PLAYING WITH CIRCLES:

A MUSICO-POETIC STUDY OF GYÖRGY KURTÁG’S SCENES FROM A NOVEL,
OP. 19 (1979-1982)

DISsertATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation examines text and music in Scenes from a Novel, op. 19 (1979-1982) by the distinguished Hungarian composer György Kurtág (b. 1926). Scenes from a Novel (for soprano, cimbalom, violin, and double bass) is set to poems by Rimma Dalos, a Russian poet living in Hungary. The first objective of the study is to show that Kurtág achieves a musico-poetic symbiosis by creating a multiplicity of structural/semantic connections between each of Dalos's fourteen poems and their fifteen musical counterparts, as well as between the poetic cycle as a whole and its musical realization. My analysis, in this respect, is a demonstration or a sample of Kurtág's unique, scrupulous work with his texts, resulting in a musico-poetic organism, where the two constituents not just complement each other, but are inexplicably interwoven. The second objective is to test what I believe is the optimal analytical approach to Kurtág's vocal music, and possibly, on a larger scale, to vocal music in general — an approach where poetry and music are treated as two equal structural constituents of one musico-poetic whole.

My analytical ideas are inspired by the writings of the preeminent Russian semiotician Iurii Lotman (1922-1994). In Chapter 1, following Lotman's principles of structuralist poetic analysis, I examine the lexical (word content), phonological (sound
content), prosodic (metric organization), graphic (visual presentation), and grammatical levels of poetic structure in each of the fourteen Dalos poems. I discuss the means of Kurtág's poetic cyclic organization in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 I examine the musical structure of *Scenes*, consciously minimizing references to the poetic text and using a variety of contemporary analytical techniques. Chapter 4 reveals the structural/semantic implications of the relationship between text and music in this composition.

The structural/semantic (as opposed to structural and semantic) indivisibility of text and music becomes apparent only when both text and music are examined together and compared with each other. The main feature of *Scenes* is the interconnectedness of all the elements within and between its fifteen fragments, which I arrange in conceptual, concentric circles. I propose that the connectedness of the constituent elements is Kurtág's compositional goal, whereas structural circularity is Kurtág's aesthetic accomplishment.
To my parents, Misha, and Barklay
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In early 1998 I had a conversation about my research plans with Dr. Jan Radzynski, Professor of Composition at The Ohio State University. He asked if I was familiar with Kurtág’s music, and since I was not, advised me to check if our library owned copies of any Kurtág scores and recordings. Scenes from a Novel happened to be one of a few. I thank Dr. Radzynski for his suggestion: this dissertation is a result of the trip to the library I took right after our conversation.

In the spring of 1999, while debating with myself which approach I should take in my analysis of Scenes from a Novel, I asked Dr. Irene Masing-Delic, Professor of Russian Literature at The Ohio State University, to teach me how to perform poetic analysis. After hearing my ideas about the role of music and poetic analyses in the interpretation of Kurtág’s music, she called me “a structuralist,” and advised me to read Iurii Lotman’s book Analysis of the Poetic Text. I am especially indebted to her for this recommendation.

I would like to thank the members of my committee: my adviser Dr. Lora Gingerich Dobos, Dr. Arved Ashby, and Dr. Irene Masing-Delic for their intellectual stimulation, valuable suggestions, and criticism they have given, as well as their enthusiasm. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Irene Masing-Delic, Dr. Graeme Boone, and Alejandro L. Madrid for their help with translations from German and French. I thank Dr.
Margarita Mazo for her continuous support and for her advice “to draw pictures when words do not come to mind” that I took very seriously.

I am grateful to Editio Musica Budapest for their gracious permission to reproduce the score of *Scenes from a Novel*; I would like especially to thank the Artistic Director of Editio Musica Budapest, János Demény, for providing me with all necessary information, scores and recordings. I thank The Ohio State University for supporting my work with research and travel grants.

And last, but not least, I am grateful to György Kurtág and Rimma Dalos for their interest and encouragement.
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INTRODUCTION

There is always some sense of playing a game when trying to interpret something so inexplicable as music, which is as ephemeral as time itself. In this game, we make up our own rules. Dealing with a musical composition, we often feel so eager to “understand” it that we take it apart, break the parts into microscopic cells, and then build our own construction, which we gaze at afterwards with some sense of pride, but which is, we claim, somebody else’s piece of music. In this sense, my analytical study is no different from any other. I am “playing with” a piece by a composer who fascinates me. I am playing by rules that I establish myself. I am breaking the composition into dozens of pieces, and then rebuilding it according to my own blueprint. What makes my analysis distinctive are the tools that I use in my game of “playing with circles.”

Why do we try to understand a work of art? Is it because it intrigues us and we want to share our fascination with others? Or, is it, as Pieter van den Toorn suggests, that “working closely with the materials of music, theorists and analysts seek a more detailed knowledge of those materials, and for the purpose of adding to the attraction itself, intensifying the felt presence of a given context. What they seek are images ever more intimate in their detail, and as such, even more capable of yielding pleasure”?1 Or,

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maybe, in order to make the ephemeral experience of music permanent we must fashion it into an intellectual property as opposed to an emotional one, and it is exactly this point where music scholars step forward and make it happen? I was and still am constantly asking myself these questions while being one of those who is intrigued by music.

And there are more questions. Just what is a music scholar supposed to do when approaching a composition by a composer who has been connected with no particular analytical tradition? How does one find that optimal access to a composer’s work without being invasive? How does one say just enough about a composition without saying too much and going too far? How does one analyze a piece of music without destroying its mystery?

These unanswered questions will remain unanswered not only because that discussion could, perhaps, constitute another dissertation, but also, and more importantly, because I believe that asking these questions, without necessarily finding the answers, helps us keep a certain respectful distance from the composition we are examining, a distance between the enigma of music and our interpretation of it.

The issue of interpretation becomes even more critical when talking about the contemporary Hungarian composer György Kurtág (b.1923), whose compositions are largely based on, set to, or inspired by literature and, specifically, poetry. Because of Kurtág’s extremely concentrated and expressive compositional style, and also because of his close affinity with poetry, there is so much meaning beyond each musical sound in his works that it is impossible to grasp, but at the same time, also impossible not to try to interpret. Starting with his op.16, Ommagio a Luigi Nono for a capella choir (1979), many of Kurtág’s vocal works are settings to texts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century
Russian poets. For more than twenty years now Kurtág has been fascinated with the sound of the Russian language and the semantics that it is capable of carrying. The extensive list of Kurtág’s Russian compositions includes Poslaniia pokoinoi R. V. Trusovoi (Messages of the Late R. V. Trussova) op. 17 (1976-1980) for soprano and instrumental ensemble, a musical setting of poems by Rimma Dalos; Pesni unyniia i pechali (Songs of Despair and Sorrow) op. 18 (1980-1994), - six choruses for mixed choir with instruments to poems by Mikhail Lermontov, Aleksandr Blok, Sergei Esenin, Osip Mandel’shtam, Anna Akhmatova, and Marina Tsvetaeva; Stseny iz romana (Scenes from a Novel) op.19 (1979-1982) for soprano and instrumental ensemble set to poems by Rimma Dalos; Rekviiem po drugu (Requiem for a Friend) op. 26 (1982-1986) for soprano and piano to poems by Rimma Dalos and Anna Akhmatova; works for solo voices (in progress) to texts by Daniil Kharms, Aleksandr Galich, Sergei Esenin, and a vocal cycle (in progress) to poems by Anna Akhmatova. The legitimate question “why Russian poetry?” remains outside the focus of this study. Objectively, Russian is richer than Hungarian in consonants and especially, vowels; for that reason, it is a more musical language. Subjectively, as a native Russian speaker, I can testify that it is very difficult to imagine a more congenial musical realization of these Russian texts, than in Kurtág’s vocal compositions. However, the uniqueness of Kurtág’s approach to Russian poetry lies in his ability to get into this language’s “transverbal zones,” to those deep layers of

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2 Kurtág speaks Hungarian, Romanian, and German since childhood. He studied Russian at school; however, his interest and a serious study of Russian started only in the 1970s. (From Kurtág’s conversation with the author, Paris, 12 March 2000).

3 Rimma Dalos’s characterization of Kurtág’s work with Russian poetry. See Dalos 1990, 195.
semantics of the Russian poetic language that remain beyond the lexical meaning of the words.

The scope of the current study allows for the thorough investigation of only one of the composer’s Russian compositions. I have chosen *Scenes from a Novel*, op. 19 (1979-1982), a musical setting of poems by Rimma Dalos, a Russian poet living in Hungary. This composition is often considered a companion-opus to the much more celebrated *Messages of the Late R. V. Trussova*, op. 17 (1976-1980), also written to Dalos’s poems, an intense and expressive vocal-instrumental composition. It is true that *Scenes* is partly made up of settings that Kurtág did not use in *Messages*. However, this fact by no means diminishes the structural integrity and the semantic depths of *Scenes*. On the contrary, its smaller scale (fifteen as opposed to twenty one fragments in *Messages*), and smaller ensemble (soprano, violin, cimbalom, and double bass) create a more intimate, more subtle, and tighter musico-poetic phenomenon.

In this study I am pursuing two main objectives. The first is to show that *Scenes* is a musico-poetic symbiosis, achieved by the composer through a multiplicity of structural/semantic connections between each of Dalos’s fourteen poems and their fifteen musical counterparts, as well as between the poetic cycle as a whole and its musical realization. My analysis, in this respect, is a demonstration or sample of Kurtág’s unique, scrupulous work with the text (any text), resulting in an interwoven musico-poetic organism where the two constituents are inseparable.

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4 Henceforth I will abbreviate the titles *Scenes from a Novel* as *Scenes*, and *Messages of the Late R. V. Trussova* as *Messages*.

5 In Kurtág’s fifteen-fragment cycle Nos 2 and 15 are written to the same text.
My realization of the second, large-scale goal of this dissertation evolved through the process of working on the first one. Thus, the second objective of this study is to test what I believe is the optimal approach to Kurtág’s vocal music and possibly, to vocal music in general -- the approach where poetry and music are considered two equal structural constituents of one music-poetic whole. My analytical ideas are inspired by the writings of the preeminent Russian semiotician Iurii Lotman (1922-1994), particularly his book Analiz Poeticheskogo Teksta (Analysis of the Poetic Text). Lotman’s conviction that every structural detail of the poetic text contributes to its semantics provided me with the necessary theoretical framework for my own music-poetic study. Moreover, I use the lotmanesque method of poetic analysis to examine the fourteen poems by Rimma Dalos in Chapter 1.

The concept of structure is essential to the method of analysis that I employ in this dissertation. My main postulate is the equation structure is semantics, and likewise the reverse, semantics is structure. This equation is true for each poem by Rimma Dalos set by Kurtág in Scenes; it is true for each musical fragment of the cycle; and it is true for the whole composition as a music-poetic totality. In other words, in my view (as it follows Lotman’s ideas on poetry), all inquiry into semantic meaning is necessarily an inquiry into structure. Lotman’s analytical principles, to the best of my knowledge, have never been applied to a musical composition before. I believe that the incorporation of Lotman’s method of poetic analysis into music analysis opens up a new level of Kurtág scholarship in particular and, on a larger scale, to the scholarship on text-music relationships in general. In this new systematic analytical approach, both the musical and

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poetic counterparts of any musico-poetic composition will be treated as equal structural/semantic constituents. This dissertation is a first step in this direction.

*Scenes* has been unjustly left out of the analytical scope of Kurtág scholars. Even when discussing this work specifically, musicologists usually concentrate not on the idiosyncrasies of *Scenes* per se, but on *Scenes* as some kind of extension of *Messages*.⁷ Indeed, there are many musical and semantic links between the two works, which is not only natural but also an expected phenomenon: intertextual connections are Kurtág’s compositional trademark. As the composer communicated himself, “In my music everything relates to everything.”⁸ But, by no means should the examination of the intertextual links between compositions substitute for a close analysis of each of them as an independent entity. The three scholarly works on Kurtág, however, pointed me to the analytical path that I take in my study of *Scenes*, namely, writings by István Balázs, Claudia Stahl, and Péter Szendy.⁹ Each of these scholars played different roles in the realization of my approach.

Balázs’s article is an example of what may be called an “essay on the meaning of Kurtág’s music.” Actually, it was the first article that came to my attention when I started working on *Scenes*. The author points to some of the important characteristics of this composition, such as a constant tension between eclectic images of the tragic and the grotesque, as well as the realistic and dreamlike.¹⁰ Most importantly, Balázs brings about

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⁷ See, for example, Balázs 1986a, 72 and 76-80, and McLay 1986, 515-517.


¹⁰ Balázs 1986a, 76-77.
the issue of a “quasi-epic distancing” as an essential semantic feature of the cycle. In other words, Balázs suggests an interpretation of the supposed “meaning” in Scenes. What this author does not offer, though, is an actual study of this composition -- an examination, even a very brief one, of its music and its text in interaction, as they might support the author’s observations and conclusions. We are left with two choices: either accept Balázs’s inferences, or try to come up with our own, based on much closer examination of this composition. I picked up on his “distancing” idea and went on.

The second important, much more recent work on Scenes is Claudia Stahl’s book, where the author gives a detailed overview of Scenes among Kurtág’s other vocal cycles. Stahl’s approach, contrary to Balázs’s, is an attempt at a systematic study. In her chapter on Scenes, Stahl singles out its two idiosyncratic features, the perpetuum mobile principle as a both semantic and structural factor, and Kurtág’s extensive and diverse use of the dance genres, including intertextual references to the Mahlerian scherzo and Glinkian Kamarinskaia. She lists Nos. 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, and 14 as fragments with some kind of perpetuum mobile element. Discussing fragments with dance-like characteristics -- namely, Nos. 5, 7, 9, and 10 -- Stahl correctly points to the slow waltz-like features of the violin part in No. 1 as the origin of this genre tendency. Though one can argue with some of her statements, she rightly considers musical processes important for the understanding of the structural/semantic large-scale organization of the cycle.

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11 Ibid., 78.

12 I will discuss the issue of intertextuality in Scenes in Chapters 3 and 4.

13 For one, I disagree with Stahl’s inclusion of Nos. 2 and 14 in the perpetuum mobile group (see my discussion in Chapters 3 and 4).
Nevertheless, in her study, Stahl keeps them separate. Her ideas about the overall construction of *Scenes* do not merge with her discussion of the perpetuum mobile and dance-like fragments. As I will show in my study, this group of fragments constitutes “the intertextual circle” of the multi-circular structure of *Scenes*.

Stahl also points to the 7+1+7 symmetry of *Scenes*’s large-scale structure, with the solo voice fragment in the middle, and to the idea of circularity inherent in Kurtág’s use of the same text in the second and the last fragments. The first fragment, according to Stahl, fulfills an introductory function. From these basic structural data on *Scenes*, she proceeds to more arbitrary inferences, blending some keen observations regarding the cycle’s construction with more or less superficial ones. Thus, rather unsubstantially, she suggests a division of *Scenes* into three parts according to the general character and tempi: Nos. 1-4, 5-12, and 13-15. At the same time, on another level of organization, Stahl sees No. 14 as the recapitulation of the large-scale form of the cycle, its musical retrospective, having being linked motivically and semantically to many other fragments, such as Nos. 2, 7, 10, and 12. Overall, Stahl emphasizes a consciously built large-scale arch between the beginning and the end of the composition, which is indeed its most fundamental large-scale organizational principle. She hints at the possibility of different interpretations of the cycle’s structure without actually arguing for or against one or another.

Stahl’s discussion of the text-music relationships in *Scenes* brings up several important points. She states that “the form, content, and sound of the poems are transposed extremely precisely into the music.”

