Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity

Essays

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74 On the politics of urban planning see Eve Blau, *The Archictecture of Red Vienna, 1919–1934* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999); also Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working Class Culture, 1919–1934* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Anson Rabinbach, *The Austrian Socialist Experiment: Social Democracy and Austromarxism, 1918–1934* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985).

Schoenberg's Byron: The "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," the Antinomies of Modernism, and the Problem of German Imperialism

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We know, of course, of Chapman's Homer, but who or what exactly was Schoenberg's Byron? On the simplest level, it was a German edition of Byron's works that Schoenberg brought with him when he came to America: the four-volume Meyers Klassiker edition assembled and annotated in 1911 by Friedrich Brie.[1] Schoenberg would have been familiar with the German tradition in which Byron embodied a particular kind of heroic ideal,[2] and he certainly would have known that Byron died while fighting to help free the Greeks from the Turks. If he had read Byron's works attentively, he would have noticed that the English poet was both a Philhellenist and a proto-Zionist: Byron frequently linked the Greeks and the Jews as oppressed peoples with whom he identified.[3] One of Byron's most successful volumes of poetry was his *Hebrew Melodies* (1815), a project designed to hark back to primitive Jewish traditions; the poems were put to music by Isaac Nathan, whose settings consisted of arrangements of Jewish religious and folk melodies. These poems mourn the lost land of the Jews, basing their depictions of Jewish culture on scenes from the Old Testament. They are also full of aggressive warriors like Sennacherib and cruel tyrants like Herod and Belshazzar. These most accessible of Byron's poems clearly delineate themes that would have spoken to Schoenberg at the time of his exile. I do not know how many of his possessions he was able

to bring with him to America, but the fact that his four-volume Byron was among these objects is clearly significant.

Schoenberg's decision to use Byron's "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte" as the text he set to fulfill a commission given him in 1941 by the American League of Composers may thus seem an unremarkable choice. But it raises many more questions than at first meet the eye—or the ear. Schoenberg's unfinished essay, "How I came to write the *Ode to Napoleon*" (1943), gives a number of answers, but still leaves much unexplained.[4] Perhaps the most intriguing question is one Schoenberg did not anticipate in 1941 when he first began to write op. 41 or even in 1943 when he embarked on his explanatory essay: how the composer himself understood the text when he set about fulfilling a subsequent request, the 1944 proposal of the U.S. Office of War Information that he prepare a German version for broadcast as part of the American propaganda against Nazism. The task of putting Byron into German while taking into account the exigencies of an already existent melodic line forced Schoenberg to pay close attention to every single word of the text: he could hardly allow himself to be swept along by vague underlying sentiments. Each detail of the poem had to make sense, not only musically, but also semantically, in this new context. Could Byron's ode be expected to work equally well when addressed to listeners who were the actual enemy of the audience for which Schoenberg's music had first been composed? How, just to give one very obvious example, might a German audience be expected to respond to the poem's concluding stanza in praise of George Washington, whose name did not bear the same emotional associations for them as it did for the original American audience? Imagining the German response to these lines of the poem is not easy.

Before tackling the puzzle of the two different audiences for the "Ode to Napoleon," we need to step back and size up in a more panoramic way the aesthetic issues Byron's poem posed for Schoenberg, especially with respect to the problems of modernism. Opus 41 is modernist in a different sense from Schoenberg's compositions of the first decades of the twentieth century, but, in its own way, it is still very much a modernist piece.

Significantly, Schoenberg's first choice for a text on which to base the composition commissioned by the American League of Composers was Maeterlinck's *The Life of the Bee* (1901). While it is not surprising that Schoenberg might look back to the aestheticist movement, which had been one of his primary sources of textual material for his first atonal pieces, it is odd that he should have thought in the first instance of a prose text of over 400 pages. What interested Schoenberg in *The Life of the Bee* was its study of the relation between the drones and the queen: he believed this description might go

some way toward explaining the attitude of individual Germans to the Führer. In "How I came to write the *Ode to Napoleon*," Schoenberg claims that it was precisely Maeterlinck's aestheticism that ultimately made him decide not to use *The Life of the Bee*: "Maeterlinck's poetic philosophy gilded everything that was not already gold." An additional problem that Schoenberg does not mention in this essay, however, was Maeterlinck's fascination with bees and their social organization. For the Belgian writer, the hive is a "strange little republic" that abounds in "faith and mystery and hope."[5] In his admiration for the social forms of bee colonies, Maeterlinck is hardly alone, of course. The prospective audience for Schoenberg's composition would have had to overturn a long cultural tradition that had imbued the social arrangements of the hive with positive associations. Even careful cutting and splicing of passages from *The Life of the Bee* would be unlikely to yield a text that fit neatly with the argument Schoenberg had hoped to present. The problem with Maeterlinck was not just with his aestheticist style; it was also with his ideas.

