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IT IS PRACTICALLY certain that music and literature, usually combined with dance, arose as a single activity long before the concept of an art existed. In later stages of history, the connections between the musical and literary arts have varied from nation to nation and period to period. The relationship was close in Elizabethan England and remote in Augustan England. It has always been close in the folk epic. The Homeric minstrel, the Anglo-Saxon *scop*, and the twentieth-century Yugoslavian singer of tales cannot function without a musical instrument. But in the literary epic it has been at best vestigial, and the connections between the *Aeneid* or *Paradise Lost* and music are in general negligible.

As soon as the arts of music and literature began to draw apart, the possibility of one's influencing the other arose. Instrumental music in its modern tradition is only some five centuries old, but Plato could complain that instrumental music is a bad thing because, in the absence of words, "it is very difficult to recognize the meaning of the harmony and rhythm, or to see that any worthy object is imitated by them."[1] By Plato's time narrative program music was already two centuries old. In 582 B.C. the Pythian Games introduced a composition for *aulos*-solo, the prescribed subject being Apollo's victory over the python, in five episodes. This contest, with the same subject and the same rules, held its place in some of the Greek games for more than three centuries.[2] As the art of criticism was added to the others, it naturally

[1] *Laws*, II, 669. Jowett's translation.
[2] Théodore Reinach, *La Musique grecque* (Paris, 1926), p. 143.

turned its attention to the interrelationships of the arts, whether by influence or by analogy. Horace begins the *Ars poetica* with a comparison between poetry and painting, and the famous *ut pictura poesis*, which comes later in the same treatise (line 361), supplies the rubric for innumerable later comparative studies in the arts.

Horace opens his poem by pointing out how absurd it would be for a painter to put together odd pieces of various animals, and then goes on to state that an inorganic literary patchwork is equally absurd. Here we have a paradigm for most of the early and casual comparisons of the arts: they are polemic rather than exploratory. The method is to take something which is assumed to be axiomatic in one art and apply it to a different art. Whether the particular application seems valid or not need hardly concern us here. The essential point about this type of argument is that it reveals a basic assumption, usually unstated and probably sometimes unconscious, that there are some universal aesthetic principles which must apply equally to all the arts, no matter how different the individual media and traditions may be. In short, it assumes that over and above the individual arts there is a valid concept of art *per se*.

For centuries this assumption remained largely latent. It was used as the basis for all sorts of individual remarks, arguments, and observations, but there was little inclination to investigate its validity or to attempt any systematic definition or delimitation of the concept of art in general, or the applications of this concept to the interrelations of the individual arts. Thomas Campion may serve here as a typical example. As a poet and composer who set both his own lyrics and those of other poets, he might be expected to show an unusual interest in the theoretical problems. But in his *Observations on the Art of English Poesy* (1602) he simply brings music in for two analogies: poetry is like music in that it requires the observance of due metrical proportion and in that it makes use of rests.[3] A similar situation is found in the predominantly musical treatises of the period: they occasionally refer to such literary matters as the settings of texts, but only casually and incidentally. A notable exception is Joachim Burmeister, whose *Musica Poetica* (Rostock, 1606) defines and classifies the musical figures of rhetoric along literary lines and gives both a technical and a rhetorical analysis of a five-voice composition of Orlando di Lasso as an illustration.

Only towards the eighteenth century did the interrelationships between the arts, and especially between music and literature, become

[3] *The Works of Thomas Campion*, ed. Walter R. Davis (New York, 1957), pp. 292-293, 298.

