MUSICAL COHERENCE AND POETIC MEANING IN GEORGE CRUMB'S

APPARITION

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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(Signature)

Department of Music

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date August 30, 1994
DOCTORAL RECITAL*

KRISTINA SZUTOR, piano

From Eight Preludes for Piano (1948)  
Frank Martin  
(1890-1974)

Prelude #1, Grave  
Prelude #8, Vivace

Variations on a Theme by Schumann, Op. 9 (1854)  
Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

Prelude in G# minor, Op. 32, No. 12 (1910)  
Sergey Rachmaninov  
(1873-1943)

Prelude in B flat Major, Op. 23, No. 2 (1903)

- INTERMISSION -

Sonata in A minor, K. 310 (1778)  
W.A. Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Allegro maestoso  
Andante cantabile con espressione  
Presto

From Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano (1946-1948)  
John Cage  
(1912-1993)

Sonata II  
Sonata III  
Sonata X  
First Interlude  
Third Interlude  
Sonata V

Postcards From Our Futures, for piano and tape (1989)  
Robert Pritchard  
(b. 1956)

I  Tokyo 1969 (Ginza-gone - Reno glitz)  
II  Roma 1908 (Wistfully pastoral, with neo-Euro-industrial overtones)  
III  New York 1953 (Real gone hep cats 2 a.m. Greenwich Village, yeah,  
man, go-go-go...)

* In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree with a major in Piano Performance.
The works presented on the first half of tonight's program were all conceived for -- and could not be rendered successfully on anything other than -- the modern grand piano. Those on the second half of the program, on the other hand, were either written with another instrument in mind (such as the fortepiano) or else imply and include other mediums altogether, such as percussion ensemble and electroacoustics. While the first group can be characterized as primarily harmonic and subjective in content, the second group can be heard as more linear and objective.

John Cage came up with the idea of the "prepared piano" in 1938 when he was asked to compose music for a dance piece entitled Bacchanale. His invention proved to be an ingenious solution to the problem of providing "percussion music" to match the primitive quality of this dance, on a stage that had room for only a piano. The screws and bolts inserted between the strings inside the piano completely transform the sound of the instrument and, in effect, place an entire percussion ensemble under the control of a single player. Cage's works for prepared piano gained him a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1949 for "having thus extended the boundaries of musical art."

Sonatas and Interludes is Cage's most important work for this medium. The word "sonata" here is used in an 18th century sense rather than a Romantic sense and this links Cage's work to that of Mozart. Both works display a central concern for proportion and clarity of line and texture. The full cycle consists of sixteen sonatas and four interludes, and is an explicit attempt to represent, in music, a gamut of stylized emotions derived from Indian aesthetics. Cage was introduced to the subject through his reading of the works of the art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy. The eight "permanent emotions" depicted in Sonatas and Interludes are: the heroic, the erotic, the wondrous, the mirthful, the sorrowful, the fearful, the angry and the odious, and the common tendency of all of these towards tranquility. There is, however, no indication as to how the various parts of the cycle relate specifically to these emotions. That is up to the listener to determine.

K. Szutor

I'll let the composer himself tell you about the last work on the program, Postcards From Our Futures.

Postcards was written at the request of my sister Barbara Pritchard. Originally, she had asked for a solo piano work, but as I began writing the piece I realized that I wanted to make use of electroacoustic timbres as well.

At the time of writing, the title referred to cities which lay in my future -- cities which I had not yet visited. I viewed these cities in the same way in which I viewed works of music written in the past -- I hoped and expected to become familiar with them sometime in my future. In one sense, music from the past is a snapshot of a specific musical time or era. However, cities change, and their past becomes elusive.

The three movements - and their subtitles - are meant to convey the artificial ideas and images often found in postcards. The first movement refers to the garish shopping districts of Tokyo, and mixes vertical and horizontal presentations of limited pitch material. The second movement makes use of samples taken from an early Caruso recording of Donizetti's Una Furtiva from the opera L'Elixer d'Amore, and the form of the movement is based on the cadenza which Donizetti wrote for the aria. the last movement is a reflection on New York, and it becomes a frantic exercise for the pianist as she attempts to remain in sync with the tape.

R. Pritchard
ABSTRACT

This document examines a somewhat neglected work by George Crumb—his song cycle entitled *Apparition: Elegiac Songs and Vocalises for Soprano and Amplified Piano*. This work is based on texts from Walt Whitman's poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." The approach taken is twofold: the musical integrity of Crumb's work is disclosed through a study of its motivic relations, and its semantic content is examined through the relations it sets up between music and text.

The introduction sets out the author's position relative to some of the current thought on the methodology of song analysis. It also gives some background information about *Apparition* and points out its more traditional character in comparison to the innovative series of works that constitute Crumb's "Lorca Cycle."

The musical images that appear in *Apparition* are intimately bound up with the symbols and events in Whitman's poem. An understanding of this poem is therefore vital to an appreciation of the song cycle. Chapter One discusses the features of Whitman's poem that are salient to Crumb's work.

Chapter Two provides a detailed analysis of each movement, taking into account form, motivic content, compositional procedures, musico-poetic relations and the function of each movement within the cycle as a whole. The analysis reveals a highly unified cycle which derives most of its musical materials from those presented in the first movement. The work takes as its central informing principle, the idea of the cyclic nature of life and death.
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Preface and Acknowledgements

The notational conventions employed throughout this document are in accordance with those set forth in John Rahn's *Basic Atonal Theory*.\(^1\) Specific pitches are therefore numbered according to the system of the American Acoustical Society whereby middle C is designated C4 etc., whereas pitch class 0 denotes all C's irrespective of the octave in which they appear. Unordered collections of pitch class sets are given in set brackets, for example \{x,y\}; ordered collections are given in angle brackets, for example \langle x,y \rangle; and pitch-class set types are given in square brackets, for example \[014\]. Integers designate intervals as measured in semitones whereby 1 corresponds to a minor second, 6 to a tritone, etc. Rehearsal numbers in the score of *Apparition* will be designated by Rx, and line numbers of the poem are given in parentheses.


I wish to express my sincerest thanks to Dr. John Roeder for his patience and insightful guidance in the preparation of this document, and to Dr. Robert Silverman for his unflagging support and friendship throughout our many years of association.

Introduction

George Crumb’s song cycle entitled *Apparition: Elegiac Songs and Vocalises for Soprano and Amplified Piano* is a work of substantial breadth and depth that makes a major contribution to the song cycle repertoire of the twentieth century. In view of this fact, the lack of critical appraisal that has attended the work is puzzling. This document seeks to redress the current situation by drawing attention to the work’s considerable artistic merits through a study of its musical and poetic relations.

*Apparition* is based on texts from Walt Whitman’s poem “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.” The song cycle was written by Crumb in 1979 at the request of his long-time friend and associate, singer Jan DeGaetani. The work received its premiere on January 13, 1981 by its dedicatees, DeGaetani and pianist, Gilbert Kalish.² *Apparition* marks the composer’s return to writing for the voice, something he had not done for almost a decade since *Ancient Voices of Children* (1970), the last of the major works in the great “Lorca cycle”, as they have come to be known.³ In venturing an association with a poet other than Lorca, it is perhaps not surprising that Crumb, having been steeped in the dark world of Lorca’s poetry during the ‘sixties, should gravitate to the poem of Whitman’s that is most “Lorca-esque” in its intense contemplation of death.⁴

It was Crumb’s aim in *Apparition* to break with the pattern, established throughout the Lorca cycle, of pairing the voice with highly innovative

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³ Except for *Federico’s Little Songs for Children* (1986).
⁴ Lorca himself recognized in Whitman a man of like mind and spirit as is evident in his “Ode to Walt Whitman” from the collection *Poet in New York*. For more on the Lorca-Whitman connection see Paul Binding, *Lorca: the Gay Imagination* (London: GMP Publisher Ltd., 1985), 134-142.
combinations of instruments in a chamber setting, in order to return to the "traditional medium of the 19th-century song" for voice and piano alone.\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Apparition} is joined in this category of Crumb's oeuvre only by a solitary three-minute song entitled "The Sleeper",\textsuperscript{6} which Crumb set to part of a text by Poe in 1984, and by a handful of student works, of which only "Three Early Songs" are currently available. These are slight works, not in the same league with \textit{Apparition}, which can therefore be seen as occupying a singular place in the composer's output.

Little in \textit{Apparition} is innovative compared to the works in the Lorca cycle, which made extraordinary use of conventional instruments, and ordinary use of unconventional and exotic instruments. Aside from a few extended techniques in the writing for piano, such as "aeolian harp" strums and harmonics, the composer's approach to the instruments here, in keeping with his goal, is quite conventional for its date of composition. In terms of his personal stylistic evolution as well, Crumb comes to \textit{Apparition} with his musical vocabulary already fully formed: there is nothing in the harmonic, melodic or rhythmic content of the work that does not have an earlier precedent.\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Apparition} is clearly not about innovation. Rather, the focus is on the musical materials themselves—their coherence, their development, and their relationship to the text.

The following study will seek to uncover the means by which musical coherence is achieved in \textit{Apparition} as well as to explore the relations it sets up between music and text. Rather than measuring the success of the music by the degree to which it concords with the text, which would imply that the function of

\footnotesize{
\textsuperscript{5} Crumb, as quoted in Henahan, "Recital: Jan DeGaetani."

\textsuperscript{6} This work was also commissioned by Jan de Gaetani, who asked Crumb, along with a number of other composers, simply to write her a short song.

the music should be a mimetic one, I believe that a much less restrictive attitude is appropriate, whereby the music can be seen as an expression of the composer’s particular reading of that text. Such an attitude is expressed by Kofi Agawu who, in the pursuit of insight into the many levels on which song can mean, advocates an approach to analysis in which the music “may support... contradict... or remain indifferent to the text.”

The text of *Apparition* is taken from Walt Whitman’s elegy “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”. There are the considerable difficulties facing a composer who attempts to deal with a literary work as significant and as widely-known as Whitman’s “Lilacs”. One view of the problem is expressed by Lawrence Kramer:

> A piece of vocal music based on a well-known poem necessarily risks a comparison that may make it seem expressively inferior... An important text will be known in its own right, and many listeners will have internalised it through various acts of interpretation ...In order to violate the “language barrier” against its expressive autonomy, the music will have to grapple with the accumulated force of meaning lodged in the poem: to recognize and to overcome the listener’s probable prior reading.  

However, a composer can take a more positive attitude about a well-known poem. Listeners’ familiarity with the work need not be a handicap but may actually serve as an advantage to the extent that they will be familiar with themes of the text. The composer, instead of being forced to clarify the content of an obscure text, is free to play upon the common knowledge of that text and to elaborate on various aspects of it.

This is what Crumb does in *Apparition*. By choosing to set only specific

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portions of the text, he eschews much of the poem's subjective content in order to focus on its universal aspects, which revolve around the acceptance of death and its role in the cosmic cycle of events.\footnote{There are two other musical settings of "Lilacs", one by Paul Hindemith, who set it as an elegy for Franklin Roosevelt, and one by Roger Sessions, who set it as one for John F. Kennedy.}

Susanne Langer, in a classic work which examines the relations between text and music in song, argues that text, once it is enveloped in music, loses its identity, becoming assimilated by that music.\footnote{Susanne K. Langer, "The Principle of Assimilation," \textit{Feeling and Form} (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1953): 149-168.} Lawrence Kramer, on the other hand, argues that the text is \textit{incorporated} rather than assimilated, by which he means that it "retains its own life, its own 'body' within the body of music."\footnote{Kramer, 127.} There are elements of both these viewpoints which seem to be true in relation to the poetic text of "Lilacs" as it appears in \textit{Apparition}. On one hand, the text that is already very fragmentary, is subjected to additional alterations. Crumb omits lines from certain stanzas, reorders them, and even alters the form within various stanzas when it suits his musical purposes. On the other hand, the vital aspects of the poem—its principal images and its central philosophic viewpoint—are those which inform \textit{Apparition} as well. We shall explore some possible reasons for his selective alterations of the text in the course of the following analysis.
The Poetry

An understanding of the poetic text of “Lilacs” is vital to a comprehensive appreciation of Crumb’s musical work. The task at hand then is to become familiar with the salient features of Whitman’s work—its structure, its principal themes, and its symbols—as well as the lines of development by which these are brought into conflict with one another and subsequently resolved.

