem, set immediately following the Interlude, serves as the commencement of the cycle's period of falling action. Unlike the energized setting of its first-half sister song, this setting is much more fluid, featuring a repeated flowing melody over triplet figures in the piano played *legatissimo* and "in a river of pedal." The musical setting seems to be congruent with the jaded and scarred nature of the text. After stanzas of mental toiling, it seems the poetic persona of Pitchford's text is questioning the very essence of the relationship. The stanza functions as a direct mirror of the poem's first stanza, but with a significantly darker tone, as shown by the persona's desire to

³² In this occasion, the gendered pronoun "his" was used simply for the sake of syntactic clarity. There is no implication for the gender of the persona of the sleeping partner in the original text.

wash away the “stains” on the partner’s lips and to smooth the “scars” on the partner’s skin, as well as hesitation to love what he has “never seen in [their] face.”

By regarding Pitchford’s texts and their musical settings as the culmination of the cycle’s rising action and the commencement of its falling action, an understanding of the meaning behind the aforementioned unfulfilled anticipation in the vocal persona at the cycle’s dramatic climax can begin to take shape. The first four stanzas of “Song for Lying in Bed during a Night Rain” evoke heightened distress occurring within the mind of the poetic persona over troubling aspects of a relationship. Perhaps this distress is representative of the increased anxiety in the cycle’s vocal persona while toiling over unrequited love. That being said, it can be postulated that the Interlude’s emphasis on unfulfilled anticipation could mirror an emotional catharsis in the vocal persona at the realization of the plaguing nature of this emotional distress. Or, viewed through a different lens, perhaps this is an emotional catharsis at the realization that a love that is felt is not and will not be reciprocated by a specific second party. This particular interpretation is furthered by the choice to set the text of the Interlude *a cappella*, which could be perceived to represent the loneliness of the vocal persona. Furthermore, the detached and jaded nature of “Song for Lying in Bed during a Night Rain” (No. 10) could be said to mirror similar emotions in the vocal persona following such catharsis.

The notion that a changed and perhaps more detached vocal persona is now present following Roethke’s “Interlude” is prefigured by the second half of Rorem’s Interlude. Following the recitative-like recitation of Roethke’s poem in *a cappella*, the drop-like piano figures from the cycle’s Prologue return as the piano launches into a solo passage, providing the vocalist a respite. The figures begin quietly and very sustained, but as time progresses momentum and dynamics build to a *presto* flourish followed by a somewhat agitated restatement of the drop-

like figures at *fortississimo*. This recollection of thematic material from “Prologue: from ‘The Rain’” (No. 1) begs for extramusical speculation involving the secondary persona.

Whereas it was initially unclear whether or not this secondary persona was a detached, omniscient narrator or some other form of the primary persona, it now seems that, given the significance of the Interlude in catalyzing the emotional catharsis in the vocal persona, this secondary persona is likely to represent a different form of the primary vocal persona. The nature of this differing primary persona is of course open to interpretation, but if one reads this cycle as a subjective recollection of events, then this secondary persona becomes one who is “outside” the recollection, looking back on memories of the pain and distress in real time. Such interpretation suggests, then, that all other musical events involving the primary vocal persona (the entirety of the cycle, excluding the Prologue, Interlude, and Epilogue) occur in the mind of what was initially conceived of as a secondary persona, in the form of intense and often painful memories.

This conception of a dual persona, one that exists in real-time and one that exists within subjective recollections, helps to clarify interpretations of the aforementioned re-compositions within “Epilogue: from ‘The Rain’” (No. 17). Perhaps the darkening in tone, characterized by the downward tonal-shift and chord revoicings, together with the restatement of Z, is representative of the lasting pain that accompanies emotionally tragic memories. As the vocal persona retreats from subjective recollection in the Epilogue, they are changed, yet are still afflicted by the pain of a difficult past. Furthermore, perhaps the conclusion suggests that, no matter how great the objective distance or emotional growth, one can rarely revisit the painful aspects of a romantic past without unveiling, at least in a small sense, the negative emotional connotations that initially accompanied them.

CHAPTER 3

CLIMAX AND ITS INFLUENCE ON INTERPRETATION

Many of the individual songs featured in Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain* display easily recognizable climactic moments. In general, perception of these climaxes is a result of an aural recognition of specific musical qualities characteristic to their deployment. For example, as in most music a climax may be identified by a dramatic dynamic shift, textural change, melodic peak in contour, or a general culmination in rhythmic and harmonic energy. Climaxes occurring in *Poems of Love in the Rain* can be characterized by a number of different criteria, though their most common identifiers are the presence of a noticeable peak in the vocalist's melodic contour and a substantial increase in dynamic level. The juxtaposition of these climaxes with their associated texts suggests correlating climactic moments within the given poem and therefore encourages a specific interpretation of the text. I propose that by investigating a song's musical climax (or climaxes) in conjunction with its associated text, one can derive a unique reading of the entire poem based on the musically-emphasized text. Furthermore, the dual text setting that occurs in *Poems of Love and the Rain* provides an opportunity to investigate the differences, if any, in musical climax location and deployment between contrasting settings. By observing these differences, one can suggest contrasting readings of the same text and therefore draw conclusions about the nature of the psychological transformation in the cycle's implicit vocal persona.