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14 Stahl 1998, 103 [Form, Inhalt und Klang der Gedichte werden genauestens in Musik umgesetzt].
form in six out of the fourteen poems, she suggests that in Nos. 2 and 15, set to the same
text, Kurtág creates a musical haikuesque form, combining five lines of the text into three
segments, 2+2+1. Another of Stahl’s valuable observations concerns the composer’s
setting of the perpetuum mobile component in the text for No. 7: the word “goverila” (“I
said”), where the “bright” vowel i and the “dark” vowels o and a correspond to the higher
and lower registers, respectively.

In sum, Stahl’s study offers an outline of some of the cycle’s important
structural/semantic characteristics, with some specific references. Not aiming at fullness,
her book is a good introduction to Scenes. However, though she hints at the structural and
semantic complexity and equivocality inherent in the cycle, Stahl does not provide us
with a comprehensive picture of Scenes. Her attempt at a systematic approach to this
composition fails not so much because of the necessary brevity of her study, but mostly
because she lacks a consistent analytical approach that addresses both musical and poetic
issues of the form and content.

In that sense, Péter Szendy’s article is a big step forward, even though his study
does not concern itself with Scenes specifically. Szendy’s work is entirely dedicated to
the issues of text-music relationships in Kurtág’s vocal compositions, which he
approaches from the position of semiotics. Szendy brings up the extremely important
issue of how words and sounds confront each other in Kurtág’s works while they also
complement each other.15 Most importantly, the author establishes direct structural links
between words and sounds: “In Kurtág, melodic gesture serves to anchor the overall
syntactic construction of the poem in corporeal reality. The upward and downward

15 Szendy 1990, 266.
motion of the vocal line *incarnates* the syntactic equilibrium of the poetic text, giving it embodied existence by projecting it into the sound space defined by the composition...”\(^{16}\)

Szendy states that the “conception of syntax as a bearer of sense is indeed the one we have noted in the formal and gestural treatment of the text by Kurtág.”\(^{17}\)

Szendy supports his theory of a complementary structural relationship between music and poetry by revealing the most fascinating insights into fragment No. III. 2 from *Messages*, “Velikaia beda...” (“Great misery”). He is the first Kurtág scholar to suggest that the poetic and musical counterparts of a composition are equally important, structurally and semantically. Through lexical and sound analysis of the text, Szendy reveals that at least one of the three consonants present in the word “liubov’” (“love”), namely \(l\), \(b\), and \(v\), are found in all other words of Dalos’s poem, such as “velikaia” (“great”), “beda” (“misery”), and “byvaet” (“that’s”) -- except for one word, “schast’e” (“happiness”). Therefore, the idea of happiness in the poem is opposed to the concepts of love and misery. Consequently, love and misery are found to constitute one semantic group. Kurtág realizes this semantic opposition in the musical structure of the setting. In this fragment, which is a canon a 2 between the soprano and cimbalom, the design of the soprano line separates the word “schast’e” (“happiness”) from the rest, and thus emphasizes the incompatibility of the two semantic groups. Szendy stops short of establishing more links between the structure and semantics of the text and structure and

\(^{16}\) Szondy 1990, 269-70 [Chez Kurtág, la gestuelle médiode a pour fonction d’ancrer la construction syntaxique globale du poème dans la réalité corporelle; les mouvements ascendants et descendantes de la ligne vocale *incarnent* l’équilibre syntaxique du texte poétique, lui donnent une existence charnelle en le projetant dans l’espace sonore défini par la composition].

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 283 [Cette conception de la syntaxe comme porteuse du sene est bien celle que l’on a pu découvrir dans le traitement formel et gestuel du texte chez Kurtág].
semantics of Kurtág’s setting. However, the value of Szendy’s study is not in its analytical completeness, but in its analytical suggestiveness. As he summarizes, “In the works of György Kurtág, the relationship between music and text is established on a radically different level: that of semantics.”

Szendy’s observations, though intended only as a demonstration of his point, suggest the ideal method of analysis for Kurtág’s vocal compositions. His article reassured me of the validity of my ideas regarding the appropriate approach to Kurtág’s vocal music. It should be one that illuminates the composition from within; the kind of analytical illumination introduces by David Lewin in his analyses of Schoenberg’s “Angst und Hoffen,” No. 5 from *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* and Schubert’s “Auf dem Flusse” from *Die Winterreise*. For me, Lewin’s analyses are inspiring examples of analytical passion that comes from a fascination with the piece of music. Also, these analyses provide examples of almost exhausting analytical completeness. In this sense, Lewin’s works became the most important points of departure for this dissertation.

My dissertation is a discourse on the complexity of Kurtág’s compositional process – one that I will, in a sense, try to recreate. In *Scenes*, Kurtág assumes not only the role of composer, but also that of co-author of the poetic cycle. He does so by taking separate poems by Rimma Dalos and structuring them into one semantic sequence of his own making. The composer creates a cycle where the poet had not. We are therefore dealing with fourteen independent poetic fragments that have been fused into one whole.

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18 Szendy 1990, 282 [Je pense avoir montré que dans l’œuvre de György Kurtág le rapport entre la musique et le texte s’établisait à un niveau radicalement différent: la sémantique].

Alternatively, we have one musical whole, which at the same time incorporates fifteen or less separate musical entities.

In this study I will refer to each of the fifteen fragments of Scenes as “fragments” and not “songs,” even though Kurtág himself subtitels this composition “15 pesen na stikhi Rimmy Dalos (“15 songs to poems by Rimma Dalos”). Traditionally, “song” implies completeness and an independent existence of a vocal piece, and “fragment” implies several pieces make up indivisible whole. However, as Heather McHugh reminds us, already in the Romantic era “Friedrich Schlegel (dean of the Romantic fragmentists) took pains to distinguish the fragments of intent from that of mere extent: ‘many works of the ancients have become fragments; many works of the moderns begin that way.’”\(^{20}\) In this study I use the term “fragment” in the second, “modern” sense. Scenes is a collage of fifteen “scenes” from one “novel,” it is a collage of fifteen fragmentary entities, for “Love is partial. There is a fullness to forgetfulness, a part to remembering…”\(^{21}\) In other words, in Scenes, each fragment is a part and a whole at the same time.

This dissertation consists of four chapters. In Chapter 1 I examine the fourteen poems by Rimma Dalos used by Kurtág in Scenes. To do so, I utilize Lotman’s system of structuralist poetic analysis. According to Lotman, poetry is the most semantically charged of all means of verbal communication. One of the distinctive features of poetic language is its high information content… coupled with a low economy of means.\(^{22}\) My structuralist approach, which follows Lotman’s principles, considers the lexical (word

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\(^{21}\) Ibid., 85.

\(^{22}\) Makaryk 1993, 209.
content), phonological (sound content), prosodic (metric organization), graphic (visual presentation), and grammatical levels of poetic structure. The main postulate of Lotman’s analytical system is that in a poetic text all the elements are mutually correlated as well as with their own unrealized alternatives; consequently, they are semantically loaded. Artistic structure manifests itself on all levels. In each separate poetic fragment one or several structural levels may dominate over others. Thus, in each of Dalos’s fourteen poems I will concentrate on the most important semantically structural features, and vice versa, on the most structurally significant semantic features. I am going to use the concept of “semantics” in two senses: on the small scale, as the lexical meaning of the words, and on the large scale, as the meaning of the structural processes. Since the understanding of both the phonetic and lexical content of the poems is absolutely critical for analysis, each poem will be given in the original Russian, but transliterated using the Latin alphabet, and also in English translation. For the latter I will use the translations by Sherwood and Howarth, published with the score, unless noted otherwise. A full score of Scenes with written-in transliteration may be found in the Appendix.

In Chapter 2 I propose that circularity is the main principle of the poetic cycle’s large-scale organization. The most apparent realization of circularity is Kurtág’s poetic “arch,” as results from setting the same Dalos poem, “From meeting to parting,” as the second and the last fragments of his cycle. The absence of an overall narrative in Scenes originates in the principle of repetition. Each of the fourteen Dalos poems that the composer sets to music is a very laconic love story, or, rather, an end-of-love story. Since

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24 In this dissertation I employ the Library of Congress system of transliteration.
these fourteen poems are structured into one sequence, we perceive them as the same love story repeated many times. Thus, the principle of circularity is also employed at the micro-level: in a sense, each poem in the cycle completes its own semantic circle.

In Chapter 3 I examine the musical structure of *Scenes*, consciously minimizing references to the poetic text. Each of the fifteen fragments is considered both as a self-contained entity, and as an element of the cycle’s large-scale organization. I will show that the musical structure of *Scenes* exhibits a multi-circular design, where each of the five structural circles overlaps with the other four. In my investigation I do not limit myself to any particular theoretical or analytical approach. On the contrary, I freely use contemporary analytical vocabulary with specific references to Allen Forte’s and David Lewin’s terminologies.25

In the last part of this discourse, Chapter 4, I reveal the structural/semantic implications of the relationship between text and music in *Scenes*. Based on its poetic and musical analyses, each of the fifteen fragments is considered as a musico-poetic entity, where the two counterparts function as equal structural-semantic forces. This synthetic musico-poetic approach allows one to view the musical structure through the idiosyncrasies of the poetic structure, and vice versa. In this view, the similarities and the differences between the two counterparts are equally important. Moreover, this method of analysis helps to uncover some additional aspects of the cycle’s overall organization, establishing subtle semantic links between different circles in the multi-circular structure.

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25 Specifically, I employ, in modified form, Lewin’s idea of wedging (Lewin 1981 and 1987) and Forte’s pitch-class set terminology (Forte 1973).
In my view, the process of musico-poetic analysis entails two things. At the macro-level, it combines three analyses -- poetic analysis, music analysis, and comparative analysis. At the micro-level, a comparative analysis is a musico-poetic analysis per se, because it becomes possible only after careful consideration of both the musical and the poetic structures.

In his book on popular music, Richard Middleton draws a parallel between music and Lévi-Strauss’s theory of myth.26 Middleton writes: “Music, too, considered as a structural-semantic system, offers a means of thinking relationships, both within a work and between works, and perhaps between these and non-musical structures.”27 I suggest that this statement is equally valid if we substitute “music” for “poetry.” It is precisely the purpose of my dissertation to demonstrate that the musical and poetic structural-semantic systems in Scenes (or any of Kurtág’s vocal-instrumental compositions for that matter) overlap, interact, and aggregate into one musico-poetic structural-semantic system. When approaching this final product, using Middleton’s words, “the interpretive principle is wholly a structural one: significance of particular units lies not in what their substance happens to be but in their relationship (by contrast, equivalence, proportion, analogy, and so on).”28 Moreover, I believe that only analysis of this relationship in all its complexity will help us get closer to the substance of Kurtág’s music.

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27 Ibid., 223.
28 Ibid., 224.
CHAPTER 1

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF FOURTEEN POEMS BY RIMMA DALOS

1. Pridi,
   ia ruku protianu.
   Teplom svoim
   tvoi kholod progoniu.
   O, kak davno
   ia v ugolakh dushi
   Khranui nenuzhnye groshi.

   Come,
   here’s my hand:
   with my warmth
   I melt your frost.
   Too long I’ve kept
   in my soul’s depths
   these useless cents.

The first poem of Scenes is divided into two parts; part one is made up of four lines and part two of three lines. There is a conflict between the “I” wanting the “you” to come (in the first part) and the “I” knowing beforehand that it is “useless” effort (in the second part). Each constituent part, in its turn, contains its own conflict between the words of the semantic field “distant” (distant in time, in space), and the words of the semantic field “close” (near, inside). As we will see later, the conflict will extend to an inner one as well.

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1 The poems are examined in their order of appearance in Kurtág’s cycle.

2 I use the terms “semantic group” and “semantic field” interchangeably. The linguistic notion of the semantic field, according to Eva Kittay, is based on the idea “that both lexical items and the concepts associated with them come not singly but in groupings defined by specifiable relations of contrast and affinity.” (Kittay, 1992, 229). Thus, using Lotman’s approach, we place the words “warmth” and “soul” into one semantic field or group in the context of this poem. Conversely, the words “kholod” and “davno” belong to a different semantic field.
The first word, “pridi,” is singled out in a separate line. It is the keyword of the first part of the poem, its main mode of supplication. Significantly, the “I” (she) needs to extend a hand in order to make the “you” come closer. It seems that she already knows that although the “you” (he) may agree to come, he will try to keep his distance. Thus, the second line of the poem already contradicts the first one. Normally, the result of the invitation “to come” does not require the action “to extend a hand.” Because of this contradiction the reader gets the idea that being physically distant is not the main conflict between the “you” and the “I” in the poem. The semantic focus of the first half of the poem is the word “kholod” (“frost”). Here a metaphor “kholod” carries the meaning of “emotional distance.” The “I” needs to make the “frostiness” of the “you” go away in order for the “you” to be really close. In the poem, the “you” is characterized mostly by the actions of the “I” toward the “you,” the word “kholod” (“frost”), and by the first word, “pridi” (“come”). This is the only thing the “I” wants the “you” to do concretely, to come. The quintessence of the world of the “you” is “kholod” (“frost”), which is foregrounded phonologically (Figure 1.1):

Pridi, ia ruku protianu. -i/i , -u/u, -u “long” vowels
Teplom svoim -om, -im “soft” sound combinations tension
[tvoj] kholod -kh/d(=t) “dry”, short sounds
progoniu -iu “long” vowel

Figure 1.1: No.1. Semantic/phonological symmetry in the first half of the poem
The “dry”, “cold” consonants -kh/d(t) of the word “kholod” (“frost”) are juxtaposed with the “soft”, “warm” sound-pair -om/-im in the words “teplom svoim” (“with my warmth”), creating a phonic parallel to the semantic conflict between the constellations “you-frostiness” and “I-warmth.” The semantic/phonological summary of the first half of this lyrical fragment can be represented in the following way (Figure 1.2):

![Diagram of semantic/phonological summary]

Figure 1.2: No. 1. Semantic/phonological summary of the first half of the poem

The second half of the poem begins with the word belonging to the semantic field “distant”: “davno” (“long ago” = distant in time), which parallels the very first word of the poem, “come” (the distance in space is implied). “Davno” (“long ago”) is followed by its opposite, two words of the semantic field “close, inside”- “v ugolkakh dushi” (literally, “in my soul’s corners”). Thus, in these two lines we can talk about the formation of a new semantic field, which contrasts and combines distance in time with nearness in space; “long and inside” is a dialectical conglomerate of the two opposites.

The last line of the poem is the most important one structurally and semantically:
it completes the sequence of the verbs of the “I”-world, the self-portrait of the “I” (shown in Figure 1.3).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1.3: No. 1. The sequence of the verbs representing the “I”-world

The semantic correspondence of these verbs is emphasized phonologically by the stressed, and therefore, “long” vowels, -u, -iu, -iu, respectively, where the second and third ones are the iotated versions of the first one. All three of them rhyme, and draw the reader’s attention to themselves being three out of four verbs used in the poem. Besides, both the first and the second verb are tri-syllabic and occupy a similar metrical position.

The real “bottom line” of the poem is the combination of the two last words, “nenuzhnye groshi” (“useless pennies”). These “pennies,” probably, stand for little bits of memories and dreams. “Nenuzhnye” (“useless”) is the only adjective in the entire poem, which together with “groshi” (“pennies”) conveys bitterness and hopelessness. The second conflict in this poem becomes not so much a conflict between the “you and I,” but rather between the “I and I” itself, and this is exactly the reason why there is almost no “you” at all to be found in this poem. The last line of the poem, “Khraniu nenuzhnye

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3 In Russian, the graphemes (letter signs) ia, iu, and iе have two functions. One is to indicate softness of the preceding consonant (in this case, “n”), and the other one is to indicate the combination of “i” and the vowels a, o, and e. I will call those functions iotation in accordance with long linguistic tradition.