When Schoenberg turned from Maeterlinck to Byron, he still did not depart radically, in the first instance, from the kind of text to which he had so often recurred in the past. His initial conception was to set the famous poem "The Isles of Greece" from Canto III of *Don Juan*. In contrast to the ironic tone of Byron's epic satire, "The Isles of Greece" is a sixteen-stanza inset lyric presented as an example of the "sort of hymn" Juan may have sung when traveling in Greece. Though highly rhetorical, the poem is also eminently lyrical: it is an elegy for the loss of the nation's former culture in the current barbaric age of the early-nineteenth century. "The Isles of Greece" includes numerous shifts in mood that would have provided grist to Schoenberg's compositional mill. In contrast to the difficult "Ode to Napoleon," "The Isles of Greece" would have allowed Schoenberg to inveigh against tyranny in a firm and decisive manner—in the penultimate line, for example, the speaker declares: "A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine." For generations of readers, "The Isles of Greece" has proved eloquent and moving; it is not only poetically more accomplished, but also easier to understand than the "Ode to Napoleon." Why did Schoenberg reject his initial impulse to use the famous hymn from *Don Juan* to express the call to freedom that he deemed essential in 1941?

To resolve this question, we need to explore the problem of audience address that Schoenberg confronted in composing his piece for the American League of Composers. The speaker of "The Isles of Greece" is figured as a Greek who laments the decline of his country's culture since its high point in classical antiquity. From Schoenberg's perspective, a parallel can be drawn between the decline of classical Greece and the decline of the German cul-

tural tradition—all the more so given the long tradition in which German writers had themselves developed this analogy. With appropriate changes of proper names, geographic and personal, Byron's "Isles of Greece" might seem to pour forth directly from the mouth of a German opponent to the cultural and political ideology of the Nazis. The difficulty was that a lament for the decline of German culture ran the risk of being seriously misunderstood by the American audience. What Schoenberg needed was not a text that would express his own views, but something that could help to focus more sharply the ideas of his American listeners.

The attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 motivated Schoenberg to reflect on his indebtedness to the United States, and the poem he finally settled on, Byron's "Ode to Napoleon," did just this in its concluding stanza, with its rather clumsy allusion to "the Cincinnatus of the West," George Washington. Furthermore, the ode itself developed the contrast between tyranny and freedom that Schoenberg wished to address in this piece. As commentators have not tired of pointing out, however, Schoenberg's selection of this text is an awkward and unconvincing one. The ode seems particularly inappropriate for the early forties because of the potential parallel between Napoleon and Hitler. Reinhold Brinkmann argues that the "Ode to Napoleon" only works within the context of World War II if it is given a "selective" reading that highlights its "impassioned appeal against tyranny" and its hope for "a liberated human race."[6]

Yet if the text was so problematic, why did the U.S. Office of War Information wish to broadcast the composition into Germany as part of its counter-propaganda program? In order to understand this, we need to recall the point of view from which Byron's text is written: that of an admirer of Napoleon disappointed by the emperor's defeat at Waterloo. The opening stanza of the ode questions Napoleon's heroism, suggesting that the nobler course of action after his defeat would have been to commit suicide:

> 'Tis done—but yesterday a King!
> And arm'd with Kings to strive—
> And now thou art a nameless thing
> So abject—yet alive!
> Is this the man of thousand thrones,
> Who strew'd our Earth with hostile bones,
> And can he thus survive?