Whitman’s “Lilacs”, widely recognized as one of his most successful poems, is an elegy for Abraham Lincoln, written during the weeks following the President’s assassination on April 14, 1865. Lincoln’s death touched Whitman very deeply. The poet’s passionately democratic idealism was the wellspring of his reverence for the man whom he describes in “Lilacs” as “the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands” (204). Indeed, it took the creation of several commemorative works for Whitman to finally assuage his grief over Lincoln’s passing. Among these, however, the most masterful is “Lilacs”, with its wealth of metaphor, its depth of feeling, and its inspired harmonization of form and content. Gay Allen, an authority on the life and works of Whitman, describes the poet’s achievement in “Lilacs”:

emotional and romantic as the poem is, Whitman did not let his private problems or his usual idiosyncrasies of language or gesture or poetic theory intrude. He expressed his own personal attitudes indirectly through a consistent set of symbols and modulated his music in conformity to a symphonic structure.\(^\text{15}\)


\(^{14}\)The collection entitled Memories of President Lincoln contains three other poems besides “Lilacs”, that were written to commemorate Lincoln’s death: “O Captain! My Captain!”; “Hushed Be the Camps Today”; and “This Dust Was Once the Man”.

Since two of the most prominent symbols in the poem arose directly out of circumstances surrounding Lincoln’s death, it would seem appropriate to sketch these before turning to an explication of the poem itself.

The weeks preceding Lincoln’s death were ones of heightened emotion and strain for Whitman. While he shared in the nation’s hope and excitement at the prospect of the Civil War finally drawing to a close, he was also tending to those wounded in that war and contending with family strife brought about by the imprisonment of his brother George. Against this emotionally turbulent backdrop, he interpreted as an omen, the appearance, throughout several nights in March, of an unusually brilliant evening star. While he hoped that it might be a sign heralding an end to the war, he had negative presentiments about it as well. These were strengthened by the fact that the star seemed to droop in the night sky before it disappeared.\(^{16}\) His sense of anticipation—for better or worse—is confirmed in the poem when the speaker, recalling this time, states that “something, I know not what kept me from sleep” (60).

The news of Lincoln’s death reached Whitman on the morning of Easter Saturday, April 15th, during a sojourn in Brooklyn with his family. Whitman arrived back to his home in Washington on Easter Monday to find that the lilacs were in full bloom: masses of them covered the President’s casket at his funeral service two days later. In a speech that he would later deliver regularly on the anniversary of Lincoln’s death, Whitman mused on the significance that the lilacs assumed for him after the confluence of these events:

I remember where I was stopping at the time, the season being advanced, there were many lilacs in full bloom. By one of those caprices that enter and give tinge to events without being at all a part of them, I find myself always reminded of the great tragedy of

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 354.
that day by the sight and odor of these blossoms. It never fails.  

Through these circumstances, both the star and the lilac came to be images that for Whitman would remain inextricably linked with Lincoln's death. It seems quite natural, then, that they would assume a prominent position in the elegy that was gestating in the poet's mind during the weeks following the event.

The exposition of the poem opens with two tercets that join the lilac and the star with the "thought of him I love" to form a trinity of images:

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

O ever-returning spring! trinity sure to me you bring:
Lilac blooming perennial, and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love (1-6)

When they are first presented, the lilac and the star seem to be mere facts of nature that are bound together in the poet's memory with his grief over the loss of "him I love".  

The symbolism of these images develops only gradually, achieving greater and greater resonance over the course of the poem. Important to notice here are the cyclic connotations of the words "ever returning", which refer not only to the lilac as a perennial, but also to the recurring mourning that the speaker is destined to feel each spring. The lilac therefore embodies a contradiction: while it is a symbol of spring and the time of birth, it also triggers memories of grief and the thought of death. The star is used at first as a direct metaphor for Lincoln himself, and its "drooping" symbolizes his death. Over the course of the poem, the star develops a broader meaning, eventually coming to symbolize the speaker's attachment to grief which keeps him, throughout much of the poem, from being able to reconcile

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18 In keeping with true elegiac tradition, Whitman never mentions the name of the deceased.
himself to the fact of death.

Aria-like sections, which expound on a particular emotion raised during the course of recitative-like sections which are more discursive, occur throughout the poem. (Whitman was quite an opera enthusiast by all accounts.19) Section 2 for instance, is very much like an aria. It has short, rhythmic lines and it focuses on one emotion—the poet's feeling of grief in relation to the star—that is heightened through repeats of "O" at the beginning of all, and in the middle of many of the lines. (The most sustained and song-like of all the "arias", however, is the "death carol" which appears in Section 14.) The overpowering grief expressed here leaves the speaker feeling helpless and brings Section 2 to an emotional dead-end.

At this point, the poet attempts to find a way out of the stalemate by abruptly shifting his mental focus. Howard Waskow, in his insightful exegesis of the elegy, describes Whitman's method in the following terms:

"Lilacs" is full of breaks in tone and unexplained shifts in stance—gaps in the speaker's movement that we can bridge only by a kind of guessing, the exercise of our imaginations. Section 2, where the hero grieves for the star, and Section 3, where he turns to the lilac in quiet celebration, are joined not by rational lines but by implication, the special logic of emotion and metaphor.20

After contemplating this idiosyncrasy in Whitman's method, James E. Miller observes that the reader's role here is to

reconstruct emotionally the context of feeling of the successive images in order to supply, where no logic exists on the surface, a complex of subterranean, instinctive connections.21

We will find that the listener, in Crumb's Apparition, must play a similar role.

With the fourth section comes the entrance of the hermit thrush who has

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21 James E. Miller, Karl Shapiro and Bernice Slote, Start With The Sun: Studies in Cosmic Poetry (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), 50.
thus far been "waiting in the wings", so to speak. Despite its delayed introduction, its function is crucial to the dramatic development of the poem. It is also the only one of Whitman's symbols that will play a major role in Apparition, where it appears pseudonymously as the "night bird". Bird images figure prominently in several works by Whitman. Most often they act as the voice of nature, disclosing keys to hidden meanings of existence which they possess by virtue of their figurative ability to "reach higher regions". This describes the role of the hermit thrush in "Lilacs" as well as that of the "night bird" in Apparition. The bird makes four appearances throughout the course of the poem, and each time it appears its presence becomes more insistent and compelling. Its relations with the speaker progress in stages that are conditioned by the speaker's willingness to relinquish his attachment to grief. In their first encounter, for example, the speaker is consumed in mourning, and although he hears the bird singing, he is not as yet aware that the bird will have something important to convey to him through its song. When he addresses the bird, he does so indirectly in an aside which attests to their distant relations. The speaker's absorption with his own pain precludes the possibility of any further awareness at this point.

One final symbol, the coffin, is introduced before the poem's images begin to interact. While the coffin itself is not presented in the text of Apparition, the view of death that emerges through its treatment in the poem is pertinent to Crumb's work. The coffin is the symbol most directly related to "him I love". Although its obvious associations are with death and loss, there is little or no sense of darkness or anguish in section five, where the coffin is described travelling across the land. Instead, we read descriptions of nature burgeoning alongside its path—one that will

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lead to a place of rest after a long journey. This characterizes the philosophic view of death towards which the speaker is struggling to move. It also prefigures the vision, at the end of the poem, in which he sees that the the dead are "not as was thought, they themselves were fully at rest, they suffered not" (180).

The dramatic structure of the poem begins to reveal itself now through the interaction of the images which have thus far been explored in isolation. (This procedure pertains to Apparition as well, where the fragments of musical imagery introduced in its first few movements begin to interact and coalesce in the later movements.) In the poem, this disassociation dissolves at the close of section six with the description of one small but significant gesture: "Here, coffin that slowly passes, I give you my sprig of lilac" (44-45). Here, for the first time, the symbols are placed in relation to one another and the speaker, by his gesture—the offering of life to the memory of the dead man—takes an initial step towards defining his own philosophical relation to them both. The conclusion that he reaches at this point is an interim one: it must still undergo development and change through the central conflict of the work, which is about to emerge. This conflict is enacted between the bird, symbolizing the philosophical acceptance of death, and the star, symbolizing personal attachment to grief.

As noted earlier, the bird makes four appearances in the poem with less time intervening between each entry. This foreshortening in the rhythm of the entries serves to underscore the mounting tension in the poem. The sheer fact that the bird is required to reappear as often as it does, shows that the experience represented by its song is not one towards which the poet can move easily. He has a great deal of resistance to it, in the form of his attachment to his grief, but this is gradually broken down through his experiences until he finds that he is receptive to what the bird
has to say. 23

The tension in the poem builds as the star and the bird vie for the poet’s attention. During their second encounter, the speaker is much more aware of the bird than he was in their first meeting. He now registers its song, at least intellectually; “I hear your notes...I understand you,” yet he is unable to give himself over to it, for “The star my departing comrade holds and detains me” (70).

The grip of this grief is loosened however, after the events of the following sections (ten, eleven and twelve). The speaker succeeds in asserting his vitality and creative powers by offering up his own life-affirming song to the memory of the deceased. In effect he is no longer “helpless” under the weight of his grief, as he was in the second section, but has found the strength to use the experience as fuel for his own creativity. The result of this experience is that the speaker, arriving at his third encounter with the bird, can now focus much more exclusively on its song. Indeed his attention is riveted by it: “O wondrous singer! You only I hear” (105-106). Although he is still held by the star (or, quite probably, he is holding onto the star himself for fear of what he will hear in the bird’s song) he recognizes that its grip is now very tenuous: “yet the star holds me (but will soon depart)” (106).

By the time the speaker encounters the bird for the fourth time, he is spiritually ready to receive its message. This time, when the bird sings the “carol of death”, the speaker understands its song: “And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird” (134). A transcendent experience is induced in the speaker through the bird’s consoling and joyful verses. The seven verses which comprise this sustained “aria” present a unified view of death as a welcome and fully integrated aspect of the universal process.24 The song of the bird imparts the wisdom of

23 Nelson, 115.
24 This section of the poem is given in the Appendix.
nature to the speaker who then experiences a vision of a battlefield. Armed with the insight gained through the “death carol”, he sees that it is the living who suffer while the the dead are “fully at rest” (181). The speaker then passes back from the visionary state through to a present reality which is enriched and edified by his experiences. Through coming to terms with death, he finds that he is freed from his fixation with the star: “I cease...from my gaze on thee in the west...O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night” (195-97). And he is able to express his love for the departed one without the earlier burden of debilitating grief. In a final commemorative gesture, the speaker gathers the images that have accompanied him on his metaphorical journey, and offers them up in a song to the memory of the deceased:

For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands–and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and cedars dusk and dim. (204-205)
Apparition:

I. The Night in Silence Under Many a Star

The text for the opening movement is taken from the penultimate stanza of the death carol. It introduces the principal subjects of the song cycle: man and the cosmos. In each of the four lines of the first movement a specific image is introduced. Two refer to elements in the natural realm—"the night" and "the ocean shore"—while the other two refer to those in the human realm—"the soul" and "the body". The opening words are repeated in each stanza, allowing for emphasis and musical expansion of the ideas associated with them.

Musically the movement is in strophic variant form, comprising three verses and a coda-like ending. The central musical image that Crumb has chosen for the movement, described in his opening directive as a "welling, pulsating sound of nature", is realized through an "aeolian harp" strum on the strings of the piano. Dampers raised from the pitches C#1, 2 and 4 and G#1, 3 and 4, during the strumming establish a pedal that continues throughout the movement. Among the several layers of signification inherent in this texture is that of a kind of oceanic movement and immutability that underlies all the other images in the movement: the pedal tones keep returning after other things have passed. This musical recurrence resonates strongly with the cyclic connotations of the words "ever-returning" and "perennial" which are essential to the opening lines of "Lilacs". This cyclic connotation is further reinforced, for the performers at least, by the curved staff in the score, one more in a long tradition of visual symbols that Crumb...
has used in the notation of his music.\textsuperscript{25} The piano's welling figuration also calls to mind Whitman's frequent references to the ocean as a direct metaphor for death, as exemplified in the following lines:

Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,  
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death (150).\textsuperscript{26}

It is also the first manifestation of the undulating motion that will later bring us "serenely arriving" to the emotional center of the music, in the fifth movement.