4 The word “groshi” is better translated as “pennies,” rather than “cents,” as in the Sherwood/Howarth translation of the poem. The word “pennies” is obsolete, and, in a sense, “useless” in contemporary Russian. Therefore, the English word “pennies,” a predecessor of the more contemporary “cents,” conveys the “uselessness,” inherent in the word “groshi,” much better.
groshi” (“I have kept these useless pennies”), contains a complex internal emphasis: to keep small change is useless by itself, to keep “useless pennies” is therefore doubly useless. The obsolescence of the word “groshi” (“pennies”) adds the third dimension to the uselessness of keeping useless pennies. “Nenyzhnye groshi” neither belong to the semantic field “distant,” nor to the semantic field “close, inside.” The word “groshi,” which is absolutely alien to the vocabulary of the poem, occupies a powerful “last word” position. Thus, it draws our special attention to itself, and that is why we attach so much meaning to it.

There is a certain dynamic in the development of the “I” - image, from the external “I,” extending an invitation in an imperative form, to the “I - inside.” There is a sense of getting deeper and deeper, and also from the “me – feeling and hoping” (in the first part) to the “me – knowing the truth” (in the second part). The conflict between hope and insight is developed in a way that may be graphically shown thus (Figure 1.4):

![Diagram](triangle.png)

**Figure 1.4: No. 1. The dynamics of the “I”-image**
The dynamics of the “you” in the poem is as follows (Figure 1.5):

“you” through “my” actions—— you as “kholod” (“frost”)—— “useless cents”
([I] extend a hand; (external and internal) (summarizes the “you” and
make his frostiness go away) the “I’s” attitude toward

the “you”)

Figure 1.5: No. 1. The dynamics of the “you”-image

There is also a logical progression in Dalos’s representation of the “you-universe,”
paralleled by the development of the “I”-image: from the actions of the “I” toward
“you,” through the barrier of his “frostiness” (which is both external and internal), to the
resulting desired “useless” merger of the “you” and the “I.”

There is a sequence of guttural and sibilant sounds in the course of the poem
(Figure 1.6):

kholod progoniu—kak—ugolkakh dushi—khraniu—nenuzhnye groshi

kh—g—k/k—g/k/kh—sh—kh—zh—g/sh

Figure 1.6: No. 1. The sequence of guttural and sibilant sounds in the poem

This progression may be divided into two parts of four words each. The first one ends
with the word “ugolkakh” (“[my soul’s] corners”), which encompasses all three gutturals;
the second part creates a sibilant-guttural-sibilant-guttural/sibilant sequence.

Interestingly, the borderline between the two parts is masked by the fact that syntactically the two words “y u golkakh dushi” (“in my soul’s corners”) are inseparable. The invisible borderline creates an enjambment effect that ultimately adds to the intensity of the statement. 5 This sequence of sounds, in a way, parallels the semantics of the poem: from dry, but potentially explosive gutturals (the “you”-world), to deep-sounding sibilants (the “I”-world), and to the almost symbolic combination of a guttural and a sibilant (the “you and I”) in the word “groshi” (“pennies”).

Finally, the metrical scheme of the poem needs to be considered (Figure 1.7, below). In this study, following Barry Scherr, I use the standard system of signs for metrical schemes: the breve [.] indicates a normally unstressed (“weak” syllable); the macron [—] stands for an ictus (“strong” syllable); the acute accent [´] indicates stresses. 6 The vertical lines [⅟] separate “a regularly recurring group of long and short syllables,” corresponding to the musical measure (the foot). 7

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5 Barry Scherr explains the term “enjambment” as follows: “Normally the end of the verse is accompanied by a syntactic break – the end of a sentence, clause, or phrase. In the case of enjambment, the significant break occurs within the line rather than at the end.” See Scherr 1986, 263.

6 Scherr 1986, xv-xvi.

7 Zhirmunskii 1966, 27.
Pri-dj,

ia ru-ku pro-tia-nu.

Tep-lom svc-im

tvoi kho-lod pro-go-niu.

O, kak dav-no

ia v u-gol-kakh du-shi

khra-niu ne-nuzh-ny-e gro-shi.

Figure 1.7: No. 1. The metrical scheme

Here we can see a regular iambic meter being unbalanced by an irregular number of feet in the lines. This creates a tension between regularity and irregularity. There is a large-scale metrical symmetry in the poem (shown in Figure 1.8).

Figure 1.8: No. 1. Large-scale metrical symmetry in the poem
The impression created by this symmetry is that the last line ("I’ve kept these useless pennies") "summarizes" the first two lines ("Come" and "here’s my hand," respectively), replicating the initial semantics of this poem. The tension caused by the heroin’s hope and the sobering reality of her life is here "resolved" in the sense of being synthesized.

2. Ot vstrechi
do rasstavania,
ot proshchaniia
do ozhidaniia
proleg moi babii vek.

From meeting
to parting,
from leave-taking
to awaiting
- that was my woman’s lot.

In this lyrical fragment there is a grammatical pattern created by the first four lines, emphasized by the sound repetition "ot"-"do." The presence of the prepositions "ot"- "do" ("from"-"to") in the two clauses causes the reader to expect a semantic pattern supporting this construction, but it is a prerogative of the poetic text not to follow up on its own premises. In any word construction involving the "from-to" model, the certain delimitation in time, or in space, must be posited between the events. We tend to perceive a specified time-space relationship between "vstrecha" ("meeting") and "rasstavanie" ("parting"). Similarly, in the second segment, "ot proshchaniia do ozhidaniia" ("from leave-taking to awaiting"), the reader pictures a certain delimitation once more, even though ordinarily there is no actual time/space implied between the two events of leave-taking and awaiting. Therefore, in the second clause, a reader’s expectations are thwarted, since "awaiting" offers no demarcation and delimitation.

Several interpretations of these four lines are possible:
1. The parallel grammatical construction emphasizes that the expected delimited intervals between the meetings are transformed into an endless waiting for reasons unknown to the reader. The only word of the semantic field “togetherness,” namely, the word “meeting,” is completely overpowered by the words “parting,” “leave-taking,” and “awaiting,” belonging to the semantic field “being apart.”

2. Among the four nouns of this construction, the first three involve two “participants,” implying “us,” whereas the last word, “awaiting,” belongs solely to the world of “I.” The reader’s expectation of an exact semantic parallel is not fulfilled because of this word.

A more logical sequence of the events would be this: “from meeting - to parting,” “from leave-taking - to meeting.” The substitution of (a second) “meeting” for “awaiting” suggests two things. First, there is no regularity between “parting” and “meeting.” Instead, there is a sequence “meeting”-“parting”-“awaiting” without any more “meetings” being automatically assumed. Second, the two segments of the pattern are not truly parallel because the words “parting” and “leave-taking” describe the same event. Finally, the word “awaiting” has opened up the second demarcation in the text. Thus, in graphic form, what we have in the poem may be represented as follows (Figure 1.9):

meeting ———-> parting = leave-taking ———> awaiting

Figure 1.9: No. 2. Graphic representation of the events in the poem
The uniqueness of the position of the word “vstrechi” (“meeting”) in the semantics of the poem is emphasized structurally. The first line, “ot vstrechi,” stands alone and unrhymed with the rest; it is also shorter than the other lines, while the words “rasstavaniia,” “proshchaniia,” and “ozhidaniia,” occurring one after another with marked alliteration, and being six-, five-, and six-syllables in length, respectively, create a strong phonological and prosodic emphasis (Figure 1.10):

vstrechi (meeting)---------- short line---------- short time
rasstavaniia (parting) ------long line---------- long time
proshchaniia (leave-taking)---long line---------long time
ozhidaniia (awaiting)-------long line---------long time

Figure 1.10: No. 2. The uniqueness of the word “vstrechi” in the context of the poem

This pattern makes it clear that there is one more possible interpretation of the first four lines. The only event in the world of “togetherness,” namely, “vstrecha,” is short. Indeed, the rest of the words (events), all belonging to the “being apart” semantic field, are much longer.

The last line of this poem, “proleg moi babii vek” (“that was my woman’s lot”) is extremely significant metrically and semantically. First of all, there is a rapid change of the metrical pattern (Figure 1.11):
Ot vstre-chi
do ras-sta-va-ni-ia,
ot pro-shcha-ni-ia
do o-zhi-da-ni-ia
pro-leg moi ba-bii vek.

Figure 1.11: No. 2. The metrical scheme of the poem

The first four lines are written in one-stress dol’nik, based on a trisyllabic pattern.\textsuperscript{8} By way of contrast, the last line represents a perfect example of an iambic line.\textsuperscript{9} Instead of four- and five-syllabic words, the fifth line consists of short one- or two-syllabic words, as does the first line. This fact makes it possible to consider the last line of the text, “proleg moi babii vek” (“that was my woman’s lot”) as the fusion of “short” and “long.” The length of the line may be thought of as representing a woman’s life filled with waiting, but the short iambic units (all fully realized) give it a fragmentary (“chopped”) quality.

Dalos’s use of the epithet “babii” in the poem is salient. “Baba” is a word frequent in folklore. Here the poet likens herself to a Russian peasant woman, physically strong and sensual: this woman is the opposite of the refined, sophisticated image of a woman.

\textsuperscript{8} Dol’nik may be described as a free metric pattern where the number of stresses in a line remain the same or nearly the same, but intervals between stresses vary (0 – approximately 4-5).

\textsuperscript{9} The first line alone may be viewed as an iambic line with anacrusis, which would create a metrical arch with the last line, emphasizing the semantics of circularity.
The word “babii” draws special attention to itself in the context, being alien to the surrounding standard Russian lexicon. Moreover, the last line brings a new meaning to the whole situation in the poem: now we do not necessarily see the woman-protagonist as only the victim because of the strength inherent in the semantics of this word. Thus, this change in one’s reading of this poem very much corresponds to the change in the prosodic pattern, occurring in the last line. It stresses the fact that this woman is capable of intense suffering but that she also has the strength to bear it.

3. Prostitute, miloserdnye,
   za slabost’ moiu zhenskuiu
   za to, chto poliubila ia
dusheiu iurodivogo.

   Merciful ones,¹⁰ forgive me
   this women’s weakness,
   that I so loved
   this holy fool.

   Metrically this poem is unified by the consistent number of feet and regular stresses in the first three lines, written in dol’nik. The word “iurodivyi” (“holy fool”) in the fourth line breaks this prosodic pattern (Figure 1.12). (However, when reciting this poem herself, Rimma Dalos stresses the third syllable in the word “iurodivogo,” thus keeping the preceding metrical pattern unchanged.)¹¹

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¹⁰ In her use of the word “miloserdnye” (“merciful ones”) Dalos alludes to all the saints there are.

¹¹ Rimma Dalos, conversation with the author, Budapest, 19 March 2000.
Pros-ti-te, mi-lo-serd-ny-e,
za sl-a-bost' mo-iu zhens-ku-iu
za to, chto po-liu-bi-la ia
du-sho-iu iu-ro-di-vo-go.

Figure 1.12: No. 3. The metrical scheme of the poem

In the first two lines of the poem there is strong alliteration involving four words containing “s” as well as other sibilants: “prostite,” “miloserdnye,” “slabost’,” “zhenskuiu.” The sibilants evoke the sound of Russian prayers, as in “Bozhe, spasi i sokhrani” (“God, save and protect me”). The lexicon of the poem is filled with the words from the semantic field of “prayer,” such as “merciful,” “forgive,” “weakness,” “holy fool.” The third line (“that I so loved”) brings a new meaning to the word “weakness.” Loving someone is a strong emotion, therefore the heroine’s “weakness,” paradoxically, is her inability to feel otherwise but strongly. In other words, in this context, a weakness becomes the opposite of itself. The last line, “dushoiu iurodivogo” is the most complex one. The complexity of it originates in the metrical position of the word “iurodivyi” (“holy fool”), which is rhythmically foregrounded, and in the semantics of the last line.

The concept of “holy foolishness” in Russian culture is a fascinating subject. One of the images of “holy fools” comes from folklore, where “holy fools,” perceived as

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madmen, are described as “fools from birth,” possessing the ability to predict the future and heal illness. At the same time, there was “foolishness for Christ’s sake.” Some of Russia’s holy fools were “ascetics who only pretended to be mad.” In Dalos’s poem the word “iurodivyi” is used in the association with the word “dusha” (“soul”). The literal translation of the last two lines is “that I so loved [someone] who has the soul of a holy fool.” The English translation of the poem by Sherwood and Howarth, grammatically correct, misses this important semantic element (they translate it as “that I so loved this holy fool”). The semantics of the phraseological unit “dushoiu iurodivogo” is complex and equivocal. The Russian word “iurodivyi” originates in “urod,” “an ugly person.” Still, the “ugliness” of holy fools is only external, not pertaining at all to their inner being, their “souls.” Therefore, the combination of the words “iurodivyi” and “dusha” (“holy fool” and “soul”, respectively) is quite paradoxical. Reference to someone with a holy fool’s soul, in the context of this poem, indicates that the beloved may be externally handsome, but has a complex and unattractive soul. He is, probably, talented, eccentric, and spontaneous, but at the same time insensitive and withdrawn.

A summary of this poem is as follows: a woman-protagonist is praying for forgiveness for her weakness, which is a strong love toward someone eccentric and unpredictable. Her strength is evident from the fact that she has seen through his façade to his inner essence. The sense of the heroine’s strength, which develops and intensifies in the course of these four lines, contradicts the idea of praying, where the one who is praying is usually the weakest. The prosody of the poem with its broken pattern in the last line reflects this change in one’s perception of the heroine.

4. Pozvol’ mne
    prikosnut’ sia k tebe,
    rasplavit’ sia, rasstvorit’ sia.  
    Allow me
to touch you,
to melt, to dissolve in you.

In these three lines, written in dol’nik, we see a rapidly increasing degree of emotion which corresponds to the rapid increase in the length of the lines: three, six, and eight syllables, respectively. Still, the first three-syllable line carries a semantic weight which balances the other two: why should a person with such an overwhelming passion for someone, a passion that comes close to ecstasy in line three, beg the object of her affection so timidly for permission to express her feelings? The most logical answer would be because her passion is not requited. The first line serves not only as a starting point of the escalated emotional force, but also indicates that it may end there. Graphically, this possibility could be illustrated in this manner (Figure 1.13):

```
line 1           REALITY
line 2           EMOTION
line 3           EMOTION
(REALITY)
```

Figure 1.13: No. 4. Graphic representation of the emotional state of the heroine
Although a real encounter of love may eventuate as a result of her pleading, the fact remains that what we hear is but pleading.

In spite of the fact that the poem is written in three lines, the analysis of the sound-aspect reveals its basic bipartite structure (Figure 1.14):

Text: Pozvol’ mne prikosnut’sia k tebe rasplavit’sia rasstvorit’sia

Phonic patterns: p/e – p/e ras/it’sia-ras/it’sia

Figure 1.14: No. 4. Bipartite phonological structure of the poem

As seen in Figure 1.14, each of the two parts consists of two segments with similar sound-organization. The two parts are linked through the verb “prikosnut’sia” (“[to] touch”), which still belongs to the first part, but grammatically and phonologically relates to the second half. “Prikosnut’sia” picks up the sound pattern of the first half while introducing the new pattern of the second (Figure 1.15):

prikosnut’sia (to touch) – rasplavit’sia (to melt) – rasstvorit’sia (to dissolve)

Figure 1.15: No. 4. Phonological links between the last three verbs

Here two phonological processes are inter-linked, one being the ut’sia – it’sia – it’sia phonemic sequence, and the other – the pr-r/p-r succession. The first part of the pr-phoneme in the word “prikosnut’sia” (“to touch”), the p-sound, gradually “dissolves”
into the single r-sound in “rastvort’sia” ("to dissolve"), after first having been subjected to isolation/inversion in the word “rasplavit’sia” ("to melt"). The process of sound-dissolution iconically represents the semantics of this lyrical fragment. The structural intricacy and firmness of the poem combined with its emotional richness create a poetic construction that is short and coherent on all levels.