These lines hammer home the idea that Napoleon's survival after his defeat

at Waterloo is as much a matter of shame as the fact of his military failure. This suggests a quite specific "selective reading" for the German audience. In the fall of 1944, Hitler was increasingly under pressure from the Allies, losing ground on both the eastern and the western fronts, but he had not yet capitulated. He had recently survived the attack on his person by German military officers under the leadership of Claus von Stauffenberg on July 20, 1944. "Is this the man of thousand thrones, / Who strew'd our Earth with hostile bones, / And can he thus survive?" Indeed, viewed from the perspective of this second audience, German citizens in Germany who might be wooed away from Hitler, Byron's text is remarkably apposite. Byron's poem, with its forceful expression of a bewildering gamut of emotions including admiration, disappointment, scorn, disgust, and many others, might well speak to a segment of the German population who were struggling to sort out complicated and often conflicting feelings about Hitler. The text successfully upholds lofty ideals of honor and freedom while showing how the previously admired leader has fallen drastically short by these measures. It models a more complex and sophisticated response than propaganda texts, with their simplistic contrasts between good and evil.

Seen from this angle of vision, the ode even anticipates the problem subsequently addressed by the Mitscherlichs in their influential study, *The Inability to Mourn*.[7] A text like Byron's "Ode to Napoleon" that articulated the struggle to wean oneself away from a misguided emotional attachment could have provided a therapeutic instrument for postwar Germany as it tried to disengage from its wartime loyalty to Hitler. The third stanza of the poem states that future times might learn from Napoleon's fall:

> Thanks for that lesson—it will teach
> To after-warriors more
> Than high Philosophy can preach,
> And vainly preached before.
> That spell upon the minds of men
> Breaks never to unite again,
> That led them to adore
> Those Pagod things of sabre-sway,
> With fronts of brass, and feet of clay.

No wonder Schoenberg thought, in 1944, that "many people will relate it to Hitler and Mussolini,"[8] or that he gave the speaker's part to the music publisher Schirmer in the hope that the work would be performed in postwar

Germany. The stanza claims that people will never again fall under the spell of a charismatic leader who promulgates evil ideas. Subsequent stanzas argue, by appealing to an entire sequence of examples from world history, that the truly heroic leader is one who recognizes when his rule has turned into tyranny and who chooses to abdicate his office. Of Lucius Sulla, the Roman dictator who resigned in 79 B.C., the text maintains: "His only glory was that hour / Of self-upheld abandon'd power."

The question "who is speaking?" in the text of Schoenberg's Opus 41 thus has a complicated answer. We have been taught to distinguish between author and speaker; but in the case of Byron's "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte" we might just as well admit that there is little difference between the two. In essence, it is Byron's own ambivalent relationship to Napoleon that finds expression in the poem. Schoenberg, however, does not occupy the same position as Byron toward the text. For this reason, it would be better to regard the text of Opus 41 as a dramatic monologue, spoken by someone who is as much an imagined persona as the speaker of Schoenberg's later piece, *A Survivor from Warsaw*, op. 46 (1947). The speaker of Opus 41 is, in effect, at one and the same time the Byron who voices his disappointment over Napoleon's fall from greatness and the German who sees his admiration for Hitler coming undone.

Though cogent for the 1944 German version of the text, designed for broadcast into wartime Germany, this argument does not hold up with respect to the original American audience for whom the work was composed in 1941/2. How could Schoenberg have conceived that this text might "speak" to that audience? In order to understand the text's function from this perspective, we need to bear in mind Schoenberg's long-held belief, as formulated in his *Four-Point Program for Jewry* (1933), that the Jewish struggle against anti-Semitism tended to alienate potential supporters who were not Jewish.[9] For this reason, Schoenberg did not want to take the position of a Jewish victim in this important wartime composition (*A Survivor from Warsaw* is a postwar work based on a radically changed set of assumptions). There is good reason to believe, furthermore, that in 1941 few Americans knew that Hitler was already proceeding toward the "final solution." As Max Frankel has shown, American newspapers tended to bury articles about the fate of Jews in Germany and German-occupied lands in the inside pages rather than displaying them as front-page stories. In the period 1939–1945, the *New York Times* rarely mentions Hitler's actions against the Jews on the front page, and only once (in December 1942) was this topic treated in a lead editorial.[10] Despite the more active work of *The Post*, *The Nation*, and *The New Republic*, [11] the

larger American public simply lacked full information about the horrors to which European Jews were being subjected. Schoenberg thus needed to find an argument against Hitler that might appeal to the American majority. The fear of invasion by the Japanese that had been unleashed by the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 had brought home to Americans just how important the idea of independence was to them. For Schoenberg to present Hitler as a "new Napoleon" aiming to conquer as much foreign territory as he could was a way of aligning his composition with the American fear of being invaded. Against the backdrop of Pearl Harbor, the implicit message that Hitler was a new Napoleon would raise in the minds of American listeners the specter of being invaded from across the Atlantic as well as from across the Pacific. The "selective reading" of Byron's ode for this group of listeners thus focused on the problem of imperialism,[12] and the speaker of this version is to be visualized as someone who is concerned about contemporary threats to American independence.