The principal motivic material for both the first movement, and also for the song cycle as a whole, is given by the voice in its first two phrases. The motives are presented in the form of trichordal cells which are the typical building blocks of Crumb's compositional technique. He describes his general approach, often called his "mosaic" technique, in the following terms:

Basically this method of construction consists of the elaboration and expansion of minute pitch and rhythmic elements. From these I tend to build larger shapes, as opposed to beginning with and working with larger units.\textsuperscript{27}

The motivic trichords will be identified by their pitch-class set type since their intervalic content gives a clearer indication of their identity than does their melodic contour. Example 1 gives the five motives that are presented during the soprano's repetition of the opening text, "The night in silence":

\textsuperscript{25} The broken arches in \textit{Eleven Echoes of Autumn} and various astrological symbols in \textit{Makrokosmos} are examples of others in this tradition.

\textsuperscript{26} For more on Whitman's references to circularity and water images in relation to death, see James Michos Hughes, "The Dialectic of Death in Poe, Dickinson, Emerson and Whitman" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1969).

Example 1a. The vocal line containing the work’s principal motives

Example 1b. The five principal motives

Besides the motives and the pedal, there are two apparently different elements in this movement, both of which are introduced by the piano. The first of these, an interleaving of four minor chords (type [037]) into the strumming texture, occurs twice, approximately when the soprano concludes her first two phrases. These minor chords are presented in first inversion, two at a time, with each pair a whole tone apart and the pairs separated by a minor third. The pitch-class series of the upper voice that results from these transpositions is <A,G,E,D>. This kind of pairing of whole tones, although with variations in the distance separating them, will be seen at several other conspicuous points in the music. The chords themselves are dissonant to the sonority established by the pedal. The disquiet and dissent they introduce here prefigures their similar role in succeeding movements, culminating in their domination of “Approach Strong Deliveress”.

The second “foreign” element that the piano introduces against its pedal tones comes, significantly, as the voice finishes “under many a star”. The right
hand of the piano at this point presents a new version of motive a that has been transformed through octave displacements to yield a figure that strikes the ear like jagged points of light (see Ex. 2).

Example 2. The piano’s “star” figure

Together with the bright energy of this figure there is a disturbing element introduced below it in the form of the blurred glissandos. These create a dark and murky texture that begins to obliterate all other sounds at the dynamic peak of each verse. The damper pedal is then released, reexposing the harmonic pedal on C# and G#, which has been there the whole time. This musical presentation of the “star figure” over the blurred glissandos strongly evokes, for a listener familiar with the poem, the second section of “Lilacs”, a text that is not actually present in Crumb’s setting.

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappeared—O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

In both the poem and the music this “black murk” is something that threatens to obliterate the image of the star. In both cases, the immutable presence of nature metaphorically underlies and absorbs the events that appear dramatic and significant on a human scale.28

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28 On a literal level, Whitman was referring to the atmospheric conditions that obscured the sight of the star in the night sky. On a symbolic level, the star came to signify Lincoln himself and the “black murk” could therefore be seen as a metaphor for death.
Within the overall form there is a textural disjunction between the vocal line and the piano. In the tradition of strophic accompaniment, the piano is bound to an unchanging repetition of its events, (although, as noted earlier, the repetition here does form an integral part of the cyclic image being conveyed). The vocal line however, enjoys considerable rhythmic independence from the piano due to the fact that the two are not written to be precisely synchronized. While retaining similarities in contour and rhythm, the vocal phrases are varied in a fashion that is typical for Crumb–through the recombination and subtle alteration of basic motivic materials.

Form is also created by pitch and interval relations within the vocal line. Verses two and three contain larger leaps and stronger dissonances than either the first verse or the last. There are leaps of major sevenths at “the ocean shore” in verse two and those of a tritone and a major seventh at “the soul” in verse three. The central two verses also bring the voice to its highest points within the movement. The vocal line climbs from a peak on C#5 in the first verse through to D#5 in the second, then on to its apex on F5 in the third verse, after which it recedes to the C5 below that. Against the underlying pedal on C#, this progression can be represented as the intervalic series <8ve, m9, M10, M7>, which begins in consonance and ends in dissonance.

The D4 on which the vocal line comes to rest has been a significant pitch. Not only has it brought each verse of the vocal line to a close, but it has also been the lowest pitch for each vocal phrase. It is therefore convincing in its role of closure in the linear dimension, but vertically, in relation to the prevailing pedal, it lies in a dissonant, Phrygian relationship, and is therefore open-ended and hardly conclusive. This inconsistency of function is a musical metaphor for the idea that
death is conclusive in only one of the dimensions that constitute the whole of reality. A subtle instance of Augenmusik in the third verse reinforces this point. In all four verses, the voice cadences to the first white key above middle C. In verses 1, 2, and 4 (ie. on “star”, “know” and “thee”) this pitch is notated as D-natural. However, in the third verse, which ends on the word “death”, this same pitch is notated as C-double sharp. This distinction may be purely visual, but to the performers at least, it connotes an active, upward tendency in the note that sets the word “death”, and so reinforces the philosophic view set forth in the text.

The final verse, like a coda, encapsulates the motivic content of the opening two phrases which present motives a through d in succession. Verse four presents two statements of both motive a and motive d. A sense of closure is achieved through the slower tempo, along with the increasing spans of silence in the vocal line. Together, these can be seen as conveying a sense of waning energy as “the body” gradually expires approaching death.

Of all the motives introduced here, motive a, type [014], assumes the most prominent position. It is the first motive to be introduced and it figures regularly in the vocal line. Moreover, throughout the movement it also makes several conspicuous appearances in which it contrasts abruptly with its surroundings (see Exx. 3a-3d.)

Example 3a. Motive a in the piano’s “star” figure 3b. in the vocal line at “the ocean shore”
In example 3a, the angularity and pointillism of the piano's figuration stands out as heterogeneous to the surrounding strums. In example 3b, in the second phrase of the vocal line, the elaboration of the minor sixth at "the night" presents leaps of a major seventh that are unprecedented and contrast strongly with the surrounding melodic intervals, which consist principally of seconds and thirds. The same is true of example 3c. Motive a in the final example is conspicuously set apart from everything else in the vocal line by large gaps of silence. This distinctiveness underscores the importance of the word "gratefully", which conveys the first clear indication of how the idea of death will be viewed.

In summary, the primary features in this first movement are: the universal scope of its text, which establishes a contextual frame for the work's subject matter; connotations of the ocean and cyclic processes; the introduction of the work's principal motives; the prominence given to motive a; and the suggestions of an optimistic view of death. Although, as we have seen, a number of discrete events occur in this movement, the harmonic and rhythmic wash of sound provided by the piano strum is so pervasive that it tends to envelop them, giving the listener, on first hearing, the impression of one large static and undifferentiated gesture. The work's characteristic motives are thus presented against the background of a kind of primal mire. From this genesis the succeeding movements will arise and begin focusing on, varying, and reassembling the initial ideas. The roles of various motives will become increasingly clear in the course of their subsequent
elaborations and juxtapositions with one another. This coalescence of fragmentary material is very much like the process that is evident in "Lilacs" in which relationships between the discrete images of the lilac, the star, and the bird evolve only gradually.

**Vocalise 1: Summer Sounds**

The next movement presents the first of three vocalises that Crumb interleaves with Whitman's text in *Apparition*. Far from being gratuitous tokens to abstract modernity within this otherwise traditionally oriented work, each of the vocalises serves a vital purpose which would have been impossible to achieve with texted portions of music: they all refer to realms or states that exist beyond the spoken word.

The shift from the first movement to the second is highly abrupt, offering little immediate clue as to the possible connection between the two. We enter a sound world in the second movement which seems to be a complete non-sequitur to the first. This cross-cutting parallels Whitman's method of leaping between ideas in "Lilacs" which, as we have discussed, is "full of breaks in tone and unexplained shifts in stance". This description is appropriate to this point in *Apparition* as well. Yet on closer examination, the relationship between the first two movements begins to reveal itself as a drastic shift in focus, from the "macro" view, outlining the universal scope of the subject matter in the first movement, to a "micro" view of only part of it in the second.

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29 This was originally called "Sounds of a Summer Evening". The composer later found the titular reference to *Makrokosmos III: Music for a Summer Evening* to be redundant and therefore deleted it in the second edition of the work. (George Crumb, telephone conversation with author, July 4, 1994.)

30 as Donal Henahan intimates was his first suspicion upon viewing the score. He revised this opinion after actually hearing a performance of the work at which point he wrote that the vocalises "proved to be an effective device". See Henahan, "Recital: Jan DeGaetani".

Here sharply etched musical figures, together with Crumb’s fantastical phonemic text, depict a scene from the natural world inhabited by insects and birds and other, unidentifiable creatures. Their cries and calls are startling and brittle as they echo into the surrounding silences. The significance of “summer” in the title of this movement, and its relation to these types of sounds, is explained by the composer in the following excerpt from an interview by Edward Strickland.

Strickland: You mention summer in the section notes to Idyll, and another work, which you subtitled Makrokosmos III, is called Music for a Summer Evening. What do you associate with summer?

Crumb: Well, summer...hum...the world of natural sound is so much more evident in the summer—all the bird-voices, the insects. Up here we’re so shut in during the winter months from all the natural environment of sound.32

In its exploration of bird and insect noises, the vocalise allies itself with the genre of “night music” that was inspired by models in the works of Béla Bartók. The following example shows striking similarities between portions of Crumb’s Vocalise 1 and Bartók’s “Night Music” from his piano suite Out of Doors (Ex. 4a and 4b).

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There are similarities not only in the rhythmic groupings of the notes and the rests between them but also in the dynamic profile of the figures as they strike the ear and then sharply recede. The similarity extends to the way in which both composers establish a set number of distinct musical characters and then proceed to vary and recombine them. The unpredictability of events is another shared characteristic. So is the highly dissonant content of the accompanying harmonies, although in Bartók’s work these are comprised of clusters of seconds, while in Crumb’s they are almost exclusively tritones.

In their specific pitch-class content, the first and second movements complement one another. Those pitch-classes that were entirely absent from the first, namely D#, F#, A, and A#, are all included in the second. Motivically, the two movements are closely related. The vocalise draws all of its primary material from the motivic pool of the first movement. Even the germinal idea for its predominantly angular and pointillistic character comes directly from the piano’s “star” figure in the first movement. This relationship is made explicit at the beginning of the vocalise in the presentation of motive a. It duplicates the pitch classes found in the opening group of the “star” figure, (B, A#, G), only in varied order and an octave below. In its new guise, this version of motive a constitutes one of the three principal ideas that are fragmented and recombined to yield all the “creature noises” in this first vocalise. The three are given below in examples 5a-c.
A detailed view of the motivic events of the movement can be found in Table 1 (p.24). The top half of the table lists the pitch-class set types of the motives in the order in which they occur. Repetitions of sets are indicated on the line below. The table shows that the movement is in ternary form, in which the final A section is a variant of the first. Each of the three long periods of silence (3\"", 3\"", and 5\""") marks an important structural event. The first of these, for instance, serves to isolate the presentation of motives a and c, [0,1,4] and [0,1,2]. These are of primary importance in the movement because one or the other appears as a subset of every subsequent event. The next pitch-class collection, [0,1,2,6,8] appears four times throughout the movement at more or less evenly spaced intervals and can therefore be heard as a "refrain" element. The first three motivic events are repeated—the last two in varied form—to constitute a self-enclosed A section which is clearly set off from the beginning of the B section by the second of the 3\"" silences.

Three events comprise this central section. They help define the contrasting character of the B section to the extent that two of them present types of pitch-class sets that have not yet been heard. The first of these, [0,1,2,3,6], enjoys the distinction of being presented only once during the course of the movement. The set type [0,1,2,4], although it arises from the first combined presentation of the head motives, a and c, is not a unique event, as it will be heard again in the varied reprise of section A. The refrain set type [0,1,2,6,8] appears again, for the third time now, and rounds out the central portion of the movement.