5. Vse vybirala-
   vse proglia-dela.
   I dostalas’ mne liubov’
   izriadno potrepanaia.

Here and there I picked and chose
till all my chances slipped away
and I was left here with this love
so ragged and tattered, torn and frayed. ¹⁴

By giving the title “Schitalochka” ("Counting-out rhyme") to the Dalos poem in his vocal cycle, Kurtág offers a clue, essential to the interpretation of this fragment. If one tries to read the poem in a sing-song manner, combining long and short rhythmic values, it becomes evident that it is only possible for the first three lines (Figure 1.16):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{vse} & \quad \text{vy-bi-ra-la} \\
\text{vse} & \quad \text{pro-glia-de-la} \\
\text{I dos-ta-las’ mne liu-bov’}
\end{align*}
\]

Figure 1.16: No. 5. The first three lines of the poem, if read as a counting-out rhyme

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¹⁴ The poem may be translated more precisely “Here and there I picked and missed, and I was left with this torn and frayed love” ("torn and frayed" in the sense of “worn out”). The Sherwood/Howarth translation offers, rather, an interpretation of Dalos’s text rather than a translation.
In musical terms the combination of the “long” and “short” syllables in this rhythmical scheme may be represented as follows (Figure 1.17):

![Musical notation]

Figure 1.17: No. 5. Musical-rhythmical representation of the same lines as in Figure 1.16

The fourth line of the poem does not fit the prescribed rhythmical pattern of “Schitalochka” and, consequently, sets itself apart from the first three lines. The lexical content of the fourth line, namely, the words “izriadno potrepannaia” (literally, “quite soiled and ragged”), is full of an apparent bravado conveying a deep sense of self-irony. We have the protagonist speaking about herself as from a distance. The careless rhythm of the counting-out rhyme intensifies the sadness of the situation by contrast. Still, the disruption of the rhythmical-metrical pattern in the fourth line suggests some changes in the careless-light-hearted mood of the poem. The use of the word “potrepannaia” is unusual even for a folk genre because of its slangy, as opposed to folksy, nature. This poem is filled with bitterness as suggested by the choice of a counting-out rhyme form for a love story in the first place.
   Ty priblizhaesh’sia 
   ia ottalkivaiu tebia.

   Every night the same dream: 
   I beg you to come near, 
   You approach - 
   I push you away.

Slightly rearranged, this poem becomes a prose piece, a diary entry that records a dream. Still, the second line of the Dalos poem is not quite prosaic because of word order inversion (“blizosti tvoei” as opposed to the prosaic “tvoei blizosti”). “Blizosti tvoei proshu” should translate into English as “I beg for you to come near” rather than “I beg you to come near” as given in the Sherwood/Howarth translation. The version “I beg for you to come near” possesses a certain equivocality: it is not clear if the heroine asks the beloved to come near (as intimated by the Sherwod/Howarth translation), or if she begs in the sense of praying.

In the first three lines there is an extensive use of sibilants in the words “snitsia,” “son”, “blizosti,” “priblizhaesh’sia.” These four words constitute two same-root pairs, snitsia/son and blizosti/priblizhaesh’sia. The first pair originates in the word “son” (“dream”), and the second one in the word “blizko” (“near”). Both of them belong to the semantic field “inside, inner, near”. Two sentences of the poem are connected through pro/pri alliteration in the words “proshu” and “priblizhaesh’sia.” Therefore, there are numerous phonological and semantic interconnections between the first three lines of the poem, whereas the last line, “ia ottalkivaiu tebia” (“I push you away”) stands apart.

Unlike the rest of the poem, the fourth line begins and ends with the same vowel “ia”: “ia ottalkivaiu tebia”. The word “ottalkivaiu” (“push away”) attracts attention because of its role on both the semantic and phonological levels of structure in this poem. It initiates a conflict between the words of the group “inside, inner, near” and itself since “to push
“Pushing away” makes an illogical completion of the sequence of events described in the poem, but we accept it as dream logic, and as an event that is happening over and over again. Besides, both the first and the last lines consist of eight syllables each, which adds prosodic coherence to the overall structure of the poem. Graphically the sequence of events in this fragment may be represented in the following way (Figure 1.18):

**ODIN I TOT ZHE SON (Every night the same dream)**

```
proshu blizosti
([I] beg for you to come near)

<p>| ty pribliizaesh’sia    |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(you approach)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| ia ottalkivaiu tebia   |
| (I push you away)      |
```

Figure 1.18: No. 6. Graphic representation of the sequence of events in the poem
7. Govorila, nel’zia, gouverila, proidet, gouverila, gouverila...
Za tumanom tekh dnei ne vidat’ alykh zor’,
za minutami schast’ia-boli razluki.
Bylo schast’ie u nas, I razluka byla...
Goverila, nel’zia, gouverila, proidet,
goverila, gouverila... I said: it cannot be,
I said: it will pass,
I said, I said... Beyond the mist of days
the purple dawn cannot be seen,
nor can the pain of parting
beyond the moment’s bliss.
Bliss we had,
a parting too.
I said: it cannot be,
I said: it will pass,
I said, I said...

The poem’s completely symmetrical structure XYY¹X is easily apparent (Figure 1.19):

I said: it cannot be, 1
I said: it will pass, 2 X
I said, I said... 3
Beyond the mist of days 4
the purple dawn cannot be seen, 5 Y
nor can the pain of parting 6
beyond the moment’s bliss. 7
Bliss we had, 8 Y¹
a parting too. 9
I said: it cannot be, 10
I said: it will pass, 11 X
I said, I said... 12

Figure 1.19: No. 7. Large-scale symmetrical form of the poem

The large-scale form of this poem is based on the X-X arch (“the exposition” and its exact “reprise”), but the relationships between and within its inner segments Y and Y¹ are much more complex (Figure 1.20).
Za tumanom tekh dnei ne vidat’ alykh zor’,
za minutami schast’ia-boli razluki.
Bylo schast’ie u nas,
I razluka byla...

\( Y \)
\( Y^1 \)

Figure 1.20: No. 7. Inner division of the middle segments \( Y \) and \( Y^1 \)

The \( Y \)-segment contains a parallel grammatical construction “za tumanom”-“za minutami” and therefore can be divided into two units \( a+b \) and \( c+d \) where \( a=c \) and \( b=d \) on the grammatical level. Simultaneously, these four lines may be coupled alternatively on the semantic level as \( a+d \) and \( b+c \), where “tuman tekh dnei”=“boli razluki” (“mist of days” =“pain of parting”), and “alye zori” =“schast’e” (“purple dawn” =“bliss”).\(^{15} \) \( Y^1 \) is a contracted version of the \( Y \)-segment, a modification of its second unit \( c+d \). In \( Y^1 \) the poet uses words present in \( c+d \), but it is not a redundant repetition of the same thought, rather a progression from metaphoric generalization to “personal” prosaic summary.

Thus, lines \( a+d+f \) constitute one semantic group, “tuman=razluka” (“mist=parting”), and lines \( b+c+e \) -- the group “alye zori=schast’e” (“purple dawn=bliss”).

The structural criss-crossing is reflected on the phonological level of the poem’s organization (Figure 1.21):

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\(^{15} \) In the Sherwood/Howarth translation lines c and d are interchanged.
za tumanom tekh dnei
(a)           ne vidat alykh zor’
(b)           za minutami schest’ia
(c)           boli razluki
(d)           bylo schast’e u nas
(e)           i razluka byla
(f)

Figure 1.21: No. 7. Phonemic connections between the lines

There are several groups with the same phonemic emphasis: the a+c unit
(za/m/m); the a+b unit (z/kh/d/ne); the d+e+f unit (boli/bylo/byla); and the c+e and d+f
units (schast’e/schast’e and boli razluki/razluka byla, respectively.) Moreover, there is
a consistent use of the “z”-sound throughout the poem (lines 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10), with its
highest saturation in segment Y. One of the most interesting aspects of this phonic pattern
is the close relation between lines d and e, where “boli razluki” (“the pain of parting”) is
connected phonologically to “bylo schast’e” (“bliss we had”), blending contradictory
concepts of parting and bliss into one semantic whole.

One more semantically charged structural detail is Dalos’s use of the ellipsis in
segments X and Y'. An abundance of ellipsis in lyrical poetry might often be seen as a
quite trivial technique, but in this poem it serves a dual purpose: to foreground the
unfinished thought and to signify the recurrence of this unfinished thought over and over
again. It thus conveys a sense of the heroine’s frustration.
8. Prikroiu dushu
figovym listkom
I ubegu iz raia.
I cover my soul
with a fig-leaf
and flee paradise.\textsuperscript{16}

This is a good example of the superb poetic mastery of Rimma Dalos. The poem resembles a haiku in its three-line layout, in the concentration of its thought, and its metrical organization. It consists of three lines, five, five, and seven syllables long, respectively. In a real haiku the total number of syllables and the number of them in each line is the same as here, but the order is different: five, seven, five syllables, respectively. Being written in two-stress dol’nik, the poem is clearly defined metrically. The semantics of the poem may be subjected to various interpretations, since it is not that obvious and simple. Using the poet’s own words, it is “covered” (“prikryta”) (see line one).

The words “dusha” (“soul”) and “raи” (“paradise”) constitute one semantic concept -- that of the spiritual. On the sound-level, these two nouns and their linked verbs form a symmetrical structure (Figure 1.22):

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
\textbf{prikroiu dushu} & \textbf{u} & \textbf{begu iz raia} \\
-\text{r}\text{oiu}, -\text{u}/-\text{u} & & -\text{u}/-\text{u}, -\text{raia} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Figure 1.22:} No. 8. The sound-symmetry of the two phraseological units “prikroiu dushu” and “ubegu iz raia”

\textsuperscript{16} Translated more precisely, “I will cover my soul with a fig-leaf and flee paradise.”
There is an almost identical vowel sequence in both syntagms, which creates assonance; only one vowel, “i” (in the preposition “iz”), does not fit into the otherwise perfect symmetry. The words “prikoiu” (“cover”) and “raia” (“paradise”) are especially closely linked by alliteration (the two syllables, -roiu/-raia). On the other hand, the semantics of the verbs “prikoiu” (“[to] cover”) and “ubegu” (“[to] flee”) change the relationship between “dusha” (“soul”) and “rai” (“paradise”) completely, making them opposite concepts. The syntagm “figovym listkom” (“with a fig-leaf”) occupies an intermediary position between them. Both “figovym” and “listkom” contain the instrumental case ending with “m;” the former includes all the vowels of the latter. Therefore, the phonological level of the structure in the poem is entirely symmetrical (Figure 1.23):

```
-roi, -u/-u  -i/-o/-ym  -i/-om  -i  -u/-u, (-i), -raia
```

Figure 1.23: No. 8. The overall sound-symmetry in the poem

The phrase “prikoiu dushu figovym listkom” (“I will cover my soul with a fig-leaf”) evokes the image of the naked soul; nakedness suggests shame. Where does one feel shame? Perhaps, in something called the soul as opposed to the body. Translated into prose, this lyrical fragment could mean something like this: “I feel ashamed to experience
this kind of joy - (if "paradise" is a place of the highest joy) - because either I am sinful, or maybe because in this paradise only my body can be happy, not my soul.” There are two major concepts juxtaposed here, one being the soul, manifested explicitly and implicitly, and the other - the body, which is only implied. These two parts of one “I” are not at peace with each other, and do not constitute one harmonious whole.

Another interpretation of the naked soul may suggest a parallel naked soul-revealed soul. The soul, the most personal and closed part of a human being, has become revealed to someone, become someone else’s possession. It has become naked, and therefore -- unprotected. “To flee paradise with a fig-leaf covered soul” offers an obvious parallel to Adam and Eve’s exodus from paradise with their genitals covered by fig-leaves. Here, however, the heroine, contemplating flight from paradise, is more concerned about her spiritual than her physical shame. Her flight may be interpreted as the attempt to regain the wholeness, the integrity of what constitutes her “I”. This reading of the text is supported by the fact that not only the soul is going to “flee paradise,” but the entire “I”. Also interesting is the fact that the poem is written in the future tense (which does not emerge in the Sherwood/Howarth translation). The protagonist is still in paradise, but this paradise has become the opposite of itself, i.e. not a place of highest joy, but a place where one cannot be happy as an integrated personality.

This duality in the interpretation of the semantics of individual words, as well as the whole poem, so perfect in its prosody and phonology, creates the artful simplicity of expression that is inherent in Japanese haiku.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17} In his book \textit{The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter}, Koji Kawamoto writes: “The sheer improbability of haiku compels us to seek out the means by which these works prepare and partially guide the reader on his circuitous journey to significance.” See Kawamoto 2000, 45.
9. I v pik chasy
katitsia bez pomekh
tramvai dushi moei.

Even in the rush-hour
the tramcar of my soul
cheerfully rolls along.

The semantics of this poetic piece is equivocal (in the English translation lines two and three of the original Russian text are interchanged). Thus, the syntagm “dushi moei” (“of my soul”) occupies the last syntactic position in the poem. “Dushi moei” is a rather unexpected continuation of the imagery built up in the first two-and-a-half lines. Up to these two words, the poem could have been about some tramcar, metaphoric or not. The power of this poem lies in the author’s ability to compress the decoding of the metaphor into three lines of the text. Looking at the entire text, rather than reading it line by line, one would be able to perceive these three lines as one whole, therefore “getting” or rather “feeling” at once the semantics of this poem. But, if listening to someone reading it aloud, without looking at the text, receiving one word at a time, one does go through the process of gradual understanding or decoding of the meaning.

“Tramvai dushi moei” (“tramcar of my soul”) was conceived by the poet as one grammatical and semantic unit. That is probably why Dalos did not break the third line into two or three units, emphasizing the inextricable semantic integration of the line. Still, these two words completely change the straightforward meaning of the first line of the text, making it ambivalent. What does “pik chasy” (“rush hour”) imply for the “dusha” (“soul”)? It could be the emotionally “busiest” time; in this case the poem may be read as “Even in the most difficult, dramatic times of my life, I have been able to carry on, keep my integrity, be true to myself.” “Katitsia bez pomekh,” translated literally “rolls on
without obstacles,” works very well with this interpretation. At the same time, “katitsia bez pomekh” suggests some sense of inertia. Indeed, for the man-made machine, the “tramcar,” there could not really be any “rush hour” since nothing prevents it from rolling on its track. “Tramcar” in modern Russian literature has been long associated with something uncontrollable, something that will not stop because a man wills it. In Dalos’s poem the “soul” is paired with the “tramcar” in one semantic and grammatical unit. Therefore, another interpretation of this poetic fragment could be entirely opposite to the first one and convey this: “My soul is so preoccupied with something/somebody that I cannot control it; I simply roll on through my life.”

The tone of this poem, with its mixture of irony and sadness, relates it to another Dalos poem discussed above, the one written as a counting-out rhyme. However, in the “tramcar poem,” there is a progression from irony to sadness, which distinguishes it from the former. This sadness, even bitterness, originates in the ambiguity of almost every word. “Katitsia,” for instance, may be understood as not just “rolls on” but “rolls on without a destination.” “Tramvai dushi” (“tramcar of [my] soul”) fuses two concepts alien to each other, namely, that of something man-made and that of something spiritual into one semantic unit, indicating “man-made soul”, a soul not “inside” the “I,” but possessed by somebody else. The word “moei” (“my”) appears at the very end, occupying the last syntactic position, and it is therefore semantically emphasized. It gives the “face” to the “soul” making this poetic piece “about” the “I.”

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18 The Sherwood/Howarth’s translation of the second line as “cheerfully rolls along” is unsubstantiated by the lexical and semantic content of the poem.