Schoenberg's personal views about the threat posed by Hitler were, to be sure, more closely linked to his racial policies; from Schoenberg's perspective, Hitler's imperialist ambitions were dangerous primarily because they would entail a vast spread of these policies throughout the lands he conquered. On the related issue of colonialism, furthermore, Schoenberg's ideas were by no means simple. In view of the fact that many countries were now limiting the number of Jewish emigrés from the Nazi Reich, he urged that a territory be found where they could settle without posing a burden on other nations. In contrast to those who advocated a return to Palestine, Schoenberg urged that money be raised by subscription to purchase land in Uganda. In taking up this idea, Schoenberg recurred to proposals that originated during the German colonial period, when the focus of overseas settlement was in Africa.[13] Ironically, Schoenberg's views about a new homeland for the Jews share the colonialist notion that Africa was essentially an empty space.

On the topic of empire, Byron's "Ode to Napoleon" lists a series of tyrants, despots, and emperors from classical antiquity to the sixteenth century. Byron's ode presents Napoleon as the most recent in this line, an emperor who should learn the lessons of his predecessors. Superimposing upon this configuration Schoenberg's implication that Hitler is yet another member of this sequence, we can see Schoenberg using the poem as a way of appealing to American anti-imperialist sentiment. The poem's tribute to George Washington in the final stanza clinches what, from this perspective, must be read as an attempt to remind the American audience of its roots in the struggle against empire.

For Byron, the Washington stanza was far from crucial to the ode. In fact, he only composed it, and the two stanzas that precede it, in response to his publisher's request to make the poem longer so that he could avoid paying stamp tax, which was levied on texts of less than one sheet. Byron later removed them from the ode again, and the 1981 authoritative edition of his works reproduces these twenty-seven verses under the heading "Additional Stanzas." [14] The German edition of Byron that Schoenberg had brought with him to the United States does not include these three stanzas: he would not have discovered them until he purchased an English edition at the beginning of 1942. This meant that when Schoenberg produced the German version for the 1944 broadcast, he had to translate these stanzas from scratch, in contrast to the rest of the poem, where he worked energetically to rewrite the Meyers Klassiker version so that it would better accord with the vocal line of his composition. Schoenberg's translation of the ode's final lines give them a dignity they do not possess in the original English. Byron writes:

> Yes—one—the first—the last—the best—
> The Cincinnatus of the West,
> Whom envy dared not hate,
> Bequeath'd the name of Washington,
> To make man blush there was but one!

Schoenberg's rendering does not entirely manage to avoid banal rhymes, but at least he avoids the awkward rhyming of "Washington" with "one" and eliminates entirely the unfortunate blushing motif. Most importantly, he introduces the concept of freedom in an emphatic position, the last line of the poem:

> Ein Cincinnatus der Neuen Welt,
> ihr größter, hehrster, reinster Held
> hat diesen Wunsch erfüllt,
> den Namen Washington vermacht
> der Menschheit, der er Freiheit bracht'.

Schoenberg's ending implicitly links Washington, who "brought freedom to humankind," with Prometheus, the bringer of fire, who had been the subject of the final stanza in the shorter version of Byron's poem. In Schoenberg's German text, Washington's gift of freedom functions as a positive counterpoint to Prometheus's theft of fire. Washington is at once part of the historical and the mythological networks that inform the poem.