The return of the A section is given prominence by the 5\"" stretch of silence—the longest in the movement—that precedes it. Motives a and c head the section as they did at the opening, only this time their order is switched so that motive c leads off. Following motive a, motive c is repeated, then the two are combined again to form [0,1,2,4], and then the refrain group makes a final
### Table 1

**Motivic Events in Vocalise 1**

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<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Coda</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(0,1,4)</td>
<td>(0,1,2,6,8)</td>
<td>(0,1,4)</td>
<td>(0,1,2,6,8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0,1,2,6,8)</td>
<td>(0,1,2,3,6)</td>
<td>(0,1,2,4)</td>
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<td>3'</td>
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<td>[x3]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

"ti" to "wi"  "a ——li"  "Li II) I<a—i"  "ti"  "ti" to "wi"  "u"

| p  | v  | p  | p  | p  | v  | v  | p  | p  | p  | v  | p  | v  | p  | v  |

\(x\)=number of repeats or partial repeats of a pitch-class set

p=piano

v=voice

vp=voice and piano
appearance to close the section.

The final dyad [0,2] is set apart from everything else by its extraordinary vocal texture. It forms a codetta to the movement. According to the composer, the “delicate Monteverdi trill” that is called for at this point is to be differentiated from the earlier repeated 32nd note quintuplets (i.e., at the end of the first system) by lighter and more rapid execution.33

Some of the inner dynamics of the movement are, however, not fully represented in the foregoing motivic analysis. At R5, for instance, the piano’s first [014] type gesture is suddenly shifted down a minor ninth, which, together with the new “echo” idea, and the return to the first pitch classes, suggests closure. The following vocal line contrasts with the previous vocal line, by sounding pure vowels without consonants. The phrase continues with the consonant-less text until the pause on B♭4. Heard in this way, the pitch classes <D#-E-B♭> form a self-enclosed unit, framed by a rest on one side and a pause on the other. This appearance of the [016] type set prefigures its important role in the following movement, where it sets the words “I mourned”. The correspondence is strengthened by the fact that they share two of the same pitch classes—B♭ and E. The [012] piano figure after the 5” rest recalls the echo gesture in the piano’s earlier [014] presentation, and, like the earlier gesture, carries with it suggestions of closure. This is at odds with the structural view proposed earlier. The ambiguity stems from the placement of the 5” rest. It represents the longest stretch of silence in the movement and therefore cannot be ignored as a structural marker. What follows will, in some way, be heard as a new beginning. It is therefore surprising when the

33 George Crumb, telephone conversation with the author, July 4, 1994. Crumb’s directive may include a subliminal reference to the mythic poet/singer Orfeo, who charmed the guardians of the underworld with his song. (The same directive occurs again in Vocalise 3 where, as we shall see, various aspects of the myth do seem to have some relevance to subsequent events.)
gesture that follows suggests closure. In this scenario, the reprise of A begins clearly with the reiteration of the piano's opening gesture at T9 despite the fact that it is one gesture removed from the 5'' divider.

In relation to the first movement, the role of this vocalise seems to be to focus upon, and give specific form to both subject matter and motivic material that was introduced there in broad terms. Within the form of Apparition as a whole, it serves a crucial function in giving voice to the realm of the natural world.

There is a dramatic purpose to this naturalism. In Whitman's poem, the bird sings several times before its message is received by the speaker. When the speaker first hears the bird, he hears just that—a bird, singing in a bird's language. There is no indication that the speaker either understands this language or feels that the bird has something to impart to him in particular through it. Rather, he simply hears its song as a part of the natural world. This is very similar to the way the listener experiences the bird and insect sounds in Vocalise 1. They are fascinating and strangely beautiful but they hold little meaning for us at this point. Their function is crucial, however, as preparation for the transition between the third vocalise and the following movement, "Come lovely...", when the bird's song is transformed into actual language. (The musical relations between Vocalise 1 and Vocalise 3 will be discussed below.) The first vocalise in the song cycle therefore has a dramatic function that is parallel to the first time that the bird sings in the poem. Both are heard as inarticulate sounds of nature that are later transformed into language that we understand.
II. When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom’d

This movement continues the textual and motivic exploration of material introduced in the first movement. There the human realm was represented in broad, universal terms—"the body" and "the soul". Here we first encounter personal human utterance.

This is the only text of *Apparition* that is taken from a section other than the "death carol". Crumb sets the first and third lines of the poem’s opening tercet, leaving out the second one; "And the great star early drooped in the western sky in the night". Perhaps the composer was seeking the strongest possible juxtaposition between the image of lilacs and the speaker’s mourning, and since the star image received prominent treatment in the first movement, the intervening line in this verse was dramatically expendable. The text situates the listener in a specific time in the past "When lilacs...bloom’d", and also gives the first instance of a personal emotion—that of mourning. Obliquely this provides the only reference to the actual event that precipitates all the subsequent rumination on death.

The transition between movements is as abrupt as before. The startling and sharply etched sounds of Vocalise 1 give way here to a wispy and evanescent stream of subtly shifting patterns in the piano. The piano plays *pppp* and the voice is directed to be pale and wan, so both parts seem a great distance away. The listener is again required to make a leap of faith that these seemingly distinct bits of music and imagery will indeed begin to cohere at some point.

This movement, like the preceding vocalise, is in three-part form with a return to opening material by both piano and voice in the last system. Its characteristic sound results from the prominence of motive b, which outlines a whole-tone set, type [026]. This motive appears, either on its own or embedded, in sixteen of the movement’s twenty-eight right-hand quintuplets. Motive d is briefly
advanced as well, appearing in a cluster of three quintuplets that surround the opening vocal idea at “When lilacs”. It is difficult to discern any pattern in the subtle and continuous variation of this motivic material. Of the five groups of trichords that are contained in the left hand line, two are statements of motive b and two of motive d. (The other trichord states motive a, whose solitary status here seems to have no significance.) In some areas, the primary motive (b) appears with greater concentration. In one instance, in the B section, this concentration serves to highlight an important moment in the vocal line.

The voice initiates the B section with an extremely disjunct setting of the words “I mourned, and yet shall mourn—”. These two climactic vocal statements are distinguished from the other vocal lines not only by their dramatic gesture but by their motivic content as well. The trichord [016], with its dissonant tritone, is used to set the text at “mourning” while the other vocal phrases feature [013] which is much more consonant. The crucial emotional content of these lines is illustrated by the downward leap of a minor ninth on the words “mourned” and “mourn”. It is important to note both the intervalic content of the gesture as well as the specific pitch classes F and E, as these will be recalled at various points throughout the piece. The vocal phrases are separated by a piano statement in which two different versions of motive b appear simultaneously. Such a concentration on this motive is unique in the movement and significant in that it associates motive b with the dark side of the emotional spectrum— with the feelings of pain and grief that are inherent in the idea of mourning. As we shall see, these are associations that motive b will retain throughout the cycle.

The climactic gestures of the minor ninths in the vocal line are prepared by a less emotive but equally conspicuous gesture in the piano part. At two points before the climax, the rhythmically staggered, fast moving lines of the piano converge, for
a relatively long duration on a vertical presentation of this interval. (see Ex. 6)

Example 6. Minor ninth convergences

(One other such convergence, after the climax, presents a major seventh.) Their consistent position within each of the piano phrases adds to their prominence: they are all the same distance from the ends of their respective phrases. Within each phrase they bring the stream of quintuplets to a momentary point of repose before they resume their motion. Since the minor ninth is so closely associated with the pain of mourning in the climactic vocal phrases, it seems that the piano’s convergences can be heard to signify the same thing. I hear the succession of quintuplets as a stream of thought or memory in the speaker’s mind, and the dissonant convergences as the momentary alighting of the mind on a painful memory or thought.

The musical reprise in the third system is an appropriate setting for the text “ever returning”, which acts as an important reminder of all the cyclic elements that have been discussed thus far, both musically and textually. The vocal line, which now heads the section, returns with a transposed version of the material at “...last in the door-yard–bloom’d”, and the piano repeats its opening two groups of quintuplets. Although some variations alter the repeat, the last four groups in the final phrase do retain a close resemblance to the final two groups in the first phrase.
In its reordering of events, this reprise is like the one in Vocalise 1 where the return of A was initiated not by [014], the first event in the movement, but by [012], the second. This switch in the order of events allows the restatement of ideas to occur without a rigid sense of segmentation. The final two notes in the movement recall the fading echoes of the “turtle dove” dyad, also at the end of the Vocalise 1.

In summary, this movement is unique thus far the cycle in that it treats personal emotion. The pain of mourning expressed here serves as the impetus for the contemplation of death in succeeding movements. The interval of the minor ninth as the musical expression of that pain is significant and will recur in various references throughout the work.

III. Dark mother Always Gliding Near with Soft Feet

The canonic procedures in this movement are its most conspicuous feature and they stand in strong contrast to the more amorphous and intuitive unfolding of events in “When lilacs...”. The movement is in open-ended rondo form; A B A C A B, and the canon between voice and piano that occurs in each of the A sections is perfectly illustrative of the text. The piano entries, rhythmically augmented and sounded in harmonics, follow the opening vocal line like a ghostly shadow—like the “dark mother always gliding near...”. These opening bars bear a striking resemblance to those of “Nacht” from Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire*. They share not only the overlapping canonic procedure, but also the idea of a three-note motive, the dark timbres of the instruments, the overall feeling of hushed mystery, and even an almost identical tempo. Both are given below in example 7.
Example 7a. Crumb, opening bars of "Dark mother..."

Example 7b. Schoenberg, opening bars of "Nacht" from *Pierrot lunaire*

Example 7c. The three-note motive in "Nacht"
Crumb’s allusion to “Nacht” at this particular point in the cycle is by no means gratuitous. This movement opens the second of the three main sections of Pierrot and signifies, among other things, the character’s descent into his own subconscious. There is a similar sense of “descent” at this point in Apparition, as we move deeper into the speaker’s internal world with this, his first personal address to death itself.\textsuperscript{34}

The image of a life-giving mother as a metaphor for death is striking. It is allied with the oceanic metaphors of the first movement in representing death not as the terminator of life but as its originator: the cradle from which all life issues forth. There is a musical representation of this image: the first twelve pitch classes we hear in the movement form the aggregate, that is, the \textit{ur}-material for all the musical figures of the work. The piano, in the last reprise of A also forms the aggregate, with the contribution of F\# from the voice.

The first A section of this movement contains two important references to the previous movement. The three statements of motive c in the voice are transposed by intervals which form the motive b [026]. Motive b was shown to be closely associated with idea of mourning and so the reference here supports the “dark” aspect of the text. The other reference occurs in the piano. Its first six pitch classes are played with the dampers up and so form a vertical hexachord \{C, B, Gb, F, Db, G\} that embeds many forms of [016]–\{C, B, F\}, \{Gb, G, Db\}, etc. This pitch-class set type was used to set the word “mourned” in the vocal line and, like the reference to motive b, brings in connotations—now even more directly—of pain and grief, with the appearance of the “dark mother”. The initial notes of the first four canonic statements between voice and piano form a chain of descending minor thirds,

\textsuperscript{34} There is a slight discrepancy at this point between “Lilacs” and Apparition as to who is actually speaking these lines. They are delivered by the thrush in “Lilacs” but I say “the speaker” here because Crumb’s ordering of the text does not tell us otherwise. And since the words of the thrush are “tallied” by the speaker in “Lilacs”, in other words, duplicated by him, I feel that no misrepresentation occurs by attributing the text to the speaker in this work.
Bb, G, E, Db>. Its sinking trajectory adds to the affect at the opening of the movement, and this intervalic succession will be recalled in movements to come.

The music at the opening of the B section illustrates its text, “always gliding...”. Gliding is exactly the effect rendered by the voice as it encompasses the leap that separates two “undulating” whole tones on either side of it. The size of this leap recalls the minor ninths used to set the word “mourning” in the previous movement. The melismatic text painting of “gliding” contrasts with the syllabic settings that dominate the rest of the movement. The pitch-class set type \([016]\) appears after “gliding” at “near”, and also recalls the vocal line at “I mourned” which was set by the same \([016]\). The vocalist whispers “with soft feet” to conclude the section with another evocative illustration of the text.

The pairing of whole tones that we see at “gliding” \([A,B]\) and \([Bb,C]\), represents the third occurrence of this small but significant motto that appears at various conspicuous points in the music. We noted it in the first movement where the whole-tone dyads are created by the voice leading of the pairs of minor chords \([A,G]\) and \([E,D]\). There the pairs were separated by a minor third. Subsequently, the motto sets the striking fluttertongued phonemic text “prui, prui, prui, ka-i, ki-a, ka-i”, taking the form \([G#, Bb]\) and \([D, F]\), in which the whole tones are separated by a major third. In its fourth appearance, it opens the chanting in the C section of “Dark Mother”, where the pairs, \([C#, B]\) and \([C#, Eb]\), are conjunct for the first time.