As just one example, Rorem's contrasting settings of "The Apparition" by Theodore Roethke yield interesting insights if observed through this lens. The first setting (No. 5) opens with brash, pointed piano figures and a *marcato* vocal line which spans the range of a major

ninth. The breadth of the vocal line is amplified by the fact that the voice is moving between the extremes of the staff very quickly, often within two beats. The initial phrase climaxes in m. 8, with the vocalist's sustained F5 (the highest note up to this point), the thickening of the piano texture, and the indication to perform at a *fortissimo* level. This moment is shown in Figure 3.1 below. Immediately following this climax, the sweeping melody is replaced by Theme Z, as described in Chapter 1, Section 2. As described, Theme Z is fairly circular and lacks a clear climax.

Figure 3.1, "The Apparition" (No. 5), mm. 7-9

The musical score for "The Apparition" (No. 5), measures 7-9, is presented for Voice and Piano. The Voice part is in 3/2 time and features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 7 and a sustained F5 note in measure 8. The Piano part is in 3/2 time and features a thickening texture in measure 8, marked with fortissimo (ff) and fortissimozzando (ffz).

Because of their stark contrast in range and mood, the opening material and Theme Z can be said to represent two differing thematic modules. If represented as such, the remainder of the song can be characterized by an alternation between these two modules, as displayed below.

A Z A Z A

Each A module is deployed in an almost identical fashion, featuring a local concluding climax on a sustained F5 at a very confident volume (*fortissimo* at the second module and *fortissimo* at the third). Together, the three climaxes highlight the phrases “Who passed by alone[.]” “And it like to die[.]” and “He walks by.”

Rorem’s second setting of “The Apparition,” song No. 13, does not feature multiple local climaxes, but rather builds from the beginning to one climax, occurring approximately two-thirds of the way through. The setting’s primary melodic phrase, shown in Chapter 1, Figure 1.7a, begins in a low register for the voice and is transposed up by perfect fourth in each of its next two iterations. The upward momentum gained through a combination of the transposition of the melodic material and an incremental increase in dynamic level from *piano* to *forte*, culminates in a singular *più agitato* climax in mm. 22-25. Though the group of measures accompanying the text “Dare I grieve? Dare I mourn? He walks by[.]” can justly be interpreted as a climax, the true peak in melodic contour occurs on an F5, accompanying the word “He” in m. 24.

Noting each setting’s climaxes and their relationship to overall formal structure, one can propose unique readings of the poem based on the differing textual emphasis. The phrases emphasized in the first setting place much of the attention on the so-called “apparition” and its effect on the implicit persona, whereas the second setting seems to emphasize the vocal persona itself. Furthermore, the modular treatment of these local climaxes, offset by iterations of Theme Z, suggest a more piece-wise reading of the poem, whereas the uniform gain in energy present in the second setting encourages a more fluid reading, culminating at one climactic moment. Speaking now in terms of a transformed vocal persona, the second setting’s emphasis on hesitation to mourn for this “apparition” and the realization that “He walks by” may signify an emotional separation from an unrequited love at the recognition of its lasting absence. This

interpretation can be supported by recalling interpretational connotations that accompany contour direction, as described in Chapter 1, Section 2. The upward direction that dominates the setting's overall contour could be said to represent emotional labor accompanying the climactic moment "Dare I grieve? Dare I mourn?"³³ Such an interpretation may suggest then that the following statement, "He walks by[.]" (the setting's melodic climax), represent an emotional catharsis in the vocal persona, acknowledging an unrequited love's absence while simultaneously asserting the persona's own independence. In contrast, the initial setting's emphasis on the "apparition" and its effect on the implicit persona may suggest a lasting emotional connection with an unrequited love. This is underscored by the emotional connotations surrounding Theme Z, which, as displayed, is integral to the setting's form.

Rorem's contrasting settings of E.E. Cummings' "in the rain" offer similar discrepancies in musical climaxes and their associated texts. The initial setting, song No. 7, features a climax on the word "i" two measures before its conclusion.³⁴ The climax is characterized by an increase in dynamic level to *forte* in both voices as well as a contour peak on G5 in the voice and G6 in the piano. Additionally, the vocal climax is aurally striking, given its approach from a B3 (a minor thirteenth below) and its length in comparison to the setting's other notes. While the climactic moment is two-and-one-half beats in length, the vast majority of other sonorities contained in the setting last for only one beat, or less. The structural climax of the second setting (song No. 11) does not occur on the word "i," but rather on the word "beloved" in m. 19. Similar to the first setting, this climax is characterized by a shift in dynamic level to *forte* as well as a peak in melodic contour, though this time on F5.³⁵ However, unlike the first setting, this

³³ Seth Monahan, "Negative Catharsis as Rotational Telos in Mahler's First Kindertotenlied," *Integral* 28 (forthcoming 2015).

³⁴ The lower case spelling is reflective of Cummings' original text.

³⁵ Note that this is not the first time this note is written for the voice in the context of this setting, though the phrase can still be argued to represent the setting's structural climax given the abundance of other relevant features.

climax features the added indication “*intense*,” implying that the passage should be played with distinction. Furthermore, the passage is preceded by a full measure crescendo, marked *appassionato*.