Reinhold Brinkmann has shown how carefully Schoenberg went through the Meyers Klassiker translation, painstakingly adjusting the German to accord with Byron's diction.[15] Such adaptations were not always possible, however, and in several instances Schoenberg actually changed his original composition to accord with the new German wording: Brinkmann illustrates this procedure by examining the opening lines of the seventh stanza, where Schoenberg made musical changes to take account of a difference in word order—and hence in stress patterns—in the second line.[16] While Schoenberg's alterations in the musical line between the 1941 and the 1944 version can be explained by such exigencies of the German, his reworking of the Meyers Klassiker translation cannot always, or certainly not always entirely, be accounted for by an appeal to the needs of the original music. Beginning with stanza five, Schoenberg undertakes revisions of the German that go well beyond minor shifts in speech intonation or meaning. These changes stem, I believe, from two different considerations: first, many of Schoenberg's revisions to the German of the edition he had brought with him into exile clarify some of the historical and mythological allusions in the poem; second, some of his reworkings bring themes to the foreground that were important for the topical reference of the poem to his 1944 German audience. Taken together, these two types of alteration would have made the larger themes of the poem clearer than they were in Byron's English, which assumes a thorough grounding in history and the classics. Perhaps Schoenberg was trying to correct the baffling impression Opus 41 had made on its original American audience, which scarcely knew how to react at the first performance.[17] It is hard to know whether Schoenberg had been unaware of the difficulties the ode's many allusions would cause twentieth-century American readers—to say nothing of listeners who would have less time to puzzle over the poem's wording—after all, he himself had originally become familiar with the text in a German edition that included helpful footnotes. Here and there, Schoenberg revises the Meyers edition so that it will render Byron's original more accurately;[18] but more often, his changes reveal a desire to clarify and explicate.

The first of these major changes is definitely of the explicative type—not a retranslation so much as an unwritten footnote pulled up into the text itself. This is the passage:

> Is it some yet imperial hope
> That with such change can calmly hope? (ll. 41–2)

The Meyers Klassiker edition stays fairly close to the original:

> Läßt ihn ein kaiserliches Hoffen
> Kalt sehn den Schlag, der ihn getroffen? (52)

To be sure, this version fails to represent the crucial word "yet"; but Schoenberg goes well beyond the small adjustment it would have required to incorporate this idea. Instead, he renders the lines:

> Nimmt ruhig seinen Sturz er hin
> Weil er noch Hilf' erhofft von Wien?[19]

These lines, with their distinctively Austrian rhyme, suggest that Napoleon was hoping that relatives of his wife, Marie Luise of Austria, might persuade Vienna to come to his assistance after the defeat at Waterloo. While this notion helped flesh out the historical context of the ode in a very concrete way, it limited the parallel that Schoenberg wishes to draw between Napoleon and Hitler (Austria was already part of Hitler's Reich), and diminishes the identification Byron implies between his own lingering "imperial hope" and that of his former idol, Napoleon.[20]

Less awkwardly explanatory is Schoenberg's inclusion of Milo's name in stanza 6, where the English alludes to him only by recounting the story of Milo's death when the oak to which he was tied rebounded when he tried to break his bonds by splitting the tree ("He who of old would rend the oak / Dreamed not of the rebound," ll. 46–47). Toward the end of the same stanza, Schoenberg again paraphrases Byron's image of the "forest prowlers' prey" (l. 53) by stating more straightforwardly that Milo's suffering was ended when he was eaten by a wolf ("Ein Wolf rasch endet Milos Leid—," Sch., 99). To be sure, Schoenberg does not include Sulla's name in stanza 7 or Charles V's in stanza 8. But in these instances, there is good reason to regard the contrasting references to "the Roman" and "the Spaniard" as predominantly an attempt to indicate that different emperors in different historical periods nonetheless had the good sense to abdicate at the appropriate time, thus setting an example that Napoleon has failed to follow. It could well be argued that the allusions to the Roman and the Spanish Empires takes precedence in these stanzas over precise identification of the specific emperors involved.

In one instance, Schoenberg even identifies a transferred epithet and shifts it back to its logical referent in his translation. When Byron writes, in stanza 14, "Then haste thee to thy sullen isle / And gaze upon the sea" (ll. 118–119),

the adjective "sullen" is clearly a poetic transference from Napoleon himself to the island where he will be exiled. The translator of the Meyers Klassiker edition retains Byron's arrangement of noun and epithet, but he uses an adjective that could more logically be applied to an island than "sullen," thus virtually eliminating the rhetorical figure Byron employs: "Zur düstern Insel nun entrückt, / Starr in des Meeres Branden!" (54). Schoenberg's rendering of these lines as "Auf deiner Insel laß dich nieder, / Das Meer starr haßvoll an" (Sch., 100), however plain it may be by comparison to the original, nonetheless reveals a translator well schooled by working with Greek and Latin texts in the German high school tradition where decoding transferred epithets would have been everyday fare.