a recognized field of study, and England provided most of the early investigations. In 1695, as a preface to his translation of a versified Latin treatise on painting, Dryden published "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," an essay which not only discussed general principles, but also worked out specific technical parallels between the two arts. The Abbé du Bos brought out his *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* in Paris in 1715, and by the time this widely influential work was translated under the altered title of *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting, and Music* (1748), Hildebrand Jacob's *Of the Sister Arts* had already appeared in London, in 1734. After the middle of the century such works came rapidly. Charles Avison's *An Essay on Musical Expression* (London, 1752), with its distinction between imitation and expression, both considered with respect to the combination of text and music, was a pioneering work of aesthetics. Daniel Webb published *Observations on the Correspondence Between Poetry and Music* in 1762. In the following year John Brown set himself a vast task in *A Dissertation on the Union and Power, the Progressions, Separations, and Corruptions of Poetry and Music* (London, 1763), and within a decade this work had been translated into French, German, and Italian. Two years later François Jean Chastellux published his *Essai sur l'union de la poésie et de la musique*, and in the following year, 1766, appeared perhaps the most important study of the interrelationship of the arts ever written, Lessing's *Laokoon*. The publication of critical works in this general field continued throughout the eighteenth century. There is no need to list them here, but special mention must be made of Joshua Steele's *An Essay Towards Establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech to be Expressed and Perpetuated by Peculiar Symbols*[4] (1775). In this work he attempted to adapt musical notation to the reading of poetry, designating pitch as well as rhythm, and recorded in this system Garrick's performance of the "To be or not to be" soliloquy.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century the emphasis was different. The initiative passed from the critics and theoreticians to the poets and musicians. It would be interesting to know, but almost impossible to prove, whether the theoretical writings of the 1700s set the stage for this development, or whether it was an independent phenomenon. At any rate, the nineteeenth century was heavily involved in what some critics call a synthesis of the arts and others dismiss as the romantic confusion of the arts. Baudelaire's "Correspondances," Rim-

[4] The second edition (London, 1779) was entitled *Prosodia Rationalis*, and the work is usually cited under this title, but the first edition contained all the important material.

baud's "Voyelles," the cultivation of synaesthesia, the attempts at *transpositions d'art*, the pursuit of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—these things are too well known to call for anything beyond a passing mention. When they were accompanied by theoretical writings, as not infrequently happened, these writings were likely to be manifestoes and polemics rather than disinterested philosophical investigations. This was the general state of affairs throughout most of the century, but towards the end important theoretical studies were resumed. In *The Science of English Verse* (1880), Sidney Lanier again attacked English metrics with musical notation, more than a century after Joshua Steele's pioneering effort. Most recent writers who have approached prosody in this way actually stem from Lanier, even in matters where Steele is clearly superior.

Then, in 1894, Jules Combarieu published *Les Rapports de la musique et de la poésie, considérées au point de vue de l'expression.* This was really the first of the important modern critical treatises, and it remains one of the best. From Combarieu on there has been a fairly steady increase in the scholarly study of the interrelations of music and literature, and this activity has now become widespread. For the last seventeen years the annual *Bibliography on the Relations of Literature and the Other Arts*[5] issued by the MLA section devoted to this topic has included about 150 items per year. The musical items almost always outnumber those devoted to the visual arts, and tend to run about 90 to 100 each year. And we must remember that this bibliography is a small and informal operation that does the best it can, but makes no pretense of achieving complete coverage.

The interest in musico-literary relations is a truly international one. The greatest part of the work is in English, French, and German, in roughly equal proportions, but most European languages are represented. Swedish and Dutch scholars seem to have a particular interest in this type of study. In the early sixties there was a flurry of books in Russian on the musical connections of various Russian writers, but no new ones have come to my attention recently.

This sketch of the history of musico-literary studies is intended to be just that—a sketch. Complete coverage and complete accuracy would require a much longer account and far more reservations. It would have to be pointed out, for example, that Burmeister's *Musica Poetica* owed a good deal to various predecessors and that its originality and impact depended more on its general and consistent emphasis than on invention *ab initio*. Similarly, there were musical prosodists between Steele

[5] Collective reprint of 1952-1967 published by AMS Press, New York, 1968.

and Lanier, notably Coventry Patmore.[6] But if taken with the necessary reservations, this account can serve as a general statement to put music-literary studies into at least a rough historical perspective.

Are we now justified in assuming that the study of the interrelations among the arts, and especially of the relations between literature and music, is an accepted discipline? Not entirely. Curt Sachs tells us that when he was working on the idea of the essential unity of the arts one specialist pleaded with him, "as a man and a Christian," to desist.[7] Steven Scher's article in this issue points out that grave doubts about the advisability and legitimacy of such studies have been expressed fairly recently. But in practice the question seems to be settling itself. Even if anyone wanted to outlaw a type of literary study (and no scholar does), how could it be done? Those who are interested in the subject will continue to study it, and the ultimate standing of their discipline will depend largely on the number of such persons and the interest and scholarly significance of their work. In the meantime, it is interesting to note that a good many apprentice-scholars are choosing musico-literary topics for their dissertations. This fact would seem to argue well for the future of such pursuits.