Given the ambiguity of Cummings’ language and the exoticism of his punctuation and form, extrapolating differing textual interpretations based on the opposing musical climaxes is somewhat problematic. For example, the word highlighted in the climax of the second setting is “beloved,” though within the context of the original poem, this word does not stand alone; rather, it is a member of the compound word, “rarely-beloved.” Taken in context of the text alone, this compound word could be referring to a number of things. Though it can be agreed that “rarely” functions as an adverb, implying “infrequently” or “seldom,” the function of the word “beloved” is not as discernible. The word holds the potential to be interpreted as either a noun, *representing* a person or object that is greatly loved, or an adjective, *describing* something that is greatly loved. Noting this distinction, within the context of Cummings’ original text, the word “rarely-beloved” could be justly seen either to *represent* the “you” that is the subject of the poetic persona’s thought, or to *describe* some other aspect of the poem, perhaps the “single star” from the following line.

Acknowledging the interpretational snare that Cumming’s has set in the word “rarely-beloved,” instead of trying to speculate into meaning behind its musical emphasis in Rorem’s second setting, perhaps a more fruitful discourse will result from an examination of the more explicit climactic phrase featured in the poem’s initial setting. Direct emphasis is put on “i” in m. 23, though the entire phrase is “and i think of you,” which spans mm. 23-24. This treatment of the phrase as a climactic moment seems particularly significant if compared with the way the phrase is treated in Rorem’s second setting. Shown below in Figure 3.2, the phrase seems to function as a final aside prior to the song’s conclusion. Speaking now to the cycle’s

transforming vocal persona, perhaps the climactic, sweeping iteration of the phrase from the first setting could represent eagerness at the thought of the poem's "you," which in this case can be suggested to represent the second party in the persona's relationship. Furthermore, the wistful and seemingly half-hearted setting of the same phrase in song No. 11 could be said to mirror a similar sentiment in the vocal persona at the thought of "you." Observing this interpretation and acknowledging the second setting's formal placement in comparison to the "pivotal" Interlude, it seems that the emotional transformation occurring throughout this cycle renders the persona less eager to visit the memory of a past love.

Figure 3.2, "in the rain" (No. 11), mm. 21-23



In contrast to his settings of the texts by Cummings and Roethke, Rorem's two songs on Jack Larson's "Do I Love You" contain musical climaxes that correspond to the same phrase: "Through you." In the first setting, No. 6, the climax in m. 12 is characterized once again by an increase in dynamic level to *forte* as well as an increase in voices in the piano texture. In addition, the measure is marked with a *poco ritardando*, further emphasizing its significance. The climax of the second setting, No. 12, occurs in mm. 11-12. Though this climax can be characterized by a shift in dynamic level (*piano* to *mezzo piano*), the significance of its aural

effect stems more from the uniqueness of its vocal line compared to the rest of the setting. The song's melodic content is comprised almost exclusively of a two-measure phrase which is repeated continuously; the only deviation occurs on the phrase "Through you." Figure 3.3a below shows this repeated, two-bar phrase and Figure 3.3b shows its only alteration. Given the monotonous repetition of the two-bar phrase, the deviation on "Through you" is particularly striking, further supporting its classification as a climactic moment.

Figure 3.3a, "Do I Love You (part II)" (No. 12), mm. 13-15



Figure 3.3b, "Do I Love You (part II)" (No. 12), mm. 11-12



Though it is interesting to observe this similarity in textual emphasis, note that the texts used in the two Larson settings are not identical. Therefore, Rorem is not representing the same poetry twice, but rather is setting two poems from a set. The poems are virtually identical in structure and in meter, though their subject matter differs slightly. Whereas the initial setting poses the question "Do I love you more than a day?" the second poem addresses the question "Do I love you more than the air?" It does seem significant, though, that the same text is emphasized in both settings despite differences in context. Perhaps, by observing this

similarity in setting, one can perceive a sameness in the implicit vocal persona despite continuing change, similar to the sameness perceived as a result of the X-motive saturation. Furthermore, the fact the repeated emphasis on the phrase “Through you” implies an existing connection to a second party. Perhaps, as in other moments of the cycle, this can be said to represent the consistency of memory and its effect on emotions, no matter how great the objective distance from an event.

Though the examples examined in this chapter are by no means exhaustive, they demonstrate the capability of musical climax to suggest specific interpretations of associated texts. Furthermore, by observing differences in musical climax location and deployment between Rorem’s contrasting settings in *Poems of Love and the Rain*, one can propose various readings of the same poem and therefore speculate into the nature of the psychological transformation occurring in the implicit vocal persona across the cycle.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

This previous analysis asserts the presence of various perceivable musical manifestations of a cross-cycle psychological metamorphosis occurring in the work's implicit vocal persona. Furthermore, it also suggests that, by juxtaposing these musical representations with their associated texts, one can begin to extrapolate a specific extramusical framework for the cycle's dramatic trajectory. Though this study highlights only periodic moments within the cycle and their extramusical connotations, one can begin to piece together a macro-extramusical framework that accounts for the entire cycle. Note that this further interpretation of the cycle's dramatic journey is subjective and therefore, of course, open for debate; however, given the abundance of musical evidence displayed in the previous chapters, such speculation seems justified.