More interesting than these indications of a particular approach to translation are those passages where Schoenberg chooses to intensify major themes he wished to highlight in the 1944 translation. His predecessor in the Meyers Klassiker edition had already decided to render Byron's phrase, "ill-minded man" (l. 10) as "Tyrann" (51), thus anticipating the word "tyrant" midway through the poem (l. 89), as well as the references to the tyrannical rulers Nebuchadnezzar in stanza 3 and Timour (Tamburlaine) in stanza 15. Schoenberg foregrounds this idea throughout his translation beginning with a seemingly minor change in the opening stanza from "Mann" to "Herr" (l. 5). The Meyers translator's decision to render "a man of thousand thrones" as "ein Mann von tausend Reichen" (51) may have been one of the things that first motivated Schoenberg to imagine that the text might invoke Hitler, with his "Tausendjähriges Reich," to listeners in the 1940s. A striking change that accentuates the present relevance of the ode for the German audience of 1944 is Schoenberg's reworking of Byron's lines about the Roman Sulla:

> His only glory was that hour
> Of self-upheld abandon'd power. (ll. 62–63).

Schoenberg sacrifices the sustained breath of this brilliant formulation for a more mundane paraphrase that spells out in clear, if rather wooden, terms the point he is trying to convey to listeners in Hitler's Germany:

> Moralisch doch sei er geschätzt,
> Der zwangfrei Macht durch Recht ersetzt. (Sch., 99)[21]

What really happened after Lucius Sulla's retirement from his cruel dictatorship in 79 B.C. is less important for Schoenberg's purposes here than the sug-

gestion that abdication by Hitler—or his removal—would return a state of law to Germany. The emphatic positioning of the contrasting terms "Macht" and "Recht" in the final line of this stanza would carry the idea much more persuasively than Byron's more poetic phrase, "self-upheld abandon'd power," which needs quite elaborate parsing before it can be fully understood.

The three last stanzas of the ode, those that Byron had added only to reduce the stamp taxes for his publisher, had not been included by the Meyers Klassiker translator. For these "additional stanzas," Schoenberg was on his own. There are moments here where he does very well, as in his version of the lines:

> Where is that faded garment? Where
> The gewgaws thou wert fond to wear,
> The star—the string—the crest? [22]

Schoenberg's translation is a masterpiece of fluid rearrangement:

> Der Tand von längst verblichner Tracht,
> Mit Stern und Schwur und Fransenpracht—
> Wer wird danach noch fragen? (Sch., 101)

And, as we have already seen, Schoenberg devises a conclusion to the poem that considerably strengthens Byron's awkward lines about George Washington. Yet in these last three stanzas, Schoenberg also takes care to use wording that is equally applicable to Napoleon and Hitler. For example, he paraphrases Byron's convoluted lines "When that immeasurable power / Unsated to resign / Had been an act of purer fame / Than gathers round Marengo's name"[23] as "bliebst du Konsul, statt Cäsar, / hättst edlern Ruhmes Tat vollbracht, als zuschreibt dir Marengos Schlacht" (Sch., 101). On a simpler level, he renders Byron's word "king" [24] as "Kaiser." More pointedly, Schoenberg replaces Byron's reference to "remembrance"[25] with an explicit reference to pangs of conscience ("Gewissens Plagen," Sch., 101), a phrase that might have evoked moral twinges in the Germans who were listening to the U.S. War Office's broadcast of this piece. Clearly, Schoenberg was thinking carefully about his potential audience when he worked on the language for the 1944 German version.

These considerations of the text and its relation to its two very different intended audiences may help us understand, at least intellectually, what Schoenberg may have seen as the potential appeal of the ode. Why do audiences not find the piece more attractive, then? The composition is vigorous

and forceful, but it does not touch us in the quite same way as Schoenberg's later piece, *A Survivor from Warsaw*. We feel that the "Ode to Napoleon" is deliberately holding back from what is conventionally thought of as the "aesthetic"—even from the kind of modernist aesthetic represented by some of Schoenberg's most radically atonal compositions.