By general consent, the study of the relationships between literature and the other arts and sciences—music, painting, psychology, economics —has been considered as a part of comparative literature. There seems to be no cogent logical reason for such a classification, and there are valid arguments against it. I find it hard to conceive of a comparatist who knows only one literature and can read, for literary purposes, only one language. Yet, under this classification, a student of American literature who specializes on the interrelations of American politics and American literature would be a comparatist. Even stranger, if possible, is the fact that every Marxist critic will be a comparatist, no matter what literature he studies, since Marxist criticism is, by definition, the study of the interrelations between economics and literature. If comparative literature is to include all these types of study as a matter of course, the term will be so broad as to be meaningless.

In practice, comparative literature is often defined as the study of literature across national and linguistic boundaries. But everyone recognizes the fact that the linguistic boundaries are the crucial ones. Since only one language is involved, no one considers the study of Eng-

[6] His "Essay on English Metrical Law" first appeared in 1857 as "English Metrical Critics." See *Coventry Patmore's "Essay on English Metrical Law": A Critical Edition with a Commentary* by Sister Mary Augustine Roth (Washington, D.C., 1961). Patmore does not use musical notation, but constantly cites musical parallels.

[7] Sachs, *The Commonwealth of Art* (New York, 1946), p. 21.

lish and American, or of Spanish and Spanish American literature to be comparative. On the other hand, I would consider the study of the French and Flemish literature of Belgium to be comparative, in spite of the fact that no national boundaries are crossed. The study of the relationships between literature and the other arts has been commonly accepted as comparative, I believe, because of the dimly felt but unformulated fact that it is a study of literature involving two different media of expression. Whether painting and music may legitimately be called languages is an ancient and still unsettled question. But it is clear that, for our purpose here, they are analogous to languages in that they are media of expression used, as languages are in literature, for artistic purposes. If we define comparative literature as any study of literature involving at least two different media of expression, a good many difficulties in classification will disappear. This definition will rule out literature and science, literature and psychology, literature and economics, because science, psychology, and economics are not media of expression. They are techniques and fields of study, and as such are comparable to literary criticism or comparative literature itself, not to genre painting or chamber music or French poetry or Greek epic. Once this definition is accepted, the absurdity of making all Marxist or Freudian criticism comparative will disappear. And if it is not accepted, if comparative literature is simply to be the study of the relations of a literature to something else, then every literary biography will be comparative, since it will be a study of the interactions of literature and biography.

If it is conceded that musico-literary studies are a recognized and worthwhile branch of comparative literature, the next question concerns the specific nature of these studies. It would be possible to draw up a fine theoretical table showing the general possibilities and working out their branches and twigs. Such a schematic view of the field would run approximately as follows.

Since music and literature have become two separate arts, their combination in a single work now presents many problems, which are essentially the problems of vocal music in all its branches. The most obvious and fascinating of these is the relationship between text and music. This relationship may be based on various and quite different assumptions. Is a poem merely the raw material for a song, or is the music merely an accompaniment for a stylized recitation of the poem? What are the problems of the composer who sets a song? Conversely, what are the problems of the poet who writes lyrics for a pre-existing tune? (This latter problem is practically never mentioned, but the practice is common enough in literary history. Perhaps the most familiar

example is the lyrics of a ballad opera.) Opera poses a number of special problems in addition to those of other vocal music, especially with regard to the libretto. Here there is not only the need for a singable text, but also the requirement that a literary work be adapted to the peculiar requirements of the musical stage. (In theory, a libretto does not have to be based on a previous literary work, but in practice it usually is.) This adaptation will require such modifications as a drastic shortening of the text, multiplication and heightening of climaxes, suppression of elaborate or close reasoning, and language which is to be felt in song rather than understood word by word. These are only a few of the problems to which vocal music gives rise.

The next two general headings would deal with the influences of the two arts on each other. That of music on literature includes the many attempts—some fruitful, some futile—to adapt musical forms, devices, and techniques to literary uses. Some of these attempts are crudely obvious; others are highly subtle. We would never be able to demonstrate, or even suspect, the derivation of the stream-of-consciousness technique from the Wagnerian music drama if we did not have the individual documented links of the chain running from Wagner to Dujardin to Joyce, the last connection attested by Valery Larbaud.[8] The attempts of literature to rival or reproduce or suggest music—the "verbal music" of Scher's article—are one heading under the much wider field of the use of music as a subject of literature.