One might posit, acknowledging the dual persona, as discussed in Chapter 2, that the cycle begins with the vocal persona in real time, pondering a previous love. As a result of this innocent pondering, the persona is then overwhelmed by a flood of memories, or subjective recollections, represented by the commencement of the cycle proper. Expanded to the real world, this type of experience is universal: as individuals ponder aspects of their past, they are often unwillingly besieged by memories, both pleasant and painful. As the cycle progresses from song to song, the vocal persona pivots between various memories: some pleasant, as represented by what Rorem refers to as the occasional "flash of light through the black cloud,"³⁶ and some painful, as represented by Theme Z and its extramusical connotations. Through the

³⁶ Rorem, Ned, *Poems of Love and the Rain* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1965).

exploration of these memories, emotional and musical energy continue to build, culminating during “Song for Lying in Bed During a Night Rain” (No. 8). Following this culmination, a dramatic climax, represented by “Interlude” (No. 9), marks the commencement of the vocal persona’s psychological metamorphosis, or in Rorem’s own words, the recognition of a “new viewpoint on an old obsession.”³⁷ It can be suggested that this “old obsession” is the second party, the object of the vocal persona’s unrequited love. Following that assertion, the catharsis occurring at the Interlude, which occurs in the real-time persona (as described in Chapter 2), evokes a new emotional separation from said second party, and highlights the independence of the vocal persona. Following this “pivotal” moment, the persona is once again consumed by memories, though now with a more wistful and jaded perception of the second party. After this secondary episode of recollection, the vocal persona emerges at the Epilogue in a psychologically different state than was displayed in the Prologue. As discussed in Chapter 2, the added darkness that characterizes the Epilogue’s tone color mirrors a darkness in the vocal persona. Extrapolated to the real world, this then serves as representation of the lasting effect of painful memories, regardless of the objective distance from them.

Following this (admittedly speculative) macro-interpretation, it is worthwhile to consider the nature of memory and subjective recollection. As an individual ponders the past, it can be said that the sanctity of true recollection is lost with the subjective emotions that accompany it. That is, as an individual recalls a memory, that memory is altered by the emotional framework that surrounds it. For example, when remembering a particularly frightening event, the mind often exaggerates various aspects of that memory to justify the fear that was felt at the time. Therefore, it can be suggested that the musically-displayed subjective recollections represented in *Poems of Love and the Rain* are exaggerated to justify their

³⁷ Wolff, Beverly & Ned Rorem, *Rorem: Poems of Love and the Rain; From an Unknown Past; Four Madrigals* (Phoenix USA, 1997).

emotional associations within the implicit persona. Whereas this exaggeration is generally confined to the mind, its liberation through musical representation amplifies it further. Therefore, the underlying dramatic trajectory of the cycle is drastically exaggerated by both the subjectivity of the vocal persona's memory and the aural manifestations of those memories through music.

Further consideration of the nature of human memory yields the insight that, during a period of sustained recollection, the mind generally does not respect the exact temporal plane in which the memories were created. That is, the mind often bounces quickly between various memories, regardless of their true chronological order. Acknowledging this assertion, it seems likely that the choice to use disparate poems to drive the drama is reflective of the disparate nature of sustained recollection. Taken one step further, contrasting settings of the same poem at different times within the cycle's trajectory represent the revisiting of a memory from a different emotional foundation. Though the vocal persona visits the same memories (or songs) following their psychological transformation, the perception of these memories is different given their changed emotional state. Similar scenarios translate to real life. The constant physical, emotional, and psychological development that individuals experience has a dramatic effect on their perception of the past.

As a final consideration, it is interesting to place the cycle's pyramidal structure and cross-cycle, psychological transformation into dialogue. Given the cycle's generic formal structure (i.e. one that seemingly starts and begins in the same place) one might expect a similar path for the implicit vocal persona. However, the extramusical framework resulting from the previous analysis suggests a concluding vocal persona who is, in fact, fundamentally affected by the cycle's dramatic trajectory, and therefore both emotionally and psychologically different, compared to the cycle's commencement. Therefore, the macro-form created by the

cycle's sequential placement of contrasting texts can be said to ironically contradict the underlying extramusical journey of the work's implicit vocal persona.

Though an abundance of fascinating insights were gathered from the analyses discussed in this study, it is obvious that there is much more to be done on this rich cycle. For example, further study of the work would benefit from an observation of the cycle's harmonic trajectory. Though the harmonic language is often exotic, the majority of songs featured in *Poems of Love and the Rain* display discernable tonal centers, often supported by the addition of a key signature. Juxtaposing the overall harmonic trajectory with the existing extramusical framework holds the potential to yield significant results. In addition, similar to the discussion of climaxes in Chapter 3, observing disparities in harmonic language between contrasting settings could encourage differing readings of a poem, which could then be used to comment on the nature of the vocal persona's psychological metamorphosis. Beyond study of the cycle's harmonic structures, an investigation into the piece's cultural and historical implications could also yield fruitful insights. Acknowledging Ned Rorem's literary acumen and reputation as a commentator on contemporary culture, it is justifiable to think that this cycle may speak to aspects of the history and culture surrounding its composition.