19 I am referring to e.g. Nikolai Gumilev’s Zabludivshiisia Tramvai, Boris Pasternak’s Doctor Zhivago, and Mikhail Bulgakov’s Master i Margarita.”
The prosody of this poem is also open to different interpretations. The three-line format of the poem, evoking the haiku-form, has the following metrical scheme (Figure 1.24):

I v pik cha-sy
ka-tit-sia bez po-mekh
tram-vai du-shi mo-ei.

Figure 1.24: No. 9. The metrical scheme

The word “katitsia” is normally stressed on its first syllable, “kátitsia”. Nevertheless, in Russian poetry it is customary to change a stress location for artistic purposes (poetic licence). Thus, it is not difficult to imagine the word “katitsia” stressed on the second syllable: “katîtsia.” If read with the modified stress, the poem appears to be written in iamb, and if read with original stress, in dol’nik.

In sum, this short poem is full of ambiguity on every level of analysis, reflecting the depth of its semantics.
10. Khotelos’ iavit’sia tebe nebozhitel’nitsei v siianii zvezdnogo nimba. a prishlos’ otvorit’ dver’ zamarashkoiu s venikom v griaznoi ruke.

I wanted you to see me like some goddess in the glory of the starry sky: but then I opened the door all ragged, a broom in my dirty hand.

Even a cursory glance at this text suggests the co-existence of two opposite worlds, the “elevated” world of “nebozhitel’nitsa” (“goddess” in the Sherwood/Howarth translation; literally, “a celestial dweller”) and the “low” world of “zamarashka.” The word “zamarashka” belongs to the folk lexicon and is often used in children’s fairy tales. It derives from the verb “marat’” (“to soil”); therefore it literally means “a soiled one.” These two opposite words, “nebozhitel’nitsei” and “zamarashkoiu” are semantically foregrounded by the graphic layout of the poem. The word “zamarashkoiu” combined with “s venikom” (“with a broom”) evokes both a Cinderella- and witch-imagery. But, “Cinderella” and “witch” belong both to the worlds of elevated or “high,” and base or “low.” Therefore, “zamarashkoiu,” the word of the “low” group, also carries conflicting meanings within itself, reflecting the large-scale lexical tension on its micro-level (Figure 1.25):

```
HIGH ("nebo" ["sky"]) LOW ("griaz" ["dirt"])  
  khotelos’ iavit’sia  ------------ prishlos’ otvorit’  
  nebozhitel’nitsei  ------------ zamarashkoiu  
  [v] siianii  ------------ [s] venikom  
  zvezdnogo  ------------ [v] griaznoi
```

Figure 1.25: No. 10. The sound-correspondence between the words of the two semantic fields

46
As seen in Figure 1.25, there is a sound-correspondence between the pairs of opposites. Lines one-three constitute the first part of the poem, expressing what the protagonist wanted to happen; lines four-six -- the second, opposite part, presenting what really happened (still, both the Russian words “khotelos’” and “prishlos’” imply an involuntary action; therefore, they are simultaneously parallel and opposite to each other). The first, “lofty,” part of the poem is dominated by “n”-words, “nebozhitel’nitsei,” “siianii,” “zvezdnogo,” “nimba” (ne/ni-ii-no-ni). In the second part the prevailing sound is “r.” All but one word, “venikom,” contain this consonant: “prishlos’,” “otvorit,’” “dver,’” “zamarashkoiu,” “griaznoi,” “ruke.” The two parts are bridged by the “z”-sound in “zvezdnogo,” “zamarashkoiu,” and “griaznoi.” The word “zamarashkoiu” with its semantic duality occupies the intermediate position between the two words of the opposite semantic groups. Also, this word continues the sound-sequence of the sibilants: “nebozhitel’nitsei’”-”prishlos’”-”zamarashkoiu” (zh-sh-sh).

Line four is the transition from one “world” to another. “Prishlos’” literally means “I had no other choice” which semantically contrasts with the opening word of the poem, “khotelos’” (“I wanted’”). The combination of the words “a” (“but”) and “prishlos’” (“I had to”), the latter not commensurate with the world of a celestial inhabitant, prepares us for the change in the lexicon and the imagery. The rhythm of this poem is based on a mixture of all three classical ternary meters. Thus, the first three lines may be considered written in amphibrach (if one includes the word “nebizhitel’nitsei” in the first line), lines three and four in anapest, and the last line in dactylic meter (Figure 1.26):
The word “dver’” (“door”) serves as the metrical and semantic border-line between the two lexically opposed worlds. It disrupts the metrical pattern (two stressed syllables next to each other) and creates a prosodic emphasis that fulfills a foregrounding function. Still, the “low”-world of the “zamarashka” is described in a regular classical meter, which creates a “lofty” impression. It seems to me that this device offers a clue to the duality of the “zamarashka”-concept. “Zamarashka” is “dirty” to look at, but her inner being is that of a “celestial dweller.” The whole poem, in fact, is a Cinderella story, only without the final happy end.

11. Ia snova zhdu tebia.
   Kak dolgo
   ne prikhodit posle zavtra.

   I’m waiting for you again.
   How slowly comes
   tomorrow.

This short three-line poem has an implicit iambic structure, which becomes explicit if the text is written as one line (Figure 1.27):
Figure 1.27: No. 11. The iambic metrical structure of the poem, if written in a single line

However, the second line, by itself, forms an amphibrach, iconically emphasizing the length of “dolgo” (“long”) in the sense of duration. Therefore, here we can speak of a subtle interplay of metrical-rhythmic patterns in connection with the lexico-semantic level of the poem’s structure.

The first sentence of the fragment is framed by the iotated “a” (“ia”- “tebia”), the second sentence - by the regular “a”- sound (“kak”- “poslezavtra”). Thus, there are phonemic interconnections between the two sentences, which create a symmetrical structure (as shown in Figure 1.28).

Figure 1.28: No. 11. Phonemic interconnections between the two sentences of the poem

The text is filled with a waiting lover’s sense of not-togetherness extended in time through the stressed vowels in the word-sequence “ia” (“I”), “snova” (“again”), “zhdu” (“I wait”), “tebia” (“[for] you”), “dolgo” (“long time”), which may sound “stretched” by virtue of declamatory intonation (Figure 1.29).
This poem is relatively simple in its thematics. Still, it can be interpreted in different ways. "Poslezavtra" ("posle" ["after"] + "zavtra" ["tomorrow"] = "the day after tomorrow") is the semantic center of the poem. In this poetic world it is not just the "day after tomorrow," but mainly, "not tomorrow." The English translation by Sherwood/Howarth, where "poslezavtra" is translated as "tomorrow," softens the semantics of the poem by overlooking this important detail. "Poslezavtra" may be considered as literally "the day after tomorrow," but if the subtext is foregrounded, the meaning becomes "the day that never comes."

12. Vot opiat’
   voskresen’e proshlo.
   Znachit, nastupit sleduiushchee.
   That’s another
   Sunday over.
   That means
   The next will come.

The semantics of this poetic piece is more complicated than the Sherwood/Howarth translation makes one believe. The word "voskresen’e" carries a double-meaning in the Russian language as both "Sunday" and "resurrection." Indeed, this ambiguity is practically impossible to translate into any other language. These two meanings do not contradict but enhance each other here.

The reader does not know what "happened" or "did not happen" on Sunday. In Russia, unlike in the United States, Sunday is the last day of the week. One could interpret the extra-textual philosophy of this poem as the following thought: "Everything
comes to a conclusion at some point, and then, in the cyclic order of things, all will come back in a new and different form.” This interpretation of the poem’s semantics relates it to the haiku, which seems to be a poetic form favored by Dalos, with its simplicity of the word choice, deep subtext, and three-line graphics.

The interpretation of “voskresen’e” as “resurrection” makes the poem metaphoric; clearly, the poet purposefully plays with the double meaning of the word. On the surface, it is still a poem about time passing. According to the subtext, it is about the resurrection or non-resurrection of the soul. A resurrected soul is an illumined soul. The illumination came and passed, but in the cyclic nature of things, it will return. Therefore, these two versions of the interpretation of the poem are really one.

An analysis of the sound-semantics shows the presence of “t” in the stressed syllables in four out of seven words: “vot,” “opiat’,” “znachit,” “nastupit.” Also, there is a sequence of sibilants: “proshlo,” “znachit,” “sleduiushchee.” The first sentence presents a fascinating case of the “disintegration” of the word “vot” in the three subsequent words (the “o” in parenthesis indicates an unstressed vowel, which a reader will register graphically, however) (Figure 1.30):

\[
\text{vot---opiat’---voskresen’e---proshlo} \\
\text{vot---(o)/t’---v(o)---(o)/o}
\]

Figure 1.30: No. 12. The “disintegration” of the word “vot” in the three subsequent words
The word “vot” first “loses” its first letter “v” and “t” becomes “soft;” its “o” sounds more like “a.” Then it looses “t” completely, and “v” is temporarily back. In the end only one stressed “o” is left. In the second sentence, consisting of three words, we do not find any words with “o” at all, but the new vowels “a,” “i,” and “u” are introduced. “Znachit” and “nastupit” relate to each other by the alliteration na/it-na/it.

Both sentences in this short poetic piece have their own phonemic unity with consistent connections between them. The graphic layout of the poem with its increasing length of the lines is paralleled by the growth of the size of the words, from the three-letter word “vot” to the five-syllable word “sleduiushchee.”

13. V belom kholode snega-
pokrova prishla
ko mne gost’ia-toska.

In a cold blanket of snow
a visitor called:
sorrow.

By its format, this poetic piece is similar to the other haiku-like poems by Dalos discussed above. But mainly, this poem represents a very interesting case of the use of enjambment technique. The Sherwood/Howarth translation, very well done in all other respects, makes the lines end on their natural syntactic pauses, however. For analytical purposes I am suggesting a literal, word-by-word translation of this poem, which would look like this:

In the white chill of a snow-
blanket [came
to me a guest]- sorrow.

Since the original order of the words is absolutely critical for the analysis, the phrase “came to me a guest” (which does not make much sense in English) is put in brackets. In
the first case of enjambment, the words “snow” and “blanket,” constituting one semantic unit “snow-blanket,” are separated by the internal syntactic pause. The second line of the text contains a “leftover” from the first phrase, and the first word of the second phrase, “came.”

The natural syntactic pauses, revealed in the Sherwood/Howarth translation, are entirely obscured by the poet. The phraseological units “snow-blanket” and “guest-sorrow” are grammatically paralleled, but they, in a sense, take each other’s metrical place in the poem: the separation of “blanket” from “snow” seems artificial, but it would not be so in the case of “guest-sorrow,” with the natural pause between the two words. “Guest” and “sorrow,” taken out of context, are words semantically alien to each other, but Dalos does not split them, foregrounding the word “sorrow,” but rather puts them next to each other in the same line. The word “toska” (“sorrow”) could have easily been replaced by a different word even in the context of this poem: “gost’ia-pechal’” (“guest-sadness”), “gost’ia-odinochestvo” (“guest-loneliness”), “gost’ia-pustota” (“guest-emptiness”), etc. Disyllabic words work better because of the ternary metrical skeleton of the poem; written down in a single line, the poem appears almost as a perfect example of anapest, a ternary meter with the stress on the third syllable (Figure 1.31):

\[
\text{V be-lom kho-lo-de sne-ga – pok-ro-va prish-la ko mne gost’-ia – tos-ka.}
\]

Figure 1.31: No. 13. The anapestic metrical structure of the poem, if written in a single line

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However, the words “gost’ia” and “toska” are closely connected through the “s” sound, which is also present in the first line in the word “snega” (“snow”). Therefore, the sound-content combines “snow,” “guest,” and “sorrow” into one semantic group. The metaphor “gost’ia-toska” (“guest-sorrow”) is very beautiful and effective, but if the two words were separated from each other graphically, the poet could have made the reader wonder for a moment “who” that “guest” was. Contrary to that, in the semantic unit “snega-pokrova” (“snow-blanket”) each of the two words can hardly be substituted. Still, the poet separates them by a “run-on line.”

Looking closer, one can see that all three words of the first line carry an image of coldness: “white,” “chill,” “snow.” Dalos transfers the qualifiers/adjectives in this sequence, having “white chill” instead of “white snow.” “Blanket,” on the other hand, even being paired with “snow” grammatically, is a word within the semantic field “warmth.” Therefore, as a unit, “snow-blanket” possesses a certain oxymoronic quality, a contradiction between “chill” and “warmth.” I believe, this is exactly what Dalos is emphasizing by using enjambment between lines one and two: she separates these two opposites while also uniting them. Still, the co-existence of the words “pokrova” and “prishla” in the second line is dictated by their phonemic similarities (Figure 1.32):

\[
\text{pokrova-----prishla}
\]

\[
p/ro/va--p/ri/la
\]

Figure 1.32: Phonemic similarities of the words “pokrova” and “prishla”
Unlike the three “cold” words of the first line, which evoke the feeling of distance and space, these two words constitute one semantic group, that of “close, near, warm.” The third line in a sense summarizes two previous ones: “gost’ia” (“a guest”), is somebody or something that “came,” “became close in space,” but this word is neither “warm” nor “cold” until it resolves into the next word, “toska” (“sorrow”), which is both “cold” and “inside.” The last line is structurally unified through a progression of gutturals and vowels, as seen in Figure 1.33 (in the words “ko” and “toska,” “o” is an unstressed vowel pronounced as “a”):

ko mne gost’ia- toska

[a] [a]

k – g - k; o - o/ia - o/a

Figure 1.33: No. 13. The progression of gutturals and vowels in the last line

To summarize, it appears that the use of enjambment in this poem highlights a semantic progression from the world of “cold, distant” (first line) to “warm, close” (second line), and finally to “cold, inside” (third line) (Figure 1.34):
14. Umiraet liubov',
zachataia
v vesenhei
speshke.
A u tebia v sadu
rastet
trava
zabven'ia.

The love,
conceived
amid
the haste
of spring
is dying.
But in your garden
grows
the grass
of oblivion

The "lesenka" ("stepladder") layout of this poem should be considered for a better understanding of the complex relationships between its constituent parts. There are two sentences in the poem; if written out in two lines, the metrical structure of the piece would be five-stress dol'nik. However, Dalos breaks each sentence into four segments. There are three verbs/participles in the text, occurring in the following order: "umiraet" ("is dying"), "zachataia" ("conceived"), "rastet" ("grows"). (In the English translation their order has been changed.) These three words describe the natural life cycle of conception, growth, and death, only in the wrong order. Also, because of the graphical layout of the poem, one can draw a parallel between the second and third segments of the first and second sentences (demonstrated in Figure 1.35):
zachataia (conceived)  ➔  rastet (grows)

v vesennei (in spring)  ➔  trava (the grass)

speshke (haste)  ➔  zabven’ia (of oblivion)

Figure 1.35: No. 14. Semantic links between the first and the second sentences of the poem

As seen in Figure 1.35, each of the three words of the first “lesenka” is paired with the three corresponding words of the second “lesenka,” where the second word in each pair is the logical result, or a probable outcome of the first one. Phonemically, the two parts of the poem are united through their first segments (as shown in Figure 1.36):

umiraet liubov’ ------  a u tebia v sadu

u/a/et-iu  a-u-te/ia-a/u

Figure 1.36: No. 14. Phonemic connections between the two parts

Putting them together would create a symmetrical, almost paliadromic sound-construction (as seen in Figure 1.37):
Also, there is a telescoping of the phonemic content of the words “zachataia”
(“conceived”) and “[v] vesenniej” (“[in] spring”) of the first part of the poem into
“zabven’ia” (“oblivion”) of the second part (Figure 1.38):

zachataia (za/ia)  
+  
=  zabven’ia (za/ven’ia)

[v] vesennei (ve/ennei)

Thus, the phonemic level of analysis determines the inevitable semantic evolution of the
“conception” and “spring” into “oblivion.”