The influences of literature on music would not form an exactly parallel section of the diagram because the problems are different. They would deal primarily with two aspects of program music, its adoption of the relative freedom of form found in its literary models, and its attempts to secure for music specific "meanings" which are an essential attribute of the sounds of language, but not of the sounds of most music. There would also be some borrowings of literary devices and techniques—the leitmotiv as a musical word, for example—but these would be relatively rare. Literature as a subject of music would be an essential part of the study of program music rather than a separate category.

Finally, there would be a main heading for the analogies and parallels between the two arts when they are neither combined nor influenced directly by each other. Under this heading would come things like the comparison of musical and literary metrics, the historical study of

[8] See Édouard Dujardin, *Le Monologue intérieur, son apparition, ses origines, sa place dans l'œuvre de James Joyce et dans le roman contemporain* (Paris, 1931), and the same author's *Les Lauriers sont coupés,* éd. définitive, Préface de Valery Larbaud (Paris, 1924).

parallel or nonparallel developments in the two arts at any given period, and the whole related question of periodization and identifiable period styles and characteristics.

This schematic sketch of the relationships between literature and music which are available for study could be carried into far greater detail, of course, but it has served its purpose by giving some indicaiton of the range and nature of the field. It is hardly worth while to work it out thoroughly because few literary-musical studies are pure specimens of any relationship as it would be isolated in a schematic table. The categories themselves overlap and interact, and the individual study is likely to require the treatment of several different categories. Hence it is worth while to consider briefly some of the commonly practiced types of studies and the various elements that normally enter into them.

One type which will already be familiar to comparatists is the study of reception, dissemination, and influence. Except for the use of a composer rather than a writer, Kurt Jäckel's *Richard Wagner in der französischen Literatur* and Leo Schrade's *Beethoven in France: The Growth of an Idea* are essentially the same sort of investigations as Baldensperger's *Goethe en France*.[9] Such studies naturally vary widely, according to the nature of the phenomena involved. Wagner's French impact was a mixture of publicity, critical theory, personal friendship and adulation, and a good many other factors besides his actual music. In fact, some of his most ardent French supporters had heard little of his music, and had no clear grasp of even that small sample. With Beethoven, on the other hand, the music itself was the principal thing, and the only real complicating factor was the romantic cult of the genius. Studies of this type are limited by the fact that few composers have had enough literary impact to justify or unify them. It would be perfectly possible to investigate Brahms in France or Debussy in Germany, for example, but the result would probably be only a series of separate facts and items which would not combine into any significant ideas or generalizations.

There are no purely literary parallels to the various types of studies in vocal music, where the essential problem is always related to the attempt to combine two arts into an organic whole. Insofar as the literary text usually comes first and the musical setting later, we might say that the problem is that of translating a literary text into musical

[9] Jäckel in Sprache und Kultur der germanischen und romanischen Völker, romanistische Reihe, III, Breslau, 1931 (Vol. I) and 1932 (Vol. II). The third and final volume was never completed. Schrade, New Haven, 1942. Baldensperger, Paris, 1904 and 1920.

terms, but there is the important difference that the musical translation is not substituted for the original, but added to it. Furthermore, though the analogy may have a certain abstract plausibility, it is of no help whatsoever in the actual study of the problems of vocal music. Most of the basic problems involved in the relationships of libretto to play and of drama to opera are considered in greater or less detail in Ulrich Weisstein's essay in this issue, which brings together and systematizes the scattered observations on the subject which Auden, as a lifelong devotee of opera and deviser and translator of librettos, has made.

Jack Stein's study of the important settings of the *Wilhelm Meister* songs is essentially an investigation of the adding of musical setting to poems which originally called for such settings, but did not supply them. Hence it seems at first to be a relatively uncomplicated study that fits the suggested abstract scheme. Actually, it shows how the elements are always mixed and the types of enquiry overlap. While the main emphasis is always on the specific setting for a specific text, it turns out that the settings cannot be understood or interpreted without reference to such matters as the context of the poems in the novel, the basic opposition between Goethe's ideal of song and that of the nineteenth-century composers of *lieder*, and the gradual process by which the poems came to be generally divorced from their original occasions in the novel and considered as independent lyrics. There is also necessarily some consideration of the changing musical tastes and assumptions of the period, quite apart from Goethe's own rather severe musical limitations.