As this study has found, *Poems of Love and the Rain* is characterized by a number of meticulous and thoughtful compositional strategies that serve an extramusical framework. It would be absurd to think that these text-music relationships and their effect on extramusical perception is coincidental. This suggests that scholarship into Ned Rorem's other vocal music would be similarly productive. There are a number of other song cycles (*War Scene*, 1969, and *Women's Voices*, 1975, for example) that hold the potential to yield equally fascinating analysis, especially regarding aspects of music and meaning. Given the exceptionally vast gap in scholarship dealing with Rorem's music, this field of research seems both musically and

intellectually rewarding. It is my hope that the insights discussed in this independent study will encourage such research.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly literature specifically investigating text-music relationships within the art songs of Ned Rorem is virtually nonexistent in contemporary music-theory research. Aside from Rorem's own writings and miscellaneous interviews and reviews, there is almost no published material discussing the nature of his text settings or analysis of his music. Consequently, further research investigating more general concepts surrounding theoretical approaches to art song was imperative to provide the academic scaffolding upon which to argue my thesis. A broader search focusing on text-music relations as well as elements of agency and persona in music yielded sources from a variety of locations, including academic journals on music theory, poetry, and aesthetics. The following literature review organizes these sources according to the nature of their subject matter and their author. Significant concepts from each are summarized, evaluated, and discussed in the context of Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain*.

Published Material Regarding Rorem's Compositional Style

As mentioned above, scholarship directly concerning the vocal music of Ned Rorem is extremely limited. The small body of work that is published exists in the form of articles and interviews concerning Rorem's compositional style and philosophies. These sources, in general, do not seek to analyze aspects of Rorem's writing, but rather to summarize his compositional ideologies using direct quotes and diary excerpts. They seem to serve as an attempt to provide a window through which one could peer into the mind of the composer. The insights gathered while peering through this window, though not able to withstand much analytical weight in

terms of music theory research, at the very least provide a starting ideological perspective from which to consider analysis.

In his article “The Songs of Ned Rorem,” the musicologist Philip Lieson Miller summarizes compositional style and text choice in Rorem’s art song repertory. One of the most salient features of this article is its early discussion of Rorem’s thoughts on appropriate poem-choice for art-song writing. Miller uses Rorem’s own words to elaborate on the various aspects of a poem to consider before setting it to music. He quotes Rorem saying that “[one] poem may be so intrinsically musical that a vocal setting would be superfluous. Another may be so complex that an addition of music would mystify rather than clarify its meaning.”³⁸ Both Miller and Rorem highlight the importance of a mutually beneficial relationship between music and text, being mindful to avoid pairings that result in a product that does a disservice to the poetry, rather than helping it to evolve artfully into a new form.

Though the classification of a poem as “too musical” or “too complicated” to be set to music is entirely too subjective to argue confidently, close readings of the poems utilized in Rorem’s *Poems of Love and the Rain* raise questions regarding text choice that demand consideration. For example, when analyzed through the lens of a poet, the cycle’s third and fifteenth song text, *The Air Is the Only*, displays numerous qualities that highlight its intrinsic musicality. The poem’s frequent utilization of such devices as end rhyme, assonance, and alliteration provide an aesthetic quality to the sound of the words that can justly be labeled as musical. Considering Rorem’s previous point, highlighted in the article by Miller, that a poem may perhaps be “so intrinsically musical that a vocal setting would be superfluous,” one must wonder why he chose to include this poem in a cycle where it is set not once, but twice, and in contrasting moods. Similar questions regarding the inclusion of specific text can be posed

³⁸ Philip Lieson Miller, “The Songs of Ned Rorem,” *Tempo*, New Series, no. 127 (December 1, 1978): 25.

throughout the entirety of the cycle. Such points provide an interesting platform on which to wrestle with and hypothesize about the decision-making process of a master composer like Ned Rorem.

Aside from providing thoughts on appropriate poem selection, Miller makes an effort to clarify various terminology associated with art-song writing. More specifically, he uses Rorem to help define the terms declamation, prosody, and song itself. These definitions are as follows:³⁹

Declamation – the effective rhetorical rendition of words with regard to correct emphasis of each word as it relates – sense-wise – to the others

Prosody – the science or art of versification, the synchronization of musical phrases with the natural movement of speech

Song – a lyrical poem of moderate length set to music for single voice and piano

These are the definitions utilized by Rorem in his own writings and compositions. Meanings associated with these words differ somewhat dramatically from those provided in common dictionaries.⁴⁰ The above definitions provide a heightened specificity in language, particularly in regards to art-song composition, making them more suitable for musical discourse. For that reason, all uses of these terms in this paper have adhered to the above definitions.

In 1982, *The Musical Quarterly* published an interview with Ned Rorem performed by American musicologist Deborah Davis. The interview brings attention to different aspects of Rorem's choral music and to art song composition. Davis attempts to delve deeper into the

³⁹ Ibid, 26.