The transition from the instrumental introduction to the voice part may help us approach this problem. Perhaps this moment in the piece (mm. 24–28) can best be understood as a shift from interior to exterior monologue. With its agitated, scurrying effects, the introduction suggests conflict in several senses: military, political, intellectual, and emotional. The rest in m. 25 is intriguing, because it suggests that these conflicted moments have come to an end: at the same time, however, two groups of instruments—the second violins and the cellos—do not join in this rest, but begin to play harmonics instead. When the voice declares, in the following measure, that "'tis done," a further ambiguity emerges, since this is not the announcement of an ending, but the start of a complexly articulated meditation on the undoing of Napoleon. The first violins and violas now join the other strings with harmonic chords that give the statement "'tis done" a somewhat surreal quality. The unearthly harmonics hint at a contrary understanding of the apparently decisive action announced by the voice. And, as if this were not enough, the voice and the instrumental parts consider several different ways of "reading" the opening syllables of the poem: while the piano accompaniment and the Sprechstimme experiment with nuanced versions of a reading of "'tis done" as an iambic foot (mm. 26 and 27),[26] the violins propose reading it as a spondee (m. 27)—although to be sure, these pizzicato chords, with their light metallic sound, countermand the usual heavy tread of this foot (an effect heightened by the dissonance introduced by the D in the second violin part). The result is something far less decisive than Mephisto's "es ist vollbracht" in Goethe's *Faust*. Schoenberg plays deconstructively with Byron's opening words, suggesting that what has been "done" at the battle of Waterloo is not an ending but the beginning of a difficult intellectual struggle about the meaning of Napoleon's defeat. For the 1940s listener, the questions this raises refer not only to Napoleon, but also to the history of seductive leadership that Byron had hoped would end with the French emperor.

Why did Schoenberg create, in the *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, a piece of music that arouses serious resistance to the expectations even of informed listeners? On one level, Schoenberg may have been responding to Byron's particular use of irony, which itself aimed to "confound readerly expectations."[27] On another level, however, he was concerned not just to sway his listeners

emotionally, but also to get them thinking. What Schoenberg heard as "170 different shades of irony, contempt, sarcasm, parody, hate, and outrage" (one for almost every line of the 171-line poem) modeled a nuanced movement of thought and feeling that posed a challenge to both his American and his German audiences.[28] In addition, his tendency in the "Ode to Napoleon" to follow speech intonations—admittedly rather bombastic ones—as closely as possible severely minimizes the latent tension between song and speech, keeping the listener in a more active mental state. Despite the difficulty of the text, which requires a range of historical and cultural knowledge to be understood completely,[29] the setting throws the emphasis on the progression of ideas.

This emphasis can be likened to Brecht's estrangement effect, though it is of course accomplished by very different means. The *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* is designed to have a compelling impact on its listeners, but at the same time to prevent them from being emotionally carried away. Were this otherwise, the stanza about breaking the charismatic sway of tyrants would in effect be countermanded. This stanza actually contains an allusion to the description of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the Book of Daniel. Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a "great image" "fearsome to behold": its head "was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet part iron and part clay."[30] The various body parts, regardless of their substance, shatter, whereupon the image grows into a huge mountain filling the whole earth. Daniel interprets the dream as an allegory of a sequence of mighty kingdoms, each of which is destroyed in turn, to be supplanted finally by the coming of the kingdom of heaven. Byron's ode anticipates that the spell Napoleon and his predecessors cast over the minds of men will ultimately be broken, like the great image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. From Schoenberg's perspective of the 1940s, however, Napoleon was not the last of the line: Hitler is another figure who harbors what Byron calls in the ode "some yet imperial hope" (l. 41). But charismatic influence must come to an end, and so Schoenberg's music itself resists the temptation to continue that charisma. The resistance the composition offers to our desire for the aesthetic is an essential aspect of its attempt to create a new modernist aesthetic that urges complex reflection and intellectual struggle at the expense of the siren call of emotion.

Notes

1 *Byrons Werke*, trans. A. Böttger et al., ed. Friedrich Brie (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut). The edition I was able to procure from Widener Library is undated, but Brie dates his introduction December 1911. The Widener copy, designated on the title page as a "kritisch durchgesehene und erläuterte Ausgabe," has a pencil note on the copyright page indicating that it was donated to Harvard in 1930.

2 In addition to Brie's almost hundred-page introduction on Byron's life and works, Schoenberg may also have read Helene Richter's large biography, *Lord Byron: Persönlichkeit und Werk* (Halle and Saale: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1929), which includes an entire chapter on Byron as a "Napoleon of Poetry" (183–211).

3 For a more detailed and sophisticated account of this aspect of Byron's thought, see Caroline Franklin, "'Some samples of the finest Orientalism': Byronic Philhellenism and proto-Zionism at the time of the Congress of Vienna," in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780–1830*, ed. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 221–242.

4 Arnold Schoenberg, "How I Came to Compose the *Ode to Napoleon*," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 2, no. 1 (1977), 55–7.