The first reprise of A consists of two disjunct hexachords, separated by a major second, engaged in a chromatic descent: \(<G, Gb, F, E, Eb, D>\) and \(<C, B, A#, A, G#, G>\). The vocal line presents \(<C, B, A#>\) and \(<A, G#, G>\) which recur again as the lower (ie., the second and the fourth) trichords in the piano part of the last reprise.

The “chant” forms the C section of the movement. Its poetic form is clearly reflected in the tripartite musical structure. The first phrase, containing pitch classes
{C#, D, Eb, G, Ab, A, B} is repeated sequentially in the second at T₄, up to the point where it reaches the triplet at “thee–a”, that corresponds with the triplet at “thee–I”. Here there is an adjustment, and what sounds like an alternation of major seconds in the first phrase—(C#, Eb, C#)—is changed to a major third and an augmented fourth in the second—(F, A, Eb). This adjustment allows for a wider leap to occur in the vocal line between Eb and B, at the important words “I glorify thee”. The third phrase uses the same pitch classes as the first, with the addition of F and E, but in a contour and order that suggest an inversion of the first phrase.

The text of this chant is remarkably strong and uplifting. The rising trajectory of the first two phrases reflects the mounting joy in the speaker’s panegyrical address to death. The soft dynamics ensure that the singer maintains a reverential tone, however. The phrase climbs from ppp, to pp, to a climax of mere p, at “I bring thee a song”, after which it makes a decrescendo. This suppression of the emotional force of the text channels musical energy towards the dramatic peaks in the forthcoming movements and prevents an anticlimax in the cycle.

The final return of the A section is signalled by the same pitch classes that opened the movement—(Bb, A, G#). This reprise features a stretto in the canonic statements between voice and piano, and some other surprising changes. The intervals in the original canonic idea are now compounded by an octave in the vocal line, and the piano exhibits a textural change from harmonics to pizzicatos. Both instruments enjoy a heightened presence through these changes. The effect of the soprano’s strained, yet dynamically suppressed vocal reaches are chilling, and as incongruous as a soft scream. They too indicate the presence of a great deal of energy which is not being allowed to escape at this point in the cycle. The voice presents <Bb, A, G#> and <G, F#, E#>, which are the same pitch classes presented
between voice and piano in the work's opening two statements. The intervals of imitation between voice and piano in the final reprise of A form a chain of descending perfect fourths: <Bb, F, C, G, D, A>, a new idea in the piece but one that will recur significantly in the climactic fifth movement. This chain is extended a final step to E, appearing in the piano harmonic after the rest, and thereby forms a link with the following B section reprise. That reprise, setting "always gliding..." with an inversion of the first B section, ends the movement.

In summary, "Dark Mother" exhibits some of the most structured musical procedures—canon, stretto, sequence, and inversion—that we have seen thus far. The close correspondence between music and text has also been unprecedented. At times the correspondence is manifested overtly in text painting, as in the glide at "gliding", and the chant-like setting at "have none chanted...". At times it is slightly more concealed, as in the canonic procedure which is illustrative not of a particular word but of the whole idea of a shadowy presence nearby. At the same time, there is considerable ambiguity between the connotations of the text and those of the music. The "mother" aspect of "Dark mother" connotes the beginning of life while the motives which accompany the text refer to ideas associated with "mourning", and the end of life. The contradictory affect of the music accompanying the exalted text in the chant is another example of this ambiguity. The music repeatedly withholds the dynamic support that would be necessary for the text to deliver its full emotional impact. As a result, there is a mysterious undercurrent to the mood of quiet and reverential prayer. The consistent unity of this mood throughout the movement heightens the effect of the drama to follow.
Vocalise 2: Invocation\textsuperscript{35}

We come now to the second of the three vocalises in the song cycle. This one proves difficult to define purely in terms of its musical components and I will therefore venture an approach that is different from that taken thus far.

Whereas the imaginative phonemic text of the first vocalise was central to its evocative effects, there is contrastingly, no similar interest here in the sound of the text itself, as all of the singer’s vocalisations take place on the vowel “a”. Unlike the first vocalise which portrayed the sounds of various creatures in the natural world, the “voice” in this one seems to represent that of a human being in a heightened emotional state—one beyond words. This movement also contrasts strongly with the previous movement in affect as well as construct and procedure, continuing the radical shifts of character between movements. While in “Dark Mother” the music may have been in opposition with the text at various times, the instruments themselves were not on opposite sides of a violent confrontation as I believe they are here. The piano is allied with motive b and the voice with motive a, and these materials are volleyed back and forth. The ghostly piano harmonics from the previous movement do reappear, but they are subjected to a radical alteration of character and dynamics, turning into rapid-firing successions of 32nd and 64th notes that are now dynamically unbridled as they crescendo from an opening dynamic of ffff\textsuperscript{36}.

There are also some important similarities in the opening ideas of these two

\textsuperscript{35} This vocalise was originally subtitled “Invocation to the Dark Angel”. As with the title of the first Vocalise, Crumb decided later to remove the reference to an earlier work, in this case, his string quartet Dark Angels.

\textsuperscript{36} In performance this kind of dynamic level is tricky to achieve with harmonics. After a point, there is an inverse proportion between the amount of finger pressure applied to the string and the amount of sound that this actually produces. The contact with the string, therefore has to be firm enough to sound the harmonic clearly but loose enough to allow the string to vibrate resonantly and loudly.
movements. The strong presence of motive b in the first three vocal statements in "Dark Mother" combines with the idea of "sinking", which derives from the chain of descending thirds between canonic entries, to yield the powerful gesture of descending energy\footnote{By "descending", I mean having a downward trajectory. I do not mean "diminishing", in any sense, as the figure actually gains in momentum and dynamic power as it descends.} that is achieved through the glissando on motive b in the second piano phrase of the vocalise. The role of this motive is crucial to the drama of the movement. It has thus far been subtly associated with the ideas of mourning, grief and pain, but it now comes to the fore and manifests the darkness of these emotions with much more force. The terminus of the glissando on motive b, though ill-defined as to pitch, is nonetheless firmly punctuated by a resounding scrape and a crash on the strings. The grace-note relationship of the scrape to the crash is soon taken up to form the only other idea pursued in the piano part in this movement. It also foreshadows the grace-chord figure that will dominate the following movement. The "scrape-crash" event impels the entrance of the vocal line, which ululates a pitch-class collection in which its motive, a [014], is clearly embedded. The voice restates its opening idea, adding some elaboration and ending this time with three emphatic repeats of motive a. The vocal statement ends with a grace-note followed by a rest that gives the impression of having been cut off in mid-thought or sentence. It will be completed later.

Pounding grace-chords in the piano call forth the second entrance of the voice which, after a little pause, begins an accelerating descent by minor thirds. The descending chain of minor thirds followed by a whole tone is an inversion of a melismatic passage in the vocal part of the second verse in the first movement (see Ex.8). There the ensuing passage follows a very similar rhythmic and melodic contour to the one that follows the pause on G4 in Vocalise 2, except that the former
involves motives a and d, while the latter involves a and b. The tension generated between motive a and the tritone in motive b is reserved for the drama of this movement.

Example 8a. Ascending minor thirds in "The Night in Silence"

8b. Descending minor thirds in Vocalise 2.

The descending thirds also recall the chain of thirds at the opening of "Dark Mother", and they echo the trajectory of the piano's disintegrating glissando in this movement. The vocal line however, resists complete disintegration. It steadies itself with the pause on G and even reverses the directional current, but then seems to be caught between ascending and descending before it levels out on an unwavering repetition of <C#, A, G>. The voice then, has taken over the piano's motive b after the pause on G. Although its final five groups of 32nds echo the piano's earlier glissando figure, the vocal line does not duplicate its most distinctive feature, its disintegrating descent. Motive b is then reclaimed by the piano, which repeats its opening two gestures thus taking the motive through a descent once again. The second, terminating scrape-crash event in the piano brings in the voice as the first one did. Compared with its earlier entrances, the voice comes in both lower and softer, perhaps indicating that it has been somewhat weakened by its
efforts to resist disintegration. The voice now mounts a three-tiered ascent using a variation of the figure in the second half of its opening statement. The first two rising sequences each conclude with an assertion of motive a before the piano jumps in with its pounding chord motif. The vocal line rises in pitch and dynamic with each of its three entries and therefore seems to be gaining ground, as it were, against the diminishing dynamic contour of the piano chords. Just at the point where the vocal line is reaching its peak, however, its momentum is arrested by a short pause after the G, recalling the earlier pause on the same pitch class. It takes up an inversion of its earlier presentation of the piano’s motive b and this time carries through with the descent and disintegration of its line. Then, in the only unified gesture to occur between these two forces, the piano takes over the spiralling descent of the voice and extinguishes itself in a final descent.38

The association of death with the piano’s descending glissando figure is justified in part, by a specific association of images in Whitman’s poem. Throughout “Lilacs”, there is a consistent association between descent and death. Descent is expressed in many different ways and most often in conjunction with the star. In the first tercet, “the great star drooped in the western sky”. In the second, it is the “powerful western fallen star”; and in section eight “...where you sad orb, concluded dropped in the night and was gone.” (Emphasis added) As the star is a metaphor for Lincoln, so its descending trajectory in all of these images is symbolic of his death. The piano’s descending glissando figuration therefore evokes the idea of death. The signification is strengthened by the disintegration of the line as it progresses downwards.

I have emphasized the idea of struggle throughout my narrative of the

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38 In the earlier edition of the work, the final piano glissando ends in a rest. In the revised edition, Crumb has added a scrape-crash chord after the glissando that marks a definite point of termination.
musical events in this vocalise as I believe that this is the essential dynamic between its forces. As an embodiment of conflict and drama, the movement serves a vital role in the cycle as a whole, for without conflict, the idea of reconciliation would have no dramatic impact. The sense of conflict in Whitman’s poem resides in the speaker’s “struggle to accept death with unsentimental fortitude.”39 This struggle is enacted principally on a symbolic plane through the interplay of two aspects of the speaker’s psyche: the star image, signifying attachment to grief, and the bird image, signifying reconciliation with the idea of death. In Apparition, these images do not interact either poetically or musically and therefore the element of conflict must be achieved by other musical means. In this movement, it is achieved through the dynamic interaction of motives with fundamentally different characteristics and associations.

Motive a was prominent in settings of the “star” figure and “the ocean shore” in the first movement and as a sound of nature in the first vocalise. It was conspicuously absent throughout “When Lilacs” and “Dark Mother” and its role here in Vocalise 2 is that of a foil to the dark energy of motive b. Motive a can therefore be heard to represent natural and positive forces. Motive b on the other hand, was prominent in “When Lilacs”, where it was closely associated with the pain of grief and mourning. It was an embedded presence in the ominous opening of “Dark Mother” and, in Vocalise 2, it comes fully to the forefront as a vehicle for destructive forces. The antithetical relationship between these motives can therefore be heard as a musical embodiment of a conflict similar to that in “Lilacs” which was enacted through the images of the star and the bird. This conflict comes to a head in Vocalise 2 which thereby represents one solution to a problem inherent the text of the cycle.

39 Cavitch, 162.
The primary source of text for Apparition—the "death carol" has little tension as it is the very section which brings about a reconciliation. The problem then is: how to introduce musical tension where none is presented in the text itself. One of Crumb's solutions, Vocalise 2, is to interpolate a piece of music, independent of the poetic text, that embodies a sense of drama and conflict. Another of his solutions, which we will see in the following movement, is to introduce discord in the music despite its absence in the text, thereby allowing musical content to contradict textual content. Together, these two movements provide the cycle with its dramatic core of musical tension. Without these, there would be little sense of having struggled in order to arrive at the sublime reconciliation presented in movement V, "Come Lovely and Soothing Death".