There is still another structural level to be revealed, depending on the literal
meaning of the words in the poem. If we put all the words in one line, the text appears as
a grammatically and semantically symmetrical construction (Figure 1.39):
The resulting pairs suggest a certain semantics derived from these parallelisms: “umiraet” (“dying”) equals “zabven’ia” (“oblivion”); “liubov’” (“love”) equals “trava” (“grass”); “zachataia” (“conceived”) equals “rastet” (“grows”), the most non-metaphoric pair; “v vesennei speshke” (“amid the haste of spring”) equals “a u tebia v sadu” (“but in your garden). The two words constituting the first pair, “umiraet” (“is dying”) and “zabven’ia” (“oblivion”), are composed of different word classes (the first word is a verb, and the second a noun), but nevertheless, are linked semantically. Both words may serve as the cause, or effect, or equivalent of each other, depending on one’s reading (as demonstrated in Figure 1.40).

\[
\text{dying} \rightarrow \text{oblivion} \quad \text{oblivion} \rightarrow \text{dying} \quad \text{dying} = \text{oblivion}
\]
The actions in the respective parts of the poem happen in the opposite direction. They only occur in time and in space the way they are laid out on paper, but semantically the first part should be read backwards, since “umiraet” (“is dying”) may chronologically happen only after “zachataia” (“conceived”). In Dalos’s poem, “umiraet” and “rastet” (“grows”) are processes happening simultaneously, but in different directions, down and up, or backwards and forward, respectively. Still, these two words are the semantic result of each other. The death of love brings a growth of oblivion; oblivion causes a death of love (Figure 1.41):

```
umiraet (liubov’) zachataia  rastet (trava) zabven’ia
(the love) conceived is dying  grows (a grass) of oblivion
```

![Diagram of the directionality of the two parts of the poem](image)

Figure 1.41: No. 14. The directionality of the two parts of the poem

There is only one pronoun in the poem, “tvoem” (“your”), in the second part. It is “you” who will forget, and the reader surmises that it is “my” and “our” love that is dying.

This poem exemplifies a case of a very strong codependence of the phonological, grammatical, graphic, and semantic levels of poetic structure.
CHAPTER 2

SCENES FROM A NOVEL AS A POETIC CYCLE

The story of the partnership between Kurtág and Dalos in Scenes is actually the story of a non-partnership between the composer and the poet. One reason why the composer did not involve the poet (whom he knew well and who lived in the same city as he did) in the process of creating the poetic cycle may be his “appropriation” of Dalos’s poetry to the point of total identification with it. Since literature and specifically poetry have always been an inspiration and, very often, the actual material for his compositions, it is obvious that words are the important element in Kurtág’s blend of intellectual, emotional, and musical impulses. Texts seem to induce a strong response in Kurtág, resolving in a subsequent musical thought; or, texts serve as a vehicle of the composer’s inner need for an emotional/intellectual expression. Most probably, they have a dual function, which may be illustrated thus (Figure 2.1):

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1 There is, of course, a long tradition in music history of such “appropriations” of poetic text by a composer. Edward T. Cone finds it characteristic for Schubert’s approach to the poetry in his Lieder: “To a composer like Schubert, a poem is only raw material. What he deals with is not a poem but his reading of it. He appropriates that reading and makes it a component in another work, entirely his own—a larger form created by musical setting” (see Cone 1974, 20-21).
Kurtág’s relationship with the text is so intimate and personal that he takes over Dalos’s creations. That is why Kurtág assumed the role of the author of the poetic cycle in *Scenes*, preferring to build his own poetic construction according to his own understanding of the cyclic potential of Dalos’s poems. Indeed, Kurtág is not the first composer-creator of the musico-poetic cycle in the history of music: Schumann, for instance, performed the same task with Heine’s poetry in *Dichterliebe* (1840). There are striking similarities between the two composers in their creative processes, specifically, in regard to their work with texts. In Beate Perrey’s words, “Schumann’s creativity indeed depends on as well as unfolds in response to stimuli, either coming from without, such as poetry, or coming from within by way of intense self-observation.”² Perrey continues: “He [Schumann] chose poems from Heine’s *Lyrisches Intermezzo* freely... There was also, as should be emphasized, no effort to construct a narrative where none can be found in the first place...”³ Yet, there are several significant differences in the practice of the two composers. First of all, even though in *Dichterliebe* Schumann shortened Heine’s poetic sequence, and set to music only twenty of original 65 poems,

² Perrey 1996, 83.

³ Ibid., 84.
still, in Schumann’s cycle, the first and the last fragments correspond to No. 1 and No. 65 in Heine’s collection, respectively. Schumann preserved “the salient structural characteristics in *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, namely its cyclicity.”⁴ Kurtág, on other hand, worked with fourteen independent self-contained poems. Second, it has become customary to perform some fragments from *Dichterliebe* individually, “Ich grolle nicht” being the most famous example. This phenomenon is an indication of the fact that in Schumann’s cycle, fragmentation as the main musico-aesthetic principle does not exclude structural/semantic closure. Conversely, none of the fragments of Kurtág’s *Scenes* are candidates for such a performance practice. It is not the shortness of Dalos’s poems, which presents an obstacle in singling out a song and performing it separately. The real, deep-seated reason for this phenomenon is Kurtág’s simple and extremely cohesive construction of the poetic cycle, which allows for no segmentation. I propose to define the structure as circular.

Kurtág created his ingenious structure realizing the literal meaning of the word “cycle”: the idea of roundedness, endlessness, repetitiveness, and infinity, as will be demonstrated below. He applied this concept to all levels of the organization of the poetic material: to its large-scale construction as well as smaller constituents. The most foregrounded manifestation of Kurtág’s circling approach is the large-scale arch he establishes between the second and fifteenth fragments of *Scenes*, by offering two different musical settings of the same poem (“From meeting to parting”). Therefore, the whole cycle may be represented as a circle where the beginning and the end coincide textually (referred to as “2-15 circle” henceforth), and the first fragment “Pridi”

⁴ Perrey 1996, 89.
(“Come”) functions as the epigraph to the circular poetic sequence 2-15. There is an inner formal symmetry also within the circle. The third poem from the beginning and the third poem from the ending of the 2-15 circle (“Allow me” and “Visit”, respectively), as well as the two central poems (“Nakedness” and “Hurdy-Gurdy Waltz,” Nos. 8 and 9, respectively) display similar formal characteristics: they all are three-liners.⁵

As seen only in the score (and never mentioned in notes to recordings of this composition), Scenes is prefaced by a purely poetic epigraph, not set to music, for which Kurtág used lines from A Fairy Tale for Children, an unfinished poem by Russia’s foremost Romantic poet Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841). Thus, there are three large-scale levels of circularity present in the design of Kurtág’s poetic sequence (illustrated below in Figure 2.2), where epigraph 2 (No. 1) functions as the implied “message” from the author of the poetic cycle (i.e., the composer as the “poet”),⁶ and epigraph 1 (Lermontov’s lines), in Kurtág’s own words, functions as the “message” from the composer,⁷ looking at the poetic cycle as from a distance.

The role of the Lermontov epigraph in understanding Kurtág’s poetic structure in Scenes will be discussed below, but I would like to point out here already that, paradoxically, Kurtág needed poetry, not musical sounds, to express his relationship to the musico-poetic cycle he created.⁸

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⁵ Admittedly, one more haiku-style poem in the cycle, No. 11 (“Again”), does not fit into this symmetry.
⁶ In the sense that the composer created the poetic cycle (of course, not the poems themselves).
⁸ In my conversation with Kurtág (Paris, 12 March 2000), he mentioned that it becomes less and less important for him if a text of his compositions is sung or not. For example, if a voice part is performed by
The concept of circling is also manifested in Kurtág’s choice of titles and subtitles in the cycle. The titles are not Dalos’s, for she never gives titles to her poems. The titles “Rondo” (No. 7) and “Hurdy-gurdy waltz” (No. 9), and the subtitle “perpetuum mobile” (No. 12) emphasize the idea of circularity; the subtitles to Nos. 2 and 15, written to the same text, “a desperate lament” and “a dispirited wail,” respectively, create a large-scale circular alliteration. Kurtág calls the second setting of “From meeting to parting” simply “Epilogue,” stressing its end position in the musico-poetic cycle. At the same time, taking only the poetic counterpart of Scenes into consideration, the repetition of the text from No. 2 in “Epilogue” symbolizes the circularity of the structure, its endlessness. The end proves to be the beginning and vice versa. In Kurtág’s hands, this idea directly relates to the problem of the plot in Scenes.

a musical instrument, Kurtág wants the performer to read the text prior to the performance. He believes that even silent reading of a text will influence the performance.


10 Henceforth I will use both the full title of No. 12 (“Infinite sequence of Sundays”) and its shorter version (“Sundays”).
Figure 2.2: The tri-circular design of Kurtág’s poetic cycle
In Kurtág’s poetic cycle, there is a story of unrequited love, repeated fifteen times.

We listen to the voice of the woman-protagonist, telling in very few words, but over and over again, the story of her passion, her loneliness, and her despair. The title of this vocal cycle, Stseny iz romana, translating into English as Scenes from a novel, has several additional layers of meaning. The Russian word “roman” has double meaning: it is both a “novel” and also a “romance,” a close, intimate relationship between two people. In Kurtág’s novel, no romance is found; there is bitterness, pain, irony, hopelessness, sometimes, passionate outbursts, but most of all -- loneliness. Thus, the “romance,” implied by the title, exists only as an ironic ideal, and Kurtág’s “novel” is no more than the statement: “I am without you” times fifteen.\textsuperscript{11} If we search for the second “voice” in this romance throughout the cycle, we find only eight references to “you” (in Nos. 1, 4, 6, and 10), and only one reference to “we” (in No. 7). The second voice, the voice of the beloved “somebody,” which may be discerned in Scenes as an element of the musico-poetic composition, does not really exist in the poetic cycle. In the latter we are aware of “him” only through the heroine, through her emotions and her reactions.

The large-scale semantic circularity in the poetic cycle, from parting and awaiting and to parting” and awaiting, may be represented by a circle consisting of the keywords found in each poem, which summarize the semantics of the cycle, as shown in Figure 2.3.

\textsuperscript{11} “Bez tebia” (“Without you”) is the first line of Dalos’s three-line poem used by Kurtág in Messages. It is also the title of the published collection of Dalos’s poems (see Dalos 1988).
Figure 2.3: The large-scale semantic circularity in the poetic cycle, represented by the keywords found in each poem
The most introspective poems, the poems containing the word “soul,” occupy the middle position in the 2-15 circle, iconically demonstrating the “position” of the soul inside of the protagonist. The only other instance of a poem containing the word “soul” can be found in the epigraph 2 to the 2-15 circle (“Come”).

The principle of circularity manifests itself in different forms on the deeper level of the organization in Scenes. The poetic analysis reveals that ten out of fourteen poems are circular on at least one level of structure (shown in Figure 2.4, below).

“Rondo,” the seventh fragment of Scenes, occupying the central position in the list of the circular fragments, introduces the most formal embodiment of the principle of circularity as the title intimates. The rondo-form, broadly defined, is based on the multiple recurrences of the same theme (refrain) throughout a composition alternating with contrasting episodes. To distinguish between symmetrical or arch-like verse structure and semantic rondo forms, in this chapter I will refer to rondo in relation to the semantics of the cycle. When referring to “circling,” I will talk about smaller structural units, such as phonological or prosodic arches, or symmetrical constructions. Since in Kurtág’s “novel,” as was mentioned above, each fragment is simultaneously the beginning and the end of the story, the whole large-scale construction of the cycle may be viewed as a poetic rondo-form.
“Come” (No. 1) metrical and sound-symmetry (arches);

“From meeting to parting” “broken” semantic circle, grammatical circular patterning (Nos. 2, 15)

"Allow me" (No. 4) semantic circularity assumed

“Dream” (No. 6) semantic circularity

“Rondo” (No. 7) formal circularity;

“Nakedness” (No. 8) total phonemic symmetry

"Hurdy-gurdy waltz" (No. 9) circularity implied by the title (repetition of the same melodic pattern)

“Again” (No. 11) semantic circularity, phonemic symmetry

“Sundays” (No. 12) semantic circularity

"True story" (No. 14) phonemic, grammatical, and semantic symmetry

Figure 2.4: The principle of circularity as refrain in the poetic rondo-form
The idea of the circle has always been a fascinating subject for philosophers, writers, poets, artists, composers, and scientists.\textsuperscript{12} Traditionally, the circle has been related to the idea of the divine, which was said to be “a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.”\textsuperscript{13} At the same time, as Jean Toyama writes, “the circle, appearing often in literature as a metaphor for the self, serves to represent its dualism. Because of its multiplicity the self exists not only at the center but also as the circumference.”\textsuperscript{14} Still, according to Bruno Munari, mathematicians consider the circle “a polygon with an infinite number of sides,” and “a point marked on the circumference of a circle eliminates the idea of eternity by indicating a beginning, and therefore, an end, to the circumference itself.”\textsuperscript{15} On one hand, these three interpretations of the circle contradict each other. On the other hand, they present us with the “true” picture, where the circle can be thought of as a perfection, the most “accomplished”\textsuperscript{16} form of all, but only ideally.

The un-circular fragments -- namely, Nos. 3, 5, 10 and 13 -- form a palindromic structure, which allows for the bi-directional reading, as illustrated in Figure 2.5, below. The middle ones, i.e. “Counting-out rhyme” and “Tale,” convey the sense of self-irony, whereas the other two, i.e. “Supplication” and “Visit,” carry bitterness and sorrow.

\textsuperscript{12} See Munari 1966 and Poulet 1966.

\textsuperscript{13} Quoted in Tuerk’s book on Thoreau prese (Tuerk 1975, 13), not in reference to Thoreau exclusively.

\textsuperscript{14} Toyama 1991, 19.

\textsuperscript{15} Munari 1966, 5.

\textsuperscript{16} Poulet 1966, vii.
In Kurtág’s poetic cycle, the imperfection of the circle is obvious, as the mathematical definition given above states. Nothing said or felt is repeated exactly the same way the second time, especially since here we are talking about fourteen self-contained poetic works. The “duality of self,” posited by writer Jean Toyama, exists not only inside the heroine in Scenes, but it is also a result of Kurtág’s identification with the heroine. He, and only he, is the center of the circle.

Rimma Dalos envisioned the cyclic potential of her poems differently from Kurtág. As she stated in the conversation with the author, she would have started “telling the story” with the “ironic” fragments (No. 10 first, and then No. 5) and then gradually intensified the mood of growing bitterness if she would have been the one to construct the cycle. Her version would have been as follows (Figure 2.6).\(^7\)

\(^7\) Rimma Dalos, conversation with the author, Budapest, 19 March 2000.
Figure 2.6: Dalos’s narrative version of the structure of the poetic cycle

It is obvious, that Dalos’s idea of Scenes is not circular, but rather linear, with a beginning and an end to the story. Nevertheless, her choice of the central fragment, either No. 12 or No. 9, both of which are “perpetual,” shows that Dalos too feels and stresses circularity in the semantics of these two poems. She commented that in “Hurdy-gurdy waltz” Kurtág was able to see infinity beyond her “tramcar” poem and to express it in music.\(^\text{18}\) I would add that Kurtág also extended the idea of infinity and endlessness to the structural aspect of his poetic cycle. The concept of cycle, introduced by French mathematician Edmond Laguerre (1834-1886), merges Kurtág’s “circular” and Dalos’s “narrative unfolding” views on the adequate principle of cyclization. As Munari maintains, according to Laguerre, “the cycle is a circle with an arrow marked on its circumference.”\(^\text{19}\) The directiveness of the circle makes it a cycle, and Kurtág’s circle, as well as Dalos’s line, existing in time, are both directional.