⁴⁰ The Oxford Dictionary provides the following definitions for the above terms: declamation – the action or art of declaiming (declaim – to utter or deliver words or a speech in a rhetorical or impassioned way, as if to an audience), prosody – the patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry, song – a short poem or other set of words set to music or meant to be sung.

compositional and philosophical intricacies of Rorem's mind. Following a question regarding the composer's denouncement of superfluous word repetition in song, specifically when the word is not repeated in the original poem, Rorem states that "Composers who repeat a word... haven't solved the problem of setting the poem to music." He follows by saying that composers who repeat words are conceding to their musical impulse which is "usually longer than the poetic impulse."⁴¹ Consideration of these points highlights the immense weight that Rorem places on the texts in his art songs. Musical ideas must be driven by poetic impulse. The music must not run rampant, leaving the essence of the poetry in its wake. Rorem states that, as a composer, his goal is to "heighten" the poetry; to "do what the poet does, only more so."⁴²

These themes are crucial to the understanding and analysis of any of Rorem's vocal works. It must be realized that all musical decisions were made in service of the text. It is for this reason that analysis must begin with the text and only then move to an investigation into how the music enhances its essence. In service of this point, my personal research and analysis into Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain* is done first from a text perspective.

Similar to the article by Philip Miller, Davis' interview goes on to investigate Rorem's thought processes when choosing song texts. Davis' discussion with Rorem regarding this matter yields insights that are, in general, more subjective than those established in Miller. Stripped of any description such as "too musical" or "too complex," Rorem simply states: "I like good poetry and I don't like bad poetry. But what I consider *good for music* is not necessarily what X composer considers good. There's much great verse that I love but don't want to set, because it does not, as we Quakers say, speak to my condition." Considering this statement, it is virtually impossible for anyone other than Ned Rorem to establish exactly why a specific text

⁴¹ Deborah Davis, "An Interview about Choral Music with Ned Rorem," *The Musical Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (July 1, 1982): 391.

⁴² Ibid.

was chosen for a specific song. Seeing this, one must assume that any speculation into the reason for specific text choice will ultimately meet a fruitless end, unless Rorem himself provides an explanation elsewhere. Given this point, my personal research has sought to refocus attention towards questions of *how* established songs function with the given text and how multiple song texts in a cycle function together to form a large, multi-part aesthetic experience. Analysis with this focus is particularly profitable given the unique mirror form and double text-setting utilized in *Poems of Love and the Rain*.

The remainder of the interview does well to elaborate on some of Rorem's more routine compositional tendencies, such as his aversion to what he calls "Mickey-Mousing," otherwise known as word-painting, or being "literally illustrative" with his music.⁴³ Other aspects addressed include Rorem's lack of interest in composing in highly contrapuntal textures and his self-diagnosis as a tonal composer, a diagnosis which is obviously correct.

Rorem's Own Writings

In addition to his fame as a composer, Ned Rorem has developed a reputation as nationally recognized essayist and diarist. His writings range across a wide variety of topics. For the purpose of this study, I have examined prominent essays and diary entries that concern art-song composition and philosophy. Similar to the article and interview previously reviewed, these writings fail to carry much analytical weight in terms of music theory research; however, they again help to establish an ideological foundation from which to examine Ned Rorem's compositions.

⁴³ Ibid, 392

In his 1959 essay *Writing Songs*, Rorem describes the process of writing a song, including choosing appropriate texts, song form, and melody. In his own words, with this essay he hopes to present a manner “by which a song might be written from start to finish.”⁴⁴ The initial portion of this essay wrestles with the question: Which comes first when composing an art song, the words or music? Appealing to the formal, vocal recital tradition, Rorem states that it is the music that *always* comes second to the words. His description of the choosing process, as well as much of the discussion following, is similar to that described in many of his other essays and diary entries, as well as Philip Miller’s recounting of this process.

One particularly salient aspect regarding art-song composition comes later in the essay. Rorem acknowledges a sort of small-to-big composition style when working with texts. More specifically, he states that a composer looks first to the text, seeking “highs and lows, and points of intensity toward which to direct emphasis.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, according to Rorem, the composer will “likely first decide upon the musical climax by looking for a group of words that sum up the poet’s message, hoping among them to find one with dramatic connotation...” The aforementioned small-to-big composition style refers then to the act of searching for textual climaxes, devising a musical setting of said climax, and then composing out from there.

This particular method of composition seems particularly interesting when considering the textual limitations involved in *Poems of Love and the Rain*. If Rorem in fact believes in composing with text in this manner, how does he handle the issue of setting a text in two contrasting ways? In a contrasting setting, is a different poetic reading used to determine a textual climax (and therefore musical climax) that is dissimilar to the original setting? Or are textual climaxes constant, but their musical treatment subject to variation? Given this particular cycle’s underlying portrayal of a psychological transformation within the vocal

⁴⁴ Ned Rorem, “Writing Songs,” *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, Fall/Winter 1982 10, no. 2 (1983): p. 210.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 217.

persona as well as the supporting musical evidence, particularly the various treatments of Z-associated texts as outlined in Chapter 1, Section 2, one might be inclined to suggest that Rorem chose to apply different readings to extract varying textual climaxes. These varying climaxes could be argued, then, to be directly related to the persona's psychological progression, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Another relevant point that Rorem makes in this essay occurs near its conclusion. After acknowledging the fact that both music and poetry feature an endless amount of interpretational possibilities, he states that "the composer desires to bridge the gap between private conception and public perception."⁴⁶ It is worthwhile to put this quote into dialogue with the interpretational foundation of this independent study. While the analysis outlined in this study proposes various interpretational frameworks from which to read the psychological transformation represented by this piece, it is impossible to say if that perception is a result of said "bridge" between the composer's private conception of the work and my personal perception. It is entirely possible that Rorem's conception of this work was grounded in another interpretational framework, one that was neglected in this study. This particular query, though fascinating, seems impossible to wrestle with, and frankly somewhat valueless. Given the mortality of composers and the immortality of their work, little value can result from sacrificing too much energy in a hunt for the composer's conception. Rather, one seems to benefit more from developing one's own perception based on the music and its salient extramusical aspects, e.g. history, culture, text, etc.