Vocalise 2 achieves its dramatic effect not only through gestures of struggle and disintegration but, typically for Crumb, by imitating the stylistic characteristics of Flamenco. Crumb has frequently made musical reference to Flamenco style in the Lorca works. He acknowledges its use in the notes to Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death: "My setting of the poem includes cadenzas in quasi-Flamenco style" and, regarding Ancient Voices of Children, he writes

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40 The quality that is evoked through reference to Flamenco style is conveyed in the Spanish word duende. Crumb has often spoken of duende as the essential characteristic of Federico García Lorca's poetry. Some of its manifestations and complex attributes are explained in Lorca's important lecture entitled "Play and Theory of the Duende." (F.G.Lorca "Play and Theory of the Duende" in Deep Song and Other Prose ed. and trans., Christopher Maurer (New Directions, 1954), 42-50.) "All that has black sounds has duende" quotes Lorca. He goes on to say that "the duende, is a power, not a work, it is a struggle, not a concept." Crumb's familiarity with the duende as the spirit which informs Flamenco is evident not only in various writings, but also in the fact that his allusions to Flamenco style appear when he wants to invoke the darkest of musical powers. Such is the case in "The Guitar", a movement from Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death. The guitar itself is a recurring image in Lorca's poetry and represents "the primitive voice of the world's darkness", says Crumb. In choosing a musical language to express the darkness of the poetic idea, the composer decided to refer to Flamenco and thus wrote the cadenzas in quasi-Flamenco style, (cited earlier in f.n. 40.) It would seem plausible then that Crumb, whether consciously or not, would gravitate to elements of this style in seeking to express the darkness and drama that are such strong components of Vocalise 2.
I was intrigued with the idea of juxtaposing the seemingly incongruous: a suggestion of Flamenco with a Baroque quotation... or a reminiscence of Mahler with a breath of the Orient.41

Musically, the characteristics of Flamenco which are appropriated in this movement are as follows:

a) usually begins with prolonged vocalization or melisma on the syllable ‘ay’ (This appears simply as “a” in the vocalise.)42

b) the guitarist (or, in this case, the pianist) establishes the atmospheric condition... through which the cantaor abruptly breaks... with declamatory vocalisation43 (see Ex. 9a).

c) often reiterates one note...frequently accompanied by appoggiaturas from above and below (see Ex. 9b).

d) uses profuse ornamentation as a means of intensifying the emotional expressivity of the song. (The singer’s opening phrases ornament F5 and D5 in this way.)

e) frequently uses portamento, i.e., “sliding” from one note to another44 (as in the vocal glissando at the end).

f) rarely narrative or descriptive but concerned with expressing the poet’s mood with the maximum of emphasis.

g) treats extreme situations, polarized around ecstasy and death.45

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41 Crumb, record jacket notes to Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death (Philadelphia Composer’s Forum, Joel Thome conductor, Desto Records.) and Ancient Voices of Children (The Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, Arthur Weisberg, conductor, Nonesuch Records.)


45 Strickland, 62.
43

Example 9a. Vocalist breaks in with declamatory vocalisations

9b. The reiterated use of one note

IV. Approach Strong Deliveress

This movement is structurally a hybrid, combining strophic variation with rondo form to yield ABA'B'A''B''A'''. To this point, it is the most extended of the cycle's movements and this length is achieved by extensive repetition of the text. (see Table 2, p. 44) Originally only four lines long, the verse has been expanded to nine lines. "Approach strong deliveress" is treated as a refrain which recurs four
TABLE 2

Musical and Textual Form In “Approach Strong Deliveress”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A T0</td>
<td>A <strong>Approach strong deliveress</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B T0</td>
<td>B <em>When it is so, when thou has taken them I joyously sing the dead</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A T3</td>
<td>A <strong>Approach strong deliveress</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| B T5  | *C **Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee**  
*Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee  
*Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death* |
| A T9  | A **Approach strong deliveress**          |
| B T6  | B *When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously, joyously sing the dead* |
| A T6  | A **Approach strong deliveress**          |

N.B. Original text is underlined
*Divergence of musical and textual form
times and reaches its transpositional peak—at T9—in its third statement.

The motives, melodic ideas, and even the pacing of events we heard at the opening of Vocalise 2 introduce those that we find, in varied form, here at the opening of "Approach Strong Deliveress". The pitch classes D, Bb, and Ab, which were sounded in harmonics at the beginning of "Invocation", reappear as the highest voice of the first three chords in this movement. The initiating grace-chord idea here recalls similar gestures in Vocalise 2.

However, the first inversion minor chords here have no direct precedent in the vocalise. Rather they derive from the first movement, where they provided a disturbing and disquieting element against the strummed pedal tones. Their subtly dissonant contribution to that movement emerges fully in this one, where interval classes 1 and 6 yield a high degree of dissonance. Triads related by a semitone are combined vertically into hexachords, (except where the first of the two appears as a grace note) and the hexachords proceed horizontally in pairs of tritones, \{G#,D\}, \{Bb,E\}, \{G,C#\}.

Indeed, the overall organization of the A sections is rigorously hexachordal. The initial vertical hexachord, of type [013478], is made up not only of two [0,3,7] trichords—\{G#,B,D#\} and \{G,Bb,D\}, but also of motive a, [014], which is embedded several times in this set, as are [013] and [015], although less prominently. The first piano gesture (to the downbeat of b. 3) presents a series of six of these vertical hexachords. The series of tritones presented by the upper line can also be analysed as hexachord type [0,1,3,6,7,9]; that is, two [013] trichords at T6. The top line of the cascading piano accompaniment to the singer’s first phrase presents an eight-note set \{C,C#,D,E,F#,G,G#,Bb\}, that embeds [013], [014], and [012] and has the same T6 invariance as the piano’s first linear hexachord. The second half of this section
restates the hexachords of the first half, but reverses the order of each of the pairs.

The singer’s first line is yet another hexachord, this time of type [0,1,3,4,6,7]. 

This is presented as two trichords [013] and [016], but it is also conceivable as two [013]s at T3I—{Bb,B,C#} and {D,E,F}—or two [014]s at T3I—{C-sharp,E,F} and {B-flat,B,D}.

The first two vocal phrases are closely related in contour and pitch-class content, to vocal parts of both “When Lilacs” and “Vocalise 2”. The relationships are shown in example 10.

Octatonic pitch series in:

Mvmt. II

Vocalise 2

Mvmt. IV

Example 10. Shared pitches and contours of vocal lines

The relentless tread of the pounding eighth-note chords, together with their clashing sonorities, gives the music a distinctly martial and steely edge consistent with the marking “Alla marcia”. This particular quality in the music does not seem to be inherent in the text and might therefore indicate the presence of a subtext. 

While the text addresses death as a positive and redemptive force—a “deliveress”—
the piano's music gives the opening phrase of text an element of ambiguity. The words indicate that the speaker is ready to receive the deliveress but the music seems to suggest battle-like conditions under which it requires great courage to do so.

The first B section begins in the ninth bar of the movement. The first inversion minor chords from the first movement, which figure so strongly in the A sections of this movement, also provide an important element at the opening of the B section. The upper voice of those chords, <A,G,E,D>, is clearly echoed in the outlines of the piano's right hand figuration at R 15+3. The accompaniment that the left hand drums out on the strings is taken from the preceding vocalise. (see Ex. 11)

Example 11. Reference to Mvmt. I minor chords in Mvmt. IV

Althroughout this section the linear trichords in the piano's right hand reiterate motive c. The first full phrase of trichords (after the right hand's 8va group) forms the aggregate, and the second full phrase of the section (beginning in the third system) is complementary with the first group of three trichords, which contain its missing Eb and E. The words "I joyously..." are set to music which duplicates the opening vocal phrase of Vocalise 2 and features a statement of motive a. It also contains another emotive application of the minor ninth whose mournful descent is transformed here into a joyful ascent. Motive a continues to figure prominently
in the vocal line. It appears twice more before the end of the phrase including its emphatic statement at “sing the dead!”, which brings the first B section to a close. Despite the elaboration of the word “joyously”, the musical affect is not purely one of joy. The pace of the music is too driving, the vocal line too strenuous and shrill.

The first reprise of A is a shortened version of the original, featuring only one transposed set of each of its main events rather than two. The group of hexachords beginning in the upper register (at 8va) are the only ones in the movement to form a unidirectional descent. In their exclusion of the ascending leg of the progression, with which they have appeared twice before, they prefigure a similar separation of the ascending and descending components of the “curtain” figure in Movement V. The hexachords then emerge at a subdued dynamic level, as a kind of vamp, and constitute a link to the second B section.

As shown in Table 2, there is a formal disjunction at this point between music and text. While the musical ideas derive from those at the opening of B, the text introduces two new lines that poetically constitute a C section. At the same time, a few musical features do draw attention to the special content of the text at this point. Variations in the instrumentation, rhythmic value and dynamic level of the ideas lends them markedly different coloration. The voice is given the line originally belonging to the piano, whose strident figuration is calmed through an augmentation of its rhythmic values (16th to 8th), the drop of over two octaves in its register (in addition to its transposition down a minor third), and the decrease in its dynamic level from ff to pp, a conspicuously low dynamic point in the movement. The thumping accompaniment is similar, except that the minor chords that carry on from the second A section replace the struck clusters of strings. While the undulating vocal line supports the text’s metaphor of death as ocean, the minor chords continue their disruptive role with their dissonant and percussive
punctuations. Again, certain aspects of the music seem to contradict the text. The
prodding and jabbing chordal accompaniment prevents the experience of
envelopment, of losing oneself, that is described in the text. Even in subdued
dynamic passages such as this, it seems that the forceful energy embodied by the
piano's chords can be contained for only so long before it suddenly erupts, as it does
intermittently, into ffz.

The vocal refrains of "Approach strong deliveress" reach their transpositional
peak—T₉—in the third A section, which must, however, accommodate the singer
with an octave displacement of the pitches at "...liveress". This transpositional high
point prepares for the real climax of the movement—the high D₆—that occurs in the
following B section. The climax is achieved by a transposition (T₆) of the parallel
phrase in the first B section and a variation of its embellishment of the word
"joyously". It could be seen as an instance in which music and text are most unified
in this movement. The climactic embellishments in the music heighten an
important word in the text—"joyously". However, the extreme nature of those
embellishments—the sheer vocal effort required to produce them—together with the
driving pace of the accompaniment all contribute to a strained and frantic effect
rather than one of joy. The movement, then, reaches its peak by driving the vocal
line to its extremities through transposed and embellished versions of previous
ideas.

Following the climax is the final refrain of "Approach strong deliveress"
which presents a reprise of the pitches in the second phrase of the opening A
section. The final set of vertical hexachords juxtapose D minor with C# minor and
recall those moments in the opening movement when the vocal line cadenced

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46 The high D₆ called for at this point is an extreme which can be rendered only with
considerable strain by most mezzo-sopranos like Jan DeGaetani for whom the work was written. In her
recording of the work, in fact, she bypasses it by singing the ossia provided by Crumb.
on a D against the piano’s strummed pedal on C# and G#. The diminuendo from \( p \) to \( ppp \) proves again to be only a temporary repression of the forceful and disruptive energy that has characterized the minor first inversion chords throughout the work. They reassert their true nature with one last ferocious outburst in the final hexachord, which is a tritone away from the penultimate one, thus encapsulating the dominant intervalic relationships of the movement—semitone and tritone.

In summary, the music in the movement sustains a sense of strain and discord by way of high levels of intervalic dissonance, frequently forceful dynamics, driving tempo, and extreme demands in terms of vocal register. Together, these contribute to a manic atmosphere that is too intense, by a few degrees, to be entirely congruous with the theme of the text—the joyous reception of death. These themes of joy and of that which masquerades as joy, coexist as two separate streams throughout the movement, and one senses little real interaction between them. The lack of dramatic friction is perhaps most keenly felt at the point of climax, that is achieved, somewhat facilely, through transpositions and embellishments of previous ideas. It arrives without any real motivation from either textual or musical events and therefore ends up sounding a little inflated and contrived. Thus the movement is not a dynamic one in itself. It merely provides an arena for dynamically charged ideas, like the minor chords, to play out their energy. Indeed the preceding vocalise, “Invocation” succeeds more in making a dramatic contribution to the work as a whole. It is the only movement in the cycle that is through-composed with an open-ended form that evolves through motivic dialogue. It generates, and then releases its dramatic momentum into “Approach Strong Deliveress” which, in itself, is more of a static tableau. In this way, the two movements work well together and provide a sense of large-scale tension. Given the problematic lack of conflict in the text itself, the musical solution presented here
is, on the whole, both viable and necessary.