\(^\text{19}\) Munari 1966, 22.
According to Ronald Vroon, what causes us to read a set of texts as a cycle, is “a constant tension between those features that mark them as a series, and those that establish them as discrete, autonomous texts... Seriation transforms a group of poems into a set, each member of which is capable of functioning like the whole itself. Seriation subordinates each poem, transforming it into a formal unit of meaning that begs comparison with every other unit within the designated borders.”

David Sloane agrees: “Each poem insinuates itself on the reader as an independent system of meaning. For a cycle as a whole to mean something the tension between these conflicting premises must on some level be resolved... Reading a cycle as a contextual unit requires that one adopt as an initial strategy the hypothesis that the introcyclic boundaries are signs of segmentation rather than textual closure.”

The resolution of the tension in Kurtág’s poetic cycle is an interesting issue. In his multi-leveled circular design of the cycle, the resolution equals completing the circle, which is a formal rather than semantic device, because each constituent part of the cycle completes its own circle even when semantic tension is not resolved. The tension between the units of the cycle, i.e. individual poems, manifests itself in the constant repetition of the dramatic situation, which is a conflict within the lyric heroine’s “self.” As Lotman writes, “similarity is uncovered in different things, while differences are uncovered in similar things.” Each of the fourteen Dalos poems is a complete love story with its beginning and its end, or rather, a love story, where each beginning coincides

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20 Vroon 1989, 476.

21 Sloane 1987, 22.

22 Ibid., 24, quoting Lotman 1971, 102.
with its own end. In his circular poetic cycle Kurtág created a never-ending story of endings. In one sense, all love stories are similar; in another sense, nothing repeats itself. That is why the macro-tension in Kurtág’s cycle arises through the method of repetition; the contrast is found in the relationship between similar micro-love stories, constituting one “roman” (“novel” and “love story”).

The composer hides (or reveals?) his “self” under three levels of circularity (see Figure 2.3 above): the inner 2-15 circle, the epigraph to the 2-15 circle, and the “silent” Lermontov epigraph to the whole composition. Thus, Kurtág first distances himself from the story, using Dalos’s poem outside of the inner 2-15 circle; then he distances himself from her poetry using Lermontov’s lines for his ultimate epigraph. The formal and semantic role of epigraph I was partially discussed above, but in order to understand why did Kurtág chose this particular poet to represent the composer’s “message,” it is necessary to look closer at Lermontov’s poem.

A Fairy Tale for Children (1839-1840) is an unfinished poem, considered one of the poet’s masterpieces. Anatoly Liberman, the translator of the majority of Lermontov’s poems into English, points out that Lermontov is a notorious self-quoter. He writes: “Nothing is easier than to show that almost every line in Lermontov’s mature works derives from some place in or even occurs in his early works...Lermontov’s miracle is his discovery and conscious use of his own poetic style... When he had realized his main strength and become aware of his limitations, that is, learned to avoid doing what he

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23 The correspondence with Heine’s cycle is quite fascinating: Heine’s description of his Lyrisches Intermezzo as “Variations on the same little theme” (in Perrey 1996, 9) is equally valid for Kurtág’s poetic cycle.
could not do well, he stopped composing bad poetry.” 24 As Liberman also points out, “Lermontov, in spite of his Romantic apprenticeship, did not know what to do with a love story...By 1837 at the latest Lermontov had realized that he must leave the love genre to others.” 25

Kurtág too “left” the love genre to the other poet -- Rimma Dalos. From Lermontov’s poem he needed different things: its ironic tone, its ambiguous mood. In epigraph 1 Kurtág uses the second and a part of the tenth stanza from Lermontov’s A Fairy Tale for Children. Transliterated Russian text and Liberman’s English translation are offered below.

| Stikhov ia ne chitaiu - no liubliu | 1 I do not read what others write - that’s true, |
| Marat’ shutia bumagi list letuchii | 2 But just for fun I like to jot and scribble; |
| Svoi stikh za kvost otvazhno ia lovliu | 3 My rhymes escape, I hunt for them anew... |
| Ia bez uma ot troistvennykh sozvuchii | 4 Oh, I adore them quick and smart and triple, |
| I vlazhnykh rifm - kak naprimer na iu. | 5 And more than others, liquid rhymes in U. |
| Vot pochemu pishu ia etu skazku. | 6 That’s how my story came into existence, |
| Ee volshebno-temnuiu zaviazku | 7 But I shall keep my readers at a distance |
| Ne stanu ia podrobnno ob’iasnit’, | 8 By hiding some ambiguous facts, for which |
| Chtob koi-kakikh doprosov izbezhat’; | 9 Immodest people have the strongest itch. |
| Zato konets ne budet bez moralii, | 10 I’ll only add (for children’s sake) a moral, |
| Chtoby ee khot’ det’ prochitali. | 11 And may it live in written form and oral. |

| Kidala noch’ svoi strannyi polusvet | 12 Mysterious night still casts its eerie glow, |
| Rumianny zapad s novoi dennitsei | 13 But in the north the crimson west was blending |
| Na severe clivalis’, kak privet | 14 With pale and timid daylight. Even so |
| Svidania s moleniem razluki; | 15 Do words of welcome blend with tears of parting. |
| Nad gorodom tainstvennye zvuki, | 16 I heard strange sounds (for life below was starting), |
| Kak greshnykh snov neskomnye slova | 17 Which were like ribald words of sinful dreams. |
| Neiasno razdavalis’.... | |

The first part of the epigraph is Lermontov’s own introduction to the story, where he establishes a rather light-hearted mood, distancing himself from the subsequent

25 Ibid.
narrative. Liberman actually uses the word “distance” in his translation (line seven) whereas Lermontov does not, merely implying the same concept by stating that he will abstain from “details.” 26 Let’s not forget that here we are talking about the outer circle of Scenes, a part of the larger music-poetic construction where all constituent elements interrelate. Jan Zelenak maintains that according to Victor Shklovsky, a well-known Russian formalist scholar, “when more than one epigraph is employed, one must explore the relationships among the single quotations.” 27 In spite of the fact that the two epigraphs in Scenes differ in so many senses (different poets, different genders, different centuries, different genres, different styles, different formal positions and different functions in the whole), they are nevertheless connected to each other in a profound way.

First of all, they negate each other, offering a “preview” of the future semantic tension within the protagonist’s “self,” between her critical self-irony and her desire to be loved. Also, the “ironic” fragments of the 2-15 circle function as episodes of the poetic rondo form; therefore, the two epigraphs in a sense replicate the formal organization of the “inner” 2-15 circle. In epigraph 1 we read about Lermontov’s love for tripled “liquid rhymes in U” (line four). 28 In epigraph 2, as was discussed above in the analysis of “Come,” there is a sequence of three verbs, representing a self-portrait of the heroine: “protianu” (extend [my hand]), “progonlu” (make [your frostiness] go away), and “khramiu” (keep). All three verbs rhyme; therefore this rhyme is “tripled,” with two out of

26 Henceforth line numbers are given according to Liberman’s translation.

27 Zelenak 1977, 7.

28 Actually, Lermontov is referring to the rhymes on û. This Russian letter has no equivalent in English, but can be described as jotted u.
three verbs ending on the “liquid U” (shown in bold).\textsuperscript{29} The irony and ambiguity of the Lermontov title \textit{A Fairy Tale for Children}, and his mentioning of some kind of “moral” to the story “for children’s sake” (line ten) corresponds to the irony and ambiguity inherent in Kurtág’s title \textit{Stseny iz romana}. Lermontov’s did not intended for his fairy tale to be read by children; in Kurtág’s “roman” (“novel”) there is no romance. Lermontov never finished his poem; it is not clear what the “moral” to the story would have been, but Kurtág still includes this line in epigraph 1. I believe that by doing so Kurtág manifest his self-created distance from the poetic cycle consisting of Dalos’s poetry. In a conventional sense, Kurtág’s cycle is devoid of a “moral” as well.

Kurtág’s choice of the Lermontov lines for the second half of epigraph 1 is also notable, since this particular fragment is neither the beginning of the narrative, nor is it a complete stanza. It seems that the composer chose the lines, which directly correspond to Dalos’s text. This correspondence is established by lexical and semantic means. Lermontov contrasts “welcoming” to “parting” (line fifteen); the opposition between “meeting” and “parting” is explicit in Nos. 2, 7, and 15 in Kurtág’s poetic cycle. Lermontov’s reference to “sinful dreams” (line seventeen) relates to the “sinful” weakness of Dalos’s heroine (No. 3 “Supplication”), her “sinful” passion (No. 4 "Allow me"), and the dream-like nature of her love (No. 6 “Dream”). Lermontov compares the blending of the “crimson west” with “pale and timid daylight” to the blending of “words of welcoming” with “tears of parting.” In No. 7 of \textit{Scenes}, “Rondo,” Dalos creates a parallel grammatical and semantic construction “mist of days” -- ”purple dawn” and

\textsuperscript{29} Since \textit{iu} is iotated \textit{u}, the three verbs in Dalos’s poem end on either plain or iotated (“liquid”) \textit{u}. 

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“pain of parting” -- “the moment’s bliss” (discussed in detail in the analysis of this poem in Chapter 1). There is an astonishing number of subtle links between Lermontov’s epigraph and the rest of the cycle.

Liberman remarks that “Lermontov was one of the most musical Russian poets, and in a number of cases his poetic effects depended more on the sound shape of a line, a stanza, or even an entire lyric than on the actual wording.”\textsuperscript{30} He adds that Lermontov “took infinite care to organize a convincing and mellifluous whole,” and was a “fond of parallel and symmetrical constuctions, of mathematically exact antitheses.”\textsuperscript{31} In our case, the lines of “one of the most musical Russian poets” play the role of a “silent” epigraph to Kurtág’s musico-poetic composition, thus participating in the organization of the “convincing and mellifluous whole,” which is symmetrical and circular on different levels of its design.

According to the Russian Encyclopedia of 1904, “the epigraph was a matter of showing off how well read the author in question was. It was also the art of using a borrowed statement in a new context.”\textsuperscript{32} If we take the first part of this definition seriously, then Kurtág “shows off” in a very modest and appropriate way. Lermontov’s lines fit perfectly into “a new context,” and it is not important if all the subtle links between epigraph 1 and the rest of the cycle were, or were not, a conscious creative act of Kurtág.

\textsuperscript{30} Liberman 1983, 23.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{32} Zelenak 1977, 1.
CHAPTER 3

SCENES FROM A NOVEL AS A MUSICAL CYCLE

Introduction

It seems logical to follow the design of the two previous chapters when examining the musical aspect of Scenes, first discussing each musical fragment as an independent entity and then explaining the cyclic organization. In a sense, this would recreate Kurtág’s compositional process -- after all, he worked with each poem separately, not necessarily knowing its position in the cycle.¹ At the same time, Kurtág worked on the cycle, and did not intend the separate songs to stand alone. Thus, it would difficult to say that the musical fragments are independent entities. There is a paradox: it appears that Kurtág uses minimal means of musical expression in each of the fifteen fragments, and often these means are similar or the same, but nevertheless each fragment brings something unique and meaningful to the whole composition. It is as if in each fragment Kurtág enables us to see a different side of the same object. In discussing the musical organization of Scenes, I will be examining its macro- and micro-structures simultaneously.

¹ In his conversation with the author (Paris, 12 March 2000) Kurtág mentioned that he worked on Messages and Scenes simultaneously, and some fragments that he originally intended to use in Messages became a part of Scenes.
It is my conviction that the first fragment of the composition, “Come,” is the most self-contained fragment in Scenes, and one that stands outside the cycle. It functions not so much as the introduction to the cycle, but rather as its condensed “synopsis,” a very concise and concentrated exposition of the cycle’s most important structural ideas. Following my discussion of the large-scale poetic structure of Scenes, it is best to turn first to the musical setting of the first poem, used by the composer as an epigraph to the rest of the cycle. Written for soprano and violin, “Come” establishes the imagery of Scenes by having only two instruments -- or two voices -- present. Since a vocalist is usually perceived by a listener as the voice of a protagonist, or even as the protagonist him/herself, the violin in “Come” may symbolize “the other” voice, be it the heroine’s own alter-ego, or another person’s wordless presence.²

No.1 “Come”

“How” represents three-dimensional structure. One dimension is the voice line, totally chromatic in its content. The second dimension is the violin part, consisting of the whole-note dyads with one or two open-string notes almost all the way through the piece. The third dimension is the conglomeration of the two.

Kurtág’s segmentation of the vocal line, which follows the flow of the text, results in four phrases (mm. 1-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-11, as shown in Example 3.1).

² Edward T. Cone was first to discuss how the poetic persona becomes the vocal persona and then the protagonist of the song (see the second chapter of his book The Composer’s Voice [Cone 1974]).
Example 3.1: No. 1. The division of the soprano part into four phrases

The contour of the first three phrases repeats an up-down pattern, and the fragment concludes with three consecutive leaps down in the fourth phrase. Kurtág does not repeat pitch-classes very often within each of the four phrases, and that creates a dodecaphonic illusion. There are several exceptions, though, in the first, third, and the last phrases. The first phrase is bound by the two D# that are emphasized metrically at the beginning and at the end of the phrase. This results in a static effect, creating an impression that the music has not moved at all. The second phrase has a bigger range, from F4 to G#5; still, the first and the last pitches of this phrase, F4 and F#4, are only a half-step apart. The fourth phrase covers even larger range, with three large descending leaps. The third phrase, as the first one, revolves around D# (E-flat), which occurs three times. The most interesting feature of the last phrase is three repeated F4s that break the pseudo-dodecaphonic melodic structure of the voice-line completely, and, notably, coincide with the word “nenuzhnye” (“useless”). One can interpret this correspondence as the iconic representation of the uselessness of the repetition of what was just heard, or on the large scale of the musico-poetic cycle, the uselessness of reiteration of the same story over and
over again. Another feature of the vocal line is its ending on E-flat3 enharmonically equivalent to D#4 of the first and the third phrases heard one octave lower. Therefore, the overall notion of development in the vocal line is only illusory; the octave shift provides motion, but in the pitch-class world the beginning and the end coincide.

Further subdivision of these four phrases into smaller units according to the breath marks uncovers interesting relationships among the seven constituent units. The structure of the vocal line can be represented as follows (the lower-case letters represent the structural units with melodic/contour similarities; in phrase B the two units c and d are not separated by a breath mark; however, a breath mark in unit d appears later in the score in parentheses):

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
A \ (mm. \ 1 - 3) & B \ (mm. \ 4 - 5) & C \ (mm. \ 6 - 8) & D \ (mm. \ 9 - 11) \\
a & b & cd & c^1 \ d^1 & a^1 \ b^1 \\
\end{array}
\]

Figure 3.1: No. 1. The phrase structure of the voice line

There is a certain symmetry in the overall construction of the vocal line, where the last two units are variants of the first two units, and the two units of phrase C reorganize phrase B. As Example 3.2a below demonstrates, there is a strikingly similar rhythmic pattern in phrases A and D in the sequence of long and short note values. The number of pitches in these phrases is identical: two pitches each in units a and a^1, and six pitches each in units b and b^1. Since b^1 contains three repeated Fs, there are only four different pitches present, in order: E, F, A, E-flat. In the b-unit of phrase A, these four distinct pitch-classes occur in the same in order: E, F, (B-flat), A, (G#), D#. Only two
pitches -- namely, A4 and E5 -- remain in the same octave; these two pitches play a special role in the violin part and also in the vertical aspect of the piece, being a part of the referential 3-5 (0, 1, 6) sonority, which will be discussed below.\footnote{Set-class numbers are given according to Allen Forte's list. See Forte 1973.} Pitch-classes B-flat and G# in motive b, which are not repeated in motive b\textsuperscript{1}, may be viewed as upper and lower neighbors of A, the central pitch-class of the violin line. The number of notes in phrases B (cd) and C (c\textsuperscript{1}+ d\textsuperscript{1}) is also equal. Units c\textsuperscript{1} and d\textsuperscript{1} outline the contour of the preceding phrase (see Example 3.2b), using seven of the ten pitch-classes but not preserving their order (as shown in Example 3.2c). If we consider only note names in units c and c\textsuperscript{1} and not their accidentals, then the content of unit c\textsuperscript{1} relates directly to unit c.
Example 3.2: No. 1. The overall construction of the voice line

Order of pitch-classes in phrase B:
- F A C E G# D# B G B-flat F#

Ordinal numerals:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Order of pitch-classes in phrase C
(using ordinal numerals of phrase B):
10 --- 8 6 3 6 7 9 6 2

Using pitch-class names:
F# C# G E-flat C D# B A# D# A
The voice line demonstrates Kurtág’s comprehensive way of exploring every possible interval. It is important to mention here that as a concept, interval can mean different things in the context of Scenes. Sometimes it is the number of half-steps between two pitches, if we are considering the contour of a melodic interval.\textsuperscript{4} We can also refer to the certain interval by name, -- as, for instance, with the perfect fifth, which is a significant structural element of “Come.” Finally, we might use the concept of interval class to indicate Kurtág’s consistent use of a particular interval collection, where the order, register, or enharmonic spelling of the pitches is not critical.\textsuperscript{5} These three concepts, each giving the term “interval” a different shade of meaning, are equally applicable to Kurtág’s music and appropriate in different contexts.