5 Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Life of the Bee*, trans. Alfred Sutro (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1901), 67–8.

6 "Arnold Schönberg's 'Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte,' op. 41," notes accompanying Edition Abseits compact disc, EDA 008–2, 39.

7 Alexander und Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1967).

8 Cit. Brinkmann (see n. 6), 39.

9 See Alexander L. Ringer, *Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Jew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), esp. chapter 7, 116–149.

10 Max Frankel, "Turning Away From the Holocaust," *The New York Times*, 150th anniversary issue, November 14, 2001, H10.

11 Ibid.

12 In fact, Byron's views on empire, like his views on Napoleon, were complex. Saree Makdisi comments: "That Byron did not share the kind of imperial attitudes expressed by Disraeli and Burton does not [...] necessarily mean that he opposed imperialism altogether" (*Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 134.

13 This was a suggestion originally made by the English, who did not want to see the Jews establish themselves in Palestine. Among the Zionists, the Uganda Project was promulgated by Theodore Herzl, but it was rejected after his death in 1904 by the Zionist Congress. See *A Four-Point Program for Jewry* in Alexander Ringer, *Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Jew*, 234–243.

14 Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 3, 265–6.

15 Brinkmann, (see n. 6), 40.

16 Ibid., 41.

17 See Arnold Schoenberg, *Complete Edition*, 24, part 2.

18 Another example of a revision that aims for greater accuracy is Schoenberg's rendering of lines 100–101, where Byron's formulation "Weighed in the balance, hero dust / Is vile as vulgar clay," seriously mistranslated in the Meyers edition as "Nicht schwerer wirst der Helden Staub als anderer du finden," becomes the more acceptable "Der Helden Staub zeigt in der Waage / Mit Lehm denselben Preis" (Sch., 100).

19 Ibid., 99. Subsequent references to Schoenberg's German version of the poem refer to this edition.

20 Byron's views on this point are well presented by Michael Williams in "Byron's 'Napoleon' Poems: 'Some yet imperial hope'," *Unisa English Studies*, XXIX, no. 1 (1991), 13–23.

21 The Meyers version runs: "Sein einz'ger Ruhm, daß er entsagt, / Frei, da noch seine Macht geragt" (53).

22 "Additional Stanzas," ll. 14–16, Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, 3, 265.

23 Ibid., ll. 3–5.

24 Ibid., l. 10.

25 Ibid., l. 13.

26 Actually, they read "'tis done" as a trisyllable, preserving a trace of the elided pronoun "it."

27 Caroline Franklin, "Some samples of the finest orientalism," 223.

28 Letter to Orson Welles of 13 September, 1943, cit. Reinhold Brinkmann (see n. 6), 39.

29 The Meyers Klassiker edition contains explanatory notes, translating the epigraph about Hannibal and giving the names of figures like Milo, Sulla, Charles V, Maria Luise of Austria, and Dionysus the Younger, all of whom remain unnamed in the poem. Schoenberg may thus have underestimated the problems the multiple allusions in the poem would present to an audience unaided by such annotations.

30 Daniel 2:31–33.

Ideologies of Serialism: Stravinsky's *Threni* and the Congress for Cultural Freedom*

ANNE C. SHREFFLER

Music and Politics: Methodological Considerations

THAT THE DEVELOPMENT of serial music after 1945 was affected by the Cold War is probably not a controversial statement anymore. Why shouldn't music have also responded to the same forces that steered post-war painting and literature into an increasingly material-based abstraction? In Western Europe, the effects of politics on cultural life after the war were drastic and immediate because of the need to reject both Fascist aesthetics and the restrictive artistic policies implemented in the Soviet block in 1948. Many of the innovations in European New Music after 1945 can be read as responses to these two pressures: on the one hand, composers embraced musical idioms and techniques that had been forbidden by Nazi cultural policies; on the other, they systematically and ostentatiously exercised the freedom that was denied their Eastern counterparts.[1] In the U.S., lacking a past that needed to be exorcised, the political dimension was less explicit in discourse about music in the immediate post-war years. Implicitly, however, the compositional avant-garde was politicized by endorsing two cornerstone Cold War values: belief in the supremacy of the methodologies of hard science and in the value of personal and political freedom.[2] Modernist art, in particular abstract expressionism, was believed to articulate these values sufficiently clearly that it could be instrumentalized by the U.S. government in its campaign to spread American