In his essay *Poetry of Music*, Rorem places focus not on the explicit compositional process but the relationship between poetry and music. Early in the work, he states:

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 221.

Song is the reincarnation of a poem which was destroyed in order to live again as music... [The composer] does not render a poem more *musical* (poetry isn't music, it's poetry); he weds it to sound, creating a third entity of different and sometimes greater magnitude than either parent.⁴⁷

This statement seems particularly significant given the specificity and descriptive nature of the language, particularly in the word “destroyed.” Rorem is implying that, by setting a text to music, one is first extirpating the very essence of the written words, only to reconstruct and heighten them again, sometimes to an even greater magnitude, by setting them to music. This product is not merely a marriage of the two elements, but rather a “third entity” that functions independently. Observing this statement has the potential to greatly affect the way one proceeds in analyzing such works. According to this ideology, art-song analysis cannot show bias towards either the music or the text, but rather must take into account both elements equally. It is from this perspective that much of this independent study's initial progress was influenced.

Acknowledging Skepticism

The literature addressed in the above two categories utilizes various portions of Rorem's recorded dialogue to attempt to lay an ideological overview of his compositional style and philosophies. Digestion of any of the above material yields a fairly comprehensive summary of the ideological foundation on which Rorem composes his work. What must be addressed here, is the validity of this ideological foundation. It is fair to say that, after the hours of arduous, meticulous, and thoughtful work that goes into composing a piece of music, a composer may be the least subjective person to consult about his own music. Given this, the

⁴⁷ Ned Rorem, *A Ned Rorem Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 111.

things that composers say about their music cannot always be regarded as fact. Take for example Ned Rorem's apprehension towards "Mickey Mousing," or obvious word-painting, in his compositions. As noted previously, this assertion can be fairly easily undermined.

While composers are often quick to characterize their compositional style with specific "do's and don'ts," one must realize that each new composition is its own independent universe with its own set of quirks and intricacies. In that regard, it can be assumed that, though a composer can be said to develop a unique musical "language" through experience, each new composition requires a composer to make decisions with the ultimate goal of serving that individual piece, not the ideological foundation from which they base their style. Given this realization, one must be sure to observe these self-characterizations with a "large grain of salt."

Edward Cone's Notion of Persona

Edward T. Cone's collection of lectures compiled in the 1974 book entitled *The Composer's Voice* is widely regarded as a seminal text in the study of persona in music. As described in the introduction to this independent study, many aspects of his conceptions were used in the identification and establishment of the vocal persona in Rorem's *Poems of Love and the Rain*. Besides what has already been described in the introduction, there are various other aspects to Cone's theories that prove interesting and relevant to this study.

The initial pages of the chapter "Persona, Protagonist, and Characters" wrestle with the question of the purpose of art song. Cone provides an anecdote summarizing Goethe's love for composer Carl Zelter's settings of his texts. As quoted by Cone, "[Goethe] praised Zelter for

producing ‘compositions [that he felt], so to speak, identical with [his] songs.’⁴⁸ The statement is in comparison to Schubert’s Goethe settings, which do not necessarily serve the reading of the poet; this is particularly interesting given that it is Schubert’s and not Zelter’s settings that exist in abundance today. What Cone highlights is that Schubert uses not the poem as it lies on paper, but a reading of the poem to catalyze his compositions.

This binary quality seems particularly fitting in the context of Rorem’s *Poems of Love and the Rain*. The dual setting of texts that characterizes this cycle would not be successful if the poems were merely set twice; rather, efficacious resetting is only the result of multiple readings, or interpretations, of the same poem. As seen in my study (specifically in Chapter 1, Section 2 regarding the resetting of Z-associated texts), various aspects of the music are used to delineate and project such differing readings, with the ultimate goal of serving the extramusical connotations surrounding the work.

Another one of Cone’s more salient arguments centers on the idea of a “universalized” vocal persona. More specifically, he claims that, as listeners, “we tend to interpret the vocal character in terms of our own sympathies and emotions, and to feel ourselves involved in his.”⁴⁹ Acknowledging this argument holds the potential to drastically impact the way one perceives Rorem’s cycle, given the previous analysis. Considering the universal nature of love and loss, the psychological journey of the vocal persona across the cycle’s progression is bound to be perceived in various ways, depending on an individual’s past and current experiences. For example, a listener experiencing unrequited love may be more affected by the dramatic trajectory of the vocal persona, whereas an individual experiencing a loving relationship may find it more difficult to relate.

⁴⁸ Edward T. Cone, *The Composer’s Voice*, The Ernest Bloch Lectures (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 20.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 22.