Vocalise 3: Death Carol ("Song of the Nightbird")

The final vocalise in Apparition parallels the last appearance of the hermit thrush in "Lilacs". This appearance at a crucial juncture in both works, giving rise to the song of the bird which brings about a final, peaceful reconciliation to the fact of death. In Apparition we have already heard words to this effect—the verses from the "death carol" in three preceding movements—but we have not as yet heard the music which allows us to experience the meaning of those words. Strident discord was perhaps the strongest feature of "Approach Strong Deliveress", despite the sense of joyful reception proclaimed by its text. It is through the mediating influence of the bird's song in the third vocalise that this sense of discord is resolved.

The a cappella texture of this movement distinguishes it from all of the others in the cycle, accentuates the singular personality of the voice, and serves to heighten the impact of the bird's brief appearance. While the first vocalise introduced the sounds of various creatures in the natural world, now the music focuses in on the voice of one specific creature that, in effect, becomes a mouthpiece for the collective wisdom of that world. The connection of the nightbird, heard in Vocalise 3, to the world of nature, presented in Vocalise 1, is therefore an important one. It is made musically explicit by the reappearance of all the ideas presented in the first vocalise, varied and recombined, in the third. The pitch classes constituting the minor ninth \{B, A\} that frames the piano's opening idea in the first vocalise are inverted and re-spelled \{Bb, B\} to frame the opening idea in the third. This idea combines motives c and e to yield the chromatic tetrachord type \{0, 1, 2, 3\}, and therefore displays more kinship with the motive c group at "tik-ki-u-wi" than with the motive a trichord at the opening of the first vocalise. The ensuing Monteverdi
trill, "hu-hu" on B4 echoes the one on the same pitch at the end of the first vocalise. After a varied repeat of the opening idea comes a new figure, "ti-to-to-to-to-i"—one that derives its characteristic quintuplet figure from the refrain group in the first vocalise. The leap of a tritone at its end recalls the tritones in the refrain chords and the interval of transposition between its first two repetitions. After a transposed repeat of "ti-o-to..." comes the whole-tone dyad on "ti-u" which echoes the three repeats of a whole-tone at "pru-i" in the first vocalise, only in retrograde, and refers also to the Monteverdi trill on "u" at the end. In another of the many gestures of "returning" that we have seen throughout the work, the opening idea of the vocalise reappears again at the end, with the last echo of its final dotted note interval leading directly into the following movement.

V. Come Lovely and Soothing Death

We come now to the weightiest movement in the cycle both in terms of its emotional content as well as its extended form. Its structural outlines are given in Table 3 (p.53). The movement seems to divide, at R28, into two large halves, each with four subdivisions. The important piano climax at R33 is a unique feature of the movement. It is preceded by a transitional section combining elements from the first half of the movement and it is followed by a coda which does the same.

The first A section, given to the piano alone, makes multiple reference to ideas heard in previous movements while introducing a new presence as well. The opening grace-chord is familiar as a forceful gesture, one that we encountered first in the second vocalise and then all the way through "Approach...". At its new dynamic level of pp however, it creates a very different atmosphere and it introduces an entirely new effect, the soundboard "knock". (The significance of this gesture is clarified later in the discussion.) The remainder of the first A section is
## TABLE 3

**Form in “Come Lovely Soothing Death”**

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<th>R26</th>
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<th>R30</th>
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"Come..."  "Come..."  "Undulate"  "arriving"  "Undulate"  "arriving"
dominated by the piano’s right hand quintuplets that refer to a number of
previously heard ideas (see Ex. 12). Its nearest relative, at least in time, is the
nightbird’s “a-o-a-u” idea in the preceding vocalise. The piano version here retains
the oft repeated Bb as well as the jagged contour of the figure, while varying the
upward reach of its first interval, now encompassing ten semitones—{Bb, G#}—
rather than nine—{C-A}. The piano’s quintuplet idea also embeds motives a and b,
in close proximity again for the first time since Vocalise 2. Their presentation here
recalls their appearance in the opening phrase of the first movement. There is the
characteristic grace note figure of motive a and the ascending minor sixth of motive
b, (see Ex. 12a). The figure even scans the same way as the words “The night in
silence”, (see Ex. 12b).

Example 12a. Reference to motives a and b as heard in Mvmt. I

Example 12b. The same figure echoing the rhythmic fall of words in Mvmt. I
With the introduction of the high Cb in the third group, the figure's referential scope is widened to include the piano's "star" figure from the first movement. They both begin with the same two pitch-classes in the same register and form the interval of a minor ninth Cb(B)-Bb(A#). This interval itself has been conspicuous throughout the cycle—from its first appearance in the "star" figure, to the eighth note convergences and the "mourning" gesture in "When Lilacs", through "gliding" in "Dark mother" and countless vocal leaps in "Approach...". It will prove to be a prominent interval in this movement as well. Besides its horizontal appearance in the third group of quintuplets, it occurs vertically in the opening group between A and B-flat, a result of the introduction of pizzicato accompaniments to the right-hand figuration. This accompaniment forms a minor third between its first two members A and C which, in the context of all the other references to the opening movement, can be heard to echo the first vocal interval at "the night". These two pitches, together with the F that follows, form an F major chord. This is the first, though somewhat removed stage of a progression that will dominate the second half of the movement.

The three raps on the piano's crossbeams following the 4" pause are louder and more insistent than the first soundboard knock and the group includes two references to the dotted rhythm of the final dyad in the nightbird's song. The piano's response following the rest is a transposition of its preceding gesture (the E5 in the third group is an inexplicable exception) but in a more excited state than at first. The quintuplets now flow in an uninterrupted stream, as they did in "When Lilacs". The sequence of events beginning with the fourth group of quintuplets (Ab, G, etc.) and extending to the entrance of the vocal line after the striking of the strings is modeled on the second vocal phrase of the second vocalise. The events are presented very much as they were, but with a complete transformation of affect (see
Ex. 13).

Example 13. Passage in Mvmt. V modeled on one in Vocalise 2.

The voice makes its long awaited entrance with another in the series of referential gestures that have dominated the opening of the movement, this time recalling the whole-tone pairs that have appeared at various prominent moments throughout the work.
The second A section features transposed versions of the piano's first phrase that allow additional references to emerge. The C# and G# pizzicatos, for instance, recall the pitch classes of the strummed pedal in the opening movement, and together with the E that follows, they form a C# minor chord. This parallels the outline of the F Major triad in the first A section (although C# minor is not part of the large-scale progression in the movement's latter half while F is.) Together they foreshadow the dominating role of consonant triads in the second half of the movement. Pitch classes D, F, and A are prominent at the beginning of the quintuplet phrases in the right hand and recall the D minor first inversion chords in the first movement. The sudden forte on the vertical minor ninth between E and F after the pause on D5 prefigures the climax of the movement and refers to the conspicuous appearances of these pitch classes in previous movements: at the word "mourned" in "When Lilacs"; at the opening of the vocal line in Vocalise 2; and at "I joyously" in "Approach Strong Deliveress".

The transposition of the vocal line in the second B section allows for yet another presentation of the horizontal minor ninth, here between the final D of "soothing" and the Db of "death". Section C takes its imitative material directly from the melismatic elaboration of "the night" in the second vocal phrase of the first movement. The pairs of half steps that constitute the piano lines offer a subtle illustration of the text "the world", by forming the aggregate (see Ex. 14). This recalls the symbolic aggregate that set the words "dark mother".

Example 14. Transpositions and the aggregate at "Undulate round the world" (C1)
At “serenely arriving”, motive a appears three times in the voice and its form recalls many earlier events. It diminishes the rhythm of both the canonic idea in “Dark Mother” and the vocal idea at “I mourned” in “When Lilacs.” Intervalically it echoes the triplets outlining major sevenths at “Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee” in “Approach...”. The descending minor thirds recall those in the second vocalise, (framed by pauses on G#5 and G4), as well as the transpositions of the opening group of canonic ideas in “Dark Mother”, and the melismatic idea in the third vocal phrase of the first movement.

The three statements here end with a trochaic rhythm that is followed by a rest, a pairing of elements that has occurred throughout the cycle.47 The piano finally completes this rhythmic gesture after R29, by landing on a held E.

The D section which begins here seems to be a complete departure from the preceding music in its overt tonal harmonies and anachronistic style. (The symbolism of this passage will be discussed later.) Upon closer examination, however, the passage can be heard as a transformation of the opening bars of “Approach Strong Deliveress”. The <G,Ab,C> progression in the top notes of the chords in the first three bars of section D, is a slightly varied version of the left hand progression, <G,A,C>, found on the downbeats of the first three bars in “Approach...”. The half-step relation of the upper parts to these chords is loosely retained in the tonal version as well. For example, the first dotted figure in the upper register of the piano (D6 to E5) sounds the two semitones which surround the root E-flat, providing a major seventh and a minor ninth to the triad below.

Crumb has a long history of referring to the works of other composers either directly in quotations from specific works, or indirectly in original music that is

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47 At “silence” in the first movement; at “I mourned” in “When Lilacs”; throughout the second vocalise; in the third vocalise at “o-a”; and in several places in Movement V, such as before R26 and R27.
meant to evoke a particular compositional style or period. While this passage is an original composition, nevertheless, it strongly evokes the opening of the theme of the second movement of Beethoven’s piano sonata, Op. 111. The two passages are shown below, along with a version in which Beethoven’s notes are written out with Crumb’s rhythm in order to reveal their essential similarity (see Ex. 15).


Example 15b. Crumb, “arriving” at R29

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48 Among many possible examples are the quotation form Bach’s “Bist du bei mir” in Ancient Voices of Children and the original passage in B major in the final movement of Vox Balaenae.

49 Crumb, in a telephone conversation with the author, July 4, 1994.
The excerpts share features such as the voicing of the tonic and dominant chords in the progression, the rhythmic contour and melodic gesture of the descending right-hand figures and the overall mood of peace and intimacy. In *Apparition* the passage is firmly grounded in a bass line that outlines the scale of Eb major. From the fourth bar of the passage on, the chord progression seems to relinquish its harmonic function. Motive b appears—both horizontally, <D,E,Ab> and vertically, <E,Gb,Bb>—in the ensuing progression before R30. Its powerfully charged tritone element, however, is defused and smoothed through the ethereal and weightless whole-tone ascent.

The tonal progression recurs transposed three more times in this movement. As shown in Table 3, the series of tonics—<Eb, Db, B, A>—constitutes a whole-tone descent that echoes local whole-tone motives and unites the second half of the movement. The F major chord outlined at the opening of the movement also ties into this progression as it represents the whole step above E-flat.

The new harmonic plateau on Db at the opening of the second C section (R30)
is framed by two gestures featuring perfect fourths. These contain various references to previous movements. The stack of fourths in the grace chord contains the pitch classes \{C,G,D,A,E,B\}. This presents the same series that begins with the third entry in the stretto of “Dark Mother”, extending it by one member to include B (see Ex.16a).

Example 16a. Fourths in “Dark Mother” and “Come Lovely”

The dyads in fourths that appear after the low Db major chord is like a “curtain”, used to close off one section and set the stage for another. This gesture is also referential, presenting a transformation of the series of hexachords separated by tritones that begins in bar 3 of “Approach” (see Ex. 16b). Both passages contain nine separate attacks featuring perfect fourths as the uppermost interval (except for the minor second at the end of the chordal passage). Transposition by tritone in the progression of hexachords is replaced with transposition by fourth in the progression of dyads.
The undulating section after R30 is similar to the one in the previous C section, but it contains some variations in the intervalic relations between its parts. The piano again presents the aggregate in its first two phrases, but the second phrase is T3 of the first rather than T9 (see Ex.17).

Example 17. Transpositions and the aggregate at “Undulate round the world” (C2)

The prominence of the interval of a third in the transpositions within this passage rivals the prominence of the perfect fourth in the previous passage. The vocal line (starting on B4) is T8 of the top piano line (starting on D#); the second “undulate” in the vocal line is T9 of the first one; and the corresponding piano phrase is T3 of the first one. This helps create contrast between sections.