In the realm of musical influence on literature, the numerous studies of the use of musical forms and specific techniques in single literary works conform to our theoretical scheme rather closely, since these phenomena can be more or less isolated for analysis. In a more generalized form, there are investigations of such adaptations from music in a writer's work as a whole, or in a whole school or period of writing. Steven Scher's essay lays a general basis for the study of the related phenomenon of literature's attempts to reproduce or suggest, not the forms and techniques of music (though these may also be used on occasion), but its effects on its hearers. Such attempts have been widely made, both as *transpositions d'art* of specific compositions and as imitations of music in general. Here again the abstract categories are not entirely applicable in practice, for though we must make a distinction between verbal music and mere musical analysis or description, verbal music also uses analysis and description, while subordinating them to an aesthetic intention.

One of the commonest types of musico-literary study is a general

investigation that will typically have a title like "Stefan George and Music" or "Music in the Works of Stefan George." Such studies are highly variable. At their worst, they merely collect all the musical references in an author's work and display them, for reasons which are not readily apparent. There is no reason to expect that "Music in the Works of Dickens" will be either more or less illuminating than, say, "The Horse in the Works of Dickens."[10] But even this sort of study may have its historical uses. The various investigations of Samuel Pepys' musical interests contribute nothing to our understanding of the art of literature, but they have provided a good deal of information for music historians about the musical life of London early in the Restoration. On the other hand, there are writers like Thomas Mann, Conrad Aiken, and Josef Weinheber for whom music has been a fundamental experience and a shaping force, and studies of their uses of music may be of real literary importance. Then there are the uninformed and intuitive music-lovers—Mallarmé is a prime example—who are endlessly tantalizing because their musical experience was apparently deep and suggestive, but also highly personalized and idiosyncratic, so that we look for some reflection of it in their works without ever being able either to find and demonstrate it or to write it off. Any investigation of the place of music in a writer's life and works is bound to be opportunistic and rather unclassifiable in that it will combine all sorts of musico-literary approaches according to the exigencies of the particular subject. Such studies often go beyond a writer's own life and work to include accounts of his impact on the musical world, usually in the form of listing and possibly also criticism of the settings of his poems and the operas, ballets, and now the films with background music based on his works. Sometimes the musical adaptations are the essential part of the study: a recent Russian book on Lermontov and music devotes more than four-fifths of its pages to the songs, operas, ballets, and films which the poet's work has called forth.[11]

This type of study is, of course, largely concerned with the influence of literature on music. In a sense the same thing may be said of the essays on the musical settings of poems and the problems of opera. Beyond these particular subjects, the more general literary impact on music, as shown in programmatic aims and practices, the loosening up or breaking down of fixed forms, and other such purely musical con-

[10] After writing this, I checked my card-file bibliography of musico-literary relations and found four articles plus James T. Lightwood, *Charles Dickens and Music* (London, 1912). I have not seen this volume, nor do I have an equo-literary bibliography to check on the horse possibility.

[11] B. Glovatskii, *Lermontov i muzyka* (Leningrad, 1964).

siderations, is usually considered the province of the musicologist rather than the literary scholar.

There is no reason why these two forms of scholarship cannot be combined in the same person, and there are certain types of investigations for which this combination is essential. These studies are highly mixed in their nature, and most often deal with the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In this issue they are illustrated by the essays of Nan Carpenter and of Frederick Sternfeld and Mary Chan. Such studies usually involve a good deal of detective work in straightening out some of the relationships between music and poetry which were obvious in their own day and hence not recorded, but which must now be unraveled by scholars who are equally at home in the musical and the literary traditions of the Renaissance. This type of technical scholarship clears the way for better nontechnical understanding of literature. Thus we learn not only how imbued with music a poet like Skelton was and how it entered into his poetry, but also that, even in an age when the two arts were much closer together than they now are, the poet's approach to music was still something different from that of the musical professional. Or we follow the vicissitudes of a popular poem, with its parodies and musical variants, and finally emerge with an understanding of some points that have been missed before in one of Shakespeare's plays. One of the most extensive branches of musico-literary scholarship at present concerns the important and largely neglected musical aspects of medieval and Renaissance drama.

On balance, the "extrinsic" study of literature seems to justify itself as far as musico-literary relations are concerned. If there has been a good deal of loose dilettantism, that is true in most kinds of human endeavor. The worst work in this field is no worse than the worst work elsewhere, and the best can take its place alongside the best work in other branches of literary scholarship.

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