One of Cone's more provocative discussions accompanies the query of whether or not the vocal persona can be perceived to be aware that he or she is actually singing, and furthermore, whether or not the persona is aware of accompanying musical gestures. To preface this, one must acknowledge the difference between performer and persona. As stated by Cone, "Of course the *singer* knows he is singing, but what about the character the singer portrays?"⁵⁰ Strictly observing the dramatic framework surrounding a vocal performance, or the nature of the vocal persona at a given time, Cone notes that it would be absurd to conceive of the persona as being aware that he or she is singing. Likewise, it would be absurd to claim that the persona were aware of the accompaniment. Therefore, though aspects of the drama are being represented and developed by the musical environment, it likely cannot be said that the persona who is subject to this representation and development is aware of its existence.⁵¹ Acknowledging this, one may conclude that the vocal persona that serves as the subject of *Poems of Love and the Rain*, though influenced by it, is not aware of the surrounding musical environment.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 30.

⁵¹ There are numerous exceptions to this assertion, as noted by Cone. He proposes, for example, that in a performance of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, "Figaro can get a laugh by reacting in exaggerated fashion to the mocking horns at the end of "*Aprite un po'*" (p. 30).

APPENDIX B

TEXTS USED IN *POEMS OF LOVE AND THE RAIN*

The Rain⁵²

“Everywhere, the impossible is happening; two things, the rain and the landscape, are occupying the same place at the same time.”

Donald Windham

Stop All the Clocks, Cut Off the Telephone

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood.
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

W.H. Auden

⁵² From the chapter entitled “The Rain” in Auden's book *Emblems of Conduct*.

The Air Is the Only

The air is the only
 Lonely bearer
 Of the one breath
 Of Love's wayfarer.
 The sea's too wet to forgive. Forget
 Its salty ranges:
 Change changes.

But sing flesh,
 Sinew and bone,
 And mostly blood,
 The fine wood
 In which we hive
 The dead and alive,
 The hollow vein
 And love's rain.

Howard Moss

Love's Stricken "Why"

Love's stricken "why"
 Is all that love can speak --
 Built of but just a syllable
 The hugest hearts that break.

Emily Dickinson

The Apparition

My pillow won't tell me
Where he has gone,
The soft-footed one
Who passed by, alone.

Who took my heart, whole,
With a tilt of his eye,
And with it, my soul,
And it like to die.

I twist, and I turn,
My breath but a sigh,
Dare I grieve? Dare I mourn?
He walks by, He walks by,

Theodore Roethke

Do I Love You

Part I

Do I love you more than a day?
Days used to be faint hours to endure.
Now, through our love, I feel each hour
on this spinned world about the sun.
Embodied time, I live creation
Through you. And I love you more than a day.

Part II

Do I love you more than the air?
Air used to seem just nothingness.
Through our love, now it seems no less
than God's air airing your life's breath;
Too rich for space; too dear for death
Through you. And I love you more than the air.

Jack Larson

in the rain

in the rain-
darkness, the sunset
being sheathed i sit and
think of you

the holy
city which is your face
your little cheeks the streets
of smiles

your eyes half-
thrush
half-angel and your drowsy
lips where float flowers of kiss

and
there is the sweet shy pirouette
your hair
and then

your dancesong
soul. rarely-beloved
a single star is
uttered,and i

think
of you

e.e. cummings

Song for Lying in Bed During a Night Rain

How can I wash the lightning away that shines on your closed eyes?
 How can I tell the thunder to lie as calm as your hand?
 How can I know two sounds as dry as your voice before love and after?
 How can I fear what I have never seen in your face?

Street noise ascend from the city beneath us as the rain falls
 - sounds that merge and blur through my gabled window
 to reflect the danger all my asphalt nightmare's proffer
 without the slow pulse beside me of your sleep.

But who are these bleeding strangers, naked as shadow,
 who stalk at our bedside, calling your name?
 When I look their faces are terrible as lightning
 exposing an instant the white harvest of your breast.

Why do they curse our handclasp, as through we hoarded
 what fills their hunger,
 what falls like rain from their wounds?
 Why do you lie unmoved as mounds of fruit and take their kisses
 as so much wetness to redden the white of your face?

Conclusion:⁵³

How can the rain wash away such stains as your lips wear?
 How can I tell their scars to grow smooth as your skin?
 How can I know two sounds as dry as your voice before fear and after?
 How can I love what I have never seen in your face?

Kenneth Pitchford

⁵³ Pitchford's original text does not indicate the last stanza as a "Conclusion." Its indication as such in this appendix was done so to reflect Rorem's choice to set only the poem's last stanza in "Song for Lying in Bed During a Night Rain (Conclusion)" No. 10.

Interlude⁵⁴

The element of air was out of hand,
 The rush of wind ripped off the tender leaves
 And flung them in confusion on the land.
 We waited for the first rain in the eaves.
 The chaos grew as hour by hour the light decreased
 Beneath an undivided sky.
 Our pupils widened with unnatural night.
 But still the roads and dusty field kept dry.
 The rain stayed in its cloud, full dark came near.
 The wind lay motionless in the long grass.
 The veins within our hands betrayed our fear.
 What we had hoped for had not come to pass.

Theodore Roethke

⁵⁴ In 1962 Ned Rorem wrote to Roethke asking him for pieces he could set to music dealing with “rain and/or love.” Roethke responded: “The enclosed poem ‘Interlude’ deals with the rain that stays in its clouds and might be the ideal piece for an interlude in your sequence.” This is the only poem from Roethke’s debut book of verse, *Open House* (1941), that Rorem set to music.

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