The second D section, starting at R31, confirms the key of Db major (suggested
first at R30) with a transposed version of the chord series that defined Eb major in the previous D section. And, as before, the right-hand part in the piano presents intervals that are dissonant to the chords. The small leaps in the piano's upper-register melody are more subdued and less emotive than the major and minor sevenths that arched over the previous E-flat progression. However, a little reminder of those large leaps appears in the vocal line at the words "to all" and "to each", which were not included in section D1. Another addition is the pair of whole-tones (like those heard at "gliding") that accompany "in the day". The vocal line reaches a somewhat subdued peak on the Ab at "night" after which it makes a whole-tone descent. This descent presents pitch classes (excluding Ab) that form the whole-tone ascent in the right hand of the piano—<C,D,E,F-sharp>—beginning in the following bar.

The transitional section, beginning with the B major chord at R32 presents a brief summary of various ideas heard so far in the movement. The piano restates the two perfect fourth ideas from the second C section, and the voice adds a linear presentation of the same interval, at "sooner or later". The second vocal idea seems as though it will continue to leap by fourths, but then makes an adjustment to a minor third at the end, on C#. This outlines an A major triad that foreshadows the arrival on that chord—the last stage in the whole-tone descent of tonics—at the end of the movement. The piano recalls the bird motives from the A section of the movement and then makes a final reference to the wavy figures that have consistently accompanied "undulating".

The piano climax at R33 combines the tonal procedures that have characterized the two D sections of the movement with a free fantasy in which nature and bird themes from vocalises 1 and 3 mingle with fragments of the vocal line from previous D sections, all embroidered with tritones and major and minor
sevenths and ninths. The chord progression that accompanied the vocal line at “arriving...” in the two previous D sections, is reprised intact. It guides our memory of the vocal line, allowing us to identify the fragments of that line that appear interwoven with the nightbird’s song and other sounds of nature. Accordingly we hear the upper part of the piano as a surrogate for the absent singer.

First, the ascending major seventh that we heard in the vocal line as part of “arriving” appears, only descending, between E5 and F4. (These notes are clearly differentiated from their surroundings not only through notation but by their duration as well. The E is accented and its flag suggests that it emerges as part of a line, the beginning of which we did not hear.) (see Ex. 18)

Example 18. The vocal line at “arriving” and its surrogate in the piano climax.

The triplet rhythm of this E and F accommodates the last two syllables of “ar-ri-ving” in much the same way that they were set on the two previous occasions—with a dotted eighth and a sixteenth. The appearance of these pitch classes here also serves to foreshadow an important climax a few bars hence. The second bar of the
climax reprises materials associated with “in the day” in R31+1. Embedded in the decorative figuration is the whole-tone descent at “day” (see Ex. 19).

Example 19. The vocal line at “in the day” and its surrogate in the piano climax.

The first note is repeated in a syncopated rhythm rather than being held for its longer duration. The repeated-note triplet and quintuplet figure from Vocalise 1 returns again, and crescendos to a transposed repeat of the quintuplet figure that opens the A section of this movement, itself a variation of figures in the nightbird’s song.

In the third measure of the piano climax, the surrogate vocal line echoes the contour of the pitches at “in the night”, the subdued climax of R31+3 (see Ex. 20). Here, however, the piano exhibits no such restraint as it propels itself to the most satisfying climax of the work. The high F7 repeats a total of twelve times, and undergoes an accelerando and a forceful crescendo. The group of quintuplets drive
their note home against the low E in the bass in one last, definitive presentation of the pitch classes that were first heard in association with the word "mourned" in "When Lilacs". The climax is cut off by a rest, then displaced by the progression of

Example 20. The vocal line at "in the night" and its surrogate in the piano climax

descending fourths which contains many of the same pitch classes as the grace chord at R30. This progression forms half of the curtain gesture that has been presented twice before as a unit comprising ascending and descending intervals. Its separation here recalls the similar separation of directional components in the hexachordal passage just before R19 in "Approach" (just before R19). There, however, the gesture was not completed with a complementary ascent whereas here, the matching ascent we expect is provided at the A major chord at R34.

The coda begins at R34 with an A-major chord, representing the final stage in the large-scale whole-tone descent which began in the first D section with the tonic Eb. A reprise of the knocking sequence is framed by an arch consisting of the ascending leg of the "curtain" on one side, and a descending vocal glissando recalling the final vocal gesture in Vocalise 2, on the other.
The movement thus represents a remarkable and culminating synthesis of the principal musical ideas and motives heard throughout the work. We can now consider the larger-scale musical significance of these motives and references as well as their interaction with the text.

The music and text together outline a progression of events that moves the listener towards a central transcendent experience. That progression has several stages: willingness; approach; arrival; climax; and continuation. The first of these is initiated by the knocking sounds that appear at the beginning of the movement. These stand out as unique and arresting events that seem to evoke the palpable presence of something we have not yet encountered in the work—possibly the “apparition” that has been a tacit promise of the title all along. The isolated knock at the opening of the movement is soon followed by several, more insistent pairs of knocks that give the impression that the presence has drawn nearer and is impatiently awaiting response. The restless and unstable bird song figures give way to the singer’s first line which indicates a mood of peaceful receptivity, and they disappear altogether after her second entrance. The singer’s music wholly supports the content of the text with its gentle rocking between whole tones, recalling the comfort and intimacy projected in the predominantly whole-tone line at “nestling close to thee” in the first movement. The unity of affect is enhanced by the addition of “mm” at the end which seems to be a private confirmation and a savouring of the previous thought. There is no longer a musical subtext in the singer’s line that contradicts her words of welcome as there was in “Approach Strong Deliveress”, for example. The willingness of the spirit has thus been established and therefore the first stage of the progression towards the central experience is complete.

The metaphor of death as ocean resurfaces again in the movement’s C section
with the words “undulate round the world...”, which move the listener closer
towards that experience.\footnote{This association was made previously in the lines “Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
"Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death” from “Approach Strong Deliveress”.} The use of water imagery in “Lilacs” to represent the
boundary between the land of the living and the land of the dead is consistent with
mythic prototypes.\footnote{For more on the significance of water imagery in “Lilacs” see Foreman, 120-121.} In the legend of Orpheus, for example, the hero has to cross
the river Styx in order to enter the underworld. In Apparition we encounter
figures which suggest waves and water in their overlapping and imitative interplay
at "undulate...". The words “serenely arriving, arriving,” then bring us to the
metaphoric shore of our destination.

The word “arriving” here functions on two levels. On the surface, it is used
to indicate an inevitable physical reality: the arrival of death “to all, to each”. On a
deeper level, the word is used to signify the arrival of the spirit to a transcendent
state of reconciliation with death.\footnote{In this context the allusion to the second movement of Beethoven’s Sonata Op. 111 seems
perfectly appropriate. The theme is a model of serenity, embodying the antithesis of the herculean
struggles in the first half of the sonata, and the movement itself later reaches timeless and unearthly
states that are unprecedented in the piano literature. In Thomas Mann’s novel Dr. Faustus, the music
teacher Kretschmar prefaces his lecture on Op. 111 with a comment that is appropriate to the themes
discussed here: “In these forms...the subjective and the conventional assume(d) a new relationship
conditioned by death.” (Thomas Mann, Dr. Faustus (New York: Vintage books, 1948), 53.)} The music here is fully united with the deeper
connotations of the text: the arrival on the Eb major chord is indeed sublime,
evoking feelings of having arrived home to a place we have never been before. The
triads we have encountered until now have either been heard as dissonant
resonances, as in Movement I, or combined with others at T1 to make harsh
hexachords, as in Movement IV. This E-flat chord is the first clearly played and
unsullied major triad, and it is set in the warm, mid-bass register for maximum
effect. The sense of fulfilment at this point is enhanced by the piano’s rhythmic
completion of the repeated trochaic figures in the voice. The tonality of E-flat is
supported by the bass and the functional harmonies of the first three chords, all of which prolong the sense of being in another place and time. This is not unlike the way the E-major triads at “Märchenzeit” function in the final movement of Schoenberg’s Pierrot lunaire. In Apparition the whole-tone materials at the end of the tonal progression add to the ethereal effect of the passage as the chords seem to evaporate in a weightless and accelerated ascent. The experience is an ecstatic one but its relevance to previous events has yet to be fully understood.

The varied reprise of both the C and the D sections allows for an enactment of the cyclic connotations inherent in the textual repeat of the word “arriving”. If this were an exact reprise it would prove difficult to justify in a narrative and dramatic sense, as it would imply a re-take of the transcendental experience. The fact that it takes place on a new tonal plane, and contains additional vocal lines and new text, however, suggests a prolongation of the experience rather than a repetition.

The references to the song of the nightbird at various points throughout the movement remind us that (in “Lilacs”) it is actually the bird who is uttering the text. The speaker’s acquiescence to the wisdom of nature, that speaks through the bird allows for the transcendent experience to take place. An allusion to this transformation of bird to word in the poem is ingeniously achieved in the piano climax where fragments of the vocal line, the nightbird’s song and the sounds of nature are melded together in one line, revealing the fact that they are actually one and the same voice. More importantly, the piano climax allows for a re-evaluation of previous events and feelings in light of the recent ecstatic experience. The climactic arrival on the pitch classes which have been closely associated with the idea of “mourning”, (E and F), recalls the painful experience of loss but now places that experience within the context of a directed progression of events represented by the ascending diatonic scale in the bass. By implication, the cathartic experience has
led us to a view of death as an integral part of the universal process.

The coda functions as a terminus for the movement's large-scale whole-tone progression; as a vehicle for its unwinding energies; and as a fulfilment of earlier, uncompleted gestures. The movement's directed whole-tone descent of triads comes to a close in the A major chord at R34. The energy generated through the piano's powerful climax is only partially dispersed by the time it reaches the opening of the coda. The two stretches of silence—5" and 3"—aid in its dissipation. We have heard several gestures in this movement that complete previously unresolved ideas. While the final vocal phrase could be heard as a descending complement to the ascending portion of the curtain in fourths at R34, that gesture actually requires no resolution as it represents a completion of the descending dyads four bars earlier. Rather, the singer's final phrase makes a farther-ranging connection to the only other glissando vocal line in the cycle, the one that occurs at the end of the second vocalise. This gesture, which seemed to hurtle into a void, finds a peaceful resolution at the end of Movement V in the word "death" and its attendant, comforting hum.

VI. The Night in Silence Under Many a Star

The music and text of the first movement are reprised with only a few changes in this, the last movement of the cycle. The melismatic flourishes in the vocal line now contain fewer notes than those of their counterparts, and these are further calmed through rhythmic augmentation. Although the vocal line here follows similar contours to those of the original, it discontinues the obsessive repetition that characterized the endings of phrases there. The reflective and "pensive" atmosphere that results from these changes is further enhanced by the soothing sound of "mm" which replaces "a" in the untexted portions of the vocal
line. The ending is greatly augmented with the addition of over fifteen seconds worth of rests, resulting in a suspension of movement and time. This, together with the fading repetitions of the final line of text, ending in pantomime, are characteristics of closure that have many precedents in the works of Crumb. They are, nonetheless, particularly appropriate here in that they suggest the idea of continuation together with ending.

The reprise of the opening movement is a gesture that embodies the cyclic process that has been the central informing principle of the work. It symbolizes the continuance of life and the move back into that life after having passed through a “psychic night” in order to come to terms with the idea of death. As in “Lilacs”, the insight gained through this experience serves not as a retreat from life, but as a means of coming to life with new understanding.

Upon first hearing, the various motives and musical fragments introduced in the first movement had little definition or individuality. These they gradually accumulated through subsequent movements, eventually becoming ossified in certain shapes and roles according to their inherent characteristics. In the culminative fifth movement, many of the identifiable characters that had developed throughout the course of the work were recalled in references. They then played out, in musical terms, the ideas of reconciliation and transformation that are central to the poetic text.

Now, in returning to the first movement, we have the opportunity to hear all the ur-materials of the work once again. This time, however, we hear these materials with an understanding that has accumulated through our past listening experience and, like the poet coming to the bird for the last time, we find that the song now has meaning.

53Vox Balaenae, for example, ends in the same way.
Selected Bibliography

The Poetry


The Music


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**On Flamenco and the Duende**


Appendix 1

The “Death Carol” from “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed”

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
    In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
    Sooner or later delicate death.

Praised be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
    And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.

Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
    Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unalteringly.

Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou has taken them I joyously sing the dead,
    Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
    Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.

From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings for thee
    And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are fitting
    And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,
    And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veiled death
    And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide
    Over the dense-packed cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
    I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.