In “Come,” the first phrase consists of just three interval classes -- ic 1, ic 2, and ic 5. The second phrase contrasts, eliminating ic 1 and ic 2, but including ic 3, ic 4, and ic 5. The third phrase, a variant of the preceding phrase, expands the limits of the second phrase by including ic 3, ic 4, and ic 5, while adding ic 6. The last phrase, in a sense, summarizes the interval content of the first three phrases. It includes ic1 from phrase A, ic 4 from phrases B and C), and ic 6 from phrase C. Therefore, each melodic phrase builds on the intervalic content of the preceding phrase and simultaneously prepares for the intervalic material of the following phrase.

The violin part, at first glance, is independent of the voice line. There are three main pitches in the violin line, all potentially open strings: A4, D4, and E5. A4 is almost

\textsuperscript{4} When necessary, I will be using plus (+) and minus (-) signs to indicate the direction of the interval, and integers to indicate the number of half steps (e.g., +3 is three half-steps up, etc.).

\textsuperscript{5} The term “interval class” (or “ic”) is borrowed from Forte1973, 14. Henceforth the abbreviation “ic” will be used for “interval class.”
always present in each sonority of the piece, mostly in the violin part. If there is no A4, then D4 or E5 takes its place, creating an open-string pedal throughout the fragment. This pedal disappears for only one moment, coinciding with the already mentioned word “useless” of the text, with three Fs in the soprano line. The voice takes part in this continuing pedal point at the end of the third phrase, on the long A4, when one of the violin dyads (A#-F#) does not include any of the three open-string pitches. A similar event happens in the last phrase, where exactly the same sonority occurs at the end of the vocal line.

This focus on the open strings, D, A, and E, makes it possible to consider the tonal or modal elements in this fragment, since one could hear a I-IV-V relationship between them. There is no tonic pitch in “Come,” but there are certain points of musical stability, originating in the violin part. The open-string A is heard more frequently than D4 and E5, which make it easier to hear it as the reference-point. As a result, the beginning of the fragment, with C# and D# in the voice part, may be heard in A-lydian. The recurrences of pitch class D# (E-flat) in the voice part, almost always coinciding with open-string A and E in the violin part, reinforce this modal effect over and over.

The chromaticization of the violin line evolves slowly. The first phrase consists only of the open-string A4, D4, and E5; the second phrase adds three more pitches. Then, in the last two phrases, as if the violin has been influenced by the chromatic content of the voice part, it breaks away from diatonicism completely.

There is an interesting detail in the metrical organization of the violin part. Even though Kurtág uses broken bar lines, emphasizing its structural openness and the free flow of the music, still, he hints at a triple waltz-like meter in the beginning and in the
first two systems of the score. As seen in Example 3.3, the open-string dyad A4-E5 brings about a waltz-like rhythmic pattern, being the first and every fourth dyad in the violin part in mm. 1-6.

Example 3.3: No. 1. The waltz-line pattern in the violin part

Such associations with particular genres, even if only an interpretative one (I would call it an illusion of genre association), is a significant factor for understanding the large-scale organization of the cycle, which will be discussed below.

Consideration of the vertical dimension of the structure in “Come” makes it possible to see a deeper level of interaction between voice and violin parts, which at first seem independent from each other. Most of the vertical sonorities are members of two set-classes, 3-4 (0, 1, 5) and 3-5 (0, 1, 6) (Henceforth set-classes 3-4 (0, 1, 5) and 3-5 (0, 1, 6) will be identified as the X-set and Y-set, respectively). These two set-classes are represented in music by the first two verticalities: D-A-C# (X-set) in m. 1, which can be described as a perfect fifth with a chromatic note outside the fifth, and A-E-D# (Y-set) in m. 2, which is a perfect fifth with a chromatic note inside the fifth. The majority of verticalities in “Come” are transformations (either transpositions or inversions) of these two referential sets, as shown in Example 3.4, below.
Example 3.4: No. 1. The saturation with the X-set and Y-set in the vertical aspect
There are several occurrences of the referential Y-set (3, 4, 9) throughout the piece at $T_0$: in mm. 3, 5, 7, and 11. This pitch-class set always occurs with the following instrumentation: the A4-E5 fifth in the violin and either D#5 or E-flat4 in the voice. However, in m. 4 the same pitch collection is heard timbrally “inverted:” D#, an important element in the dramaturgy of the voice line, appears in the violin part; conversely, E5, one of the three most important pitches of the violin part, is found in the voice line. Since D# occurs in the violin only once in this fragment, its appearance as part of $T_0(Y)$ carries some semantic weight: timbrally “inverted” pitch collections may symbolize the heroine’s attempt to “invert” the “frostiness” of her beloved. Notably, the original timbral version of this pitch-class set comes right after “inverted” version on the word “kholod” (“frost”). Three of the six occurrences of the Y-set at $T_0$ coincide with the syntactically important spots in the poem and the music: the beginning and the end of the first phrase, and the last word of the text. This gives the collection (3, 4, 9) a central role as a kind of tonic sonority that supports the tonal center A discussed earlier, but also gives the vertical dimension a static effect.

The second unit of phrase A in the voice line exhibits three overlapping occurrences of the two referential set-classes. As a result, there is a high saturation of these two sonorities in m. 3 of the piece in both its horizontal and vertical dimensions (as shown in Example 3.5a). Also, a chain of the overlapping X- and Y-sets is found in the last five dyads in the violin part (shown in Example 3.5b).
Example 3.5: No.1. Selected measures with the high saturation with the X-set and Y-set in the vertical and horizontal dimensions

The vertical level of the structure of “Come” exhibits Kurtág’s minimalist method of harmonic organization. Not only is the music dominated by two particular trichords, which also influence the horizontal aspect of “Come,” it also brings together the most important characteristics of each line -- their overall stasis that results from the constant repetitiveness, where motion is just an illusion. Table 3.1 demonstrates the similarities of the main characteristics of the voice and violin parts in “Come”: 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Violin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Symmetry</td>
<td>1. Relative stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Repetitiveness</td>
<td>2. Repetitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Stasis in the condition of total chromaticism and unfolding melodic contour</td>
<td>3. Stasis, as the result of the two previous characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Up-and-down pattern, with prevailing “down” motion</td>
<td>4. “Openness” of open-string dyads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Intervalic accumulation</td>
<td>5. Gradual chromaticization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Illusion (pseudo-dodecaphony, quasi-motion)</td>
<td>6. Illusion of the genre association (quasi-waltz)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: No. 1. The similarities between the voice and violin parts

In technical terms, “Come” is constructed of the chromatic voice line and the open-fifth dyads in the violin part, resulting in a particular type of verticality. The concepts of openness, illusion, stasis, and referentiality may be viewed as contradictory, but nevertheless, together they best describe the first fragment of Scenes. No. 1 introduces the structural ideas used by Kurtág in whichever way in each of other fourteen fragments of Scenes. In that sense, the analysis of the first fragment is an overview of the whole cycle.

Kurtág manifested his highly symmetrical large-scale organization in Scenes by choosing the same text for the second and the last fragments and by placing a solo voice fragment (No. 8) in the middle of the cycle. Closer structural analysis, though, shows that the cycle contains within itself five interior circles with their own means of

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6 According to Kurtág, he decided to construct the “arch” between the second and fifteenth fragments at the very beginning of his work on the cycle by using the same poem in both of them. In his words, this makes up a large-scale form; and the first fragment functions as a kind of the “ouverture” to the cycle (from Kurtág’s conversation with the author [Paris, 12 March 2600]).
cyclization. It is precisely the interconnections between these circles that give the entire composition the sense of a whole. Almost every fragment of Scenes has multiple structural links with at least one, but mostly, several other fragments, which, in their turn, have their own system of relations. This circular music organism with its subtle interrelations of the constituent elements may only be compared to the very delicate complexity of a spider’s web. I define these four circles as the X-set/Y-set circle, the chromatic circle, the wedge circle, the intertextual circle, and the polyphonic circle. The multi-circular construction of the piece is represented in Figure 3.2.

The referential verticalities of the first fragment of the cycle, my X-set and Y-set, supply the cycle with two flexible building blocks. Even a superficial analysis of Scenes shows that many of the fragments are based on these trichords either melodically or harmonically, with the abundance of open-string dyads in both the violin and the double bass parts, and often, with a chromatic melody in the voice line. Moreover, Kurtág’s constant use of open-string fifths and fourths throughout the cycle carries a certain imagery, which may be defined as “cold” and “distant.” The semantically important X-set/Y-set sonorities are found in Nos. 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, and 15.

The second group of fragments, or the chromatic circle, is formed by pieces with the chromatic cell as their main musical idea. These fragments are Nos. 2, 3, 4, 11, 14, 15. Kurtág seems to favor either chromatic motion, gradually expanding in both directions (often with the lower part heavier than the upper part), or chromatic descending motion.
Figure 3.2: The five circles of the musical structure in *Scenes from a Novel*
The wedge circle (Nos. 2, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14) includes fragments with symmetrical expansion of the pitch- or pitch-class content, a process I call a “wedging-out-from.” The idea of “wedging,” or symmetrical expansion of the musical space, is borrowed in modified version from the works of George Perle, Erno Lendvai, Elliott Antokoletz, and David Lewin among others. See Perle 1955 and 1977, Lendvai 1971 and 1993, Antokoletz 1984 and 1992, Lewin 1981 and 1987. In his analysis of the seventh song (“Angst und Hoffen”) from Schoenberg’s *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, op. 15, Lewin refers to the wedge concept while describing the inward voice leading in a symmetrical chord sequence in the piano part (Lewin 1981). Unlike Schoenberg’s converging wedge, in this composition Kurtág seems to favor symmetrical harmonic formations that expand.

Almost all wedge constructions in this circle use a chromatic cell as their building material, and therefore, are connected to the chromatic circle. There are six fragments in the wedge circle, and four of these are also part of the chromatic circle. Likewise, there are six fragments total in the chromatic circle, and four of them participate in the wedge circle.

The polyphonic circle consists of fragments with an extensive use of imitative techniques. These fragments are Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15. The polyphonic circle, inherently both “technical” and “semantic,” also has strong links to the other four circles. Polyphony is, first of all, a compositional texture, but in the “love-story” context of the cycle, polyphony also carries the semantics of a dialog. Perhaps that is why Kurtág uses contrapuntal techniques in ten out of the fifteen fragments of *Scenes*.

Lastly, the intertextual circle is defined by the genre, formal, or stylistic allusions that Kurtág makes in fragments Nos. 5, 7, 9, 10, and 12.

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8 The term “intertextuality” was first introduced in the late 1960s by French semiotician Julia Kristeva (Kristeva 1969). My use of the term here, only in reference to the musicas opposed to literary text, is based on Roland Barthes’s definition of intertextuality: “Any text is a new issue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text” (Barthes 1981,39).
Each of the five circles represents one specific structural aspect found in more than a few fragments of the composition, but it is indeed the overlapping of these circles that creates the macro-structure of *Scenes*. The diameter of each circle in Figure 3.2 depends on its function as a “formal” or “semantic” device. The bigger the circle, the more “technical” its structural characteristics. The smaller the circle, the more “semantic” it is. Thus, the intertextual circle is considered the least “technical,” and the most “semantic,” while the X-set/Y-set circle is the most “technical.” Remarkably, three out of five members of the most “semantic” circle have direct structural connections to the most “technical” one. These links suggest that for Kurtág everything is semantic.

Further examination of the multi-circular large-scale structure of the cycle reveals that there are four fragments that participate in three circles, namely, Nos. 4, 11, 12, and 15; there are five fragments that take part in two circles (Nos. 3, 5, 7, 8, 10). Nos. 2 and 14 are the most “saturated” of all fragments: they participate in most of the circles – four out of five. Finally, there are three fragments that stand apart from the others and have just one particular structural/semantic device governing their structure. These three fragments, Nos. 6, 9, and 13, belong to the polyphonic, intertextual, and the wedge circle, respectively. I would like to stress that belonging to only one circle does not automatically imply the absence of any relations to other fragments; rather, it recognizes that fragment’s particular dominant structural force.

I will examine the chromatic and the wedge circles first, grouping them into one chromatic/wedge circles analytical unit, since four out of six members in these circles are common to both of them. For convenience, the preference in order will be given to the chromatic circle members. The fragments that break the chromatic/wedge pattern --
namely, Nos. 3, 12, 13, and 15 -- will take us further to their circular affiliations (except for No. 13 that belongs to the wedge circle exclusively). This way, we will be able to examine all fragments of *Scenes* not linearly, in the order of the cycle itself, but rather by tracing different strands of Kurtág’s “web.”

**The chromatic and the wedge circles**

No. 2 “From meeting to parting”

The second fragment of *Scenes* exhibits symmetry on both large and small levels of its structure. The musical processes here can be defined by their connection to the central pitch-class of the piece -- namely, G.

As shown in Example 3.6, the voice line starts in m. 7 with a rocking motion, where each motion expands the boundaries of the previous one.
Example 3.6: No. 2. The implied two lines in the soprano’s wedge-construction

The G is the first and the last pitch class of the fragment and the first note of the voice line, and thus, the center of musical gravity. The rocking half-step pattern takes us away from G, and then back. The pitch content of the line can also be described as a wedge-out from G. In linear terms, the process of wedging resembles a compound melody, where polyphony is inherent in the melodic line itself. We hear the wedge-center, G4, and two contrapuntal parts: one rising, the other falling (in Example 3.6 the pitches belonging to the each rising and falling part of the wedge are beamed together). The pattern continues up to the B-flat in the upper part. At the point where we expect E in the lower part of the wedge, we hear the tritone C#5-G4 instead, which is the axis of symmetry for the wedge. At the time of arriving at G in the voice part, the desired pitch-class E occurs in the instrumental part (m. 11) and then, one measure later, it finally appears in the vocal part registrally displaced. The connection with the poetic text here is fascinating: the delayed occurrence of the E in the voice part coincides with one of the five syllables of the word

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"ozhidaniia" ("awaiting"). Musically this word also includes the last two members of the wedge: B4, the upper boundary of the wedge, and E-flat5, again, the registrally displaced lower boundary. The resulting wedge is shown in Figure 3.3 (parentheses indicate an octave displacement):

![Diagram of a chromatic wedge-out from G]

Figure 3.3: No. 2. The chromatic wedge-out from G

Starting with the anacrusis to m. 12, the "after the C#-G tritone" voice part may be divided into two units with similar rhythmic-intervalic content (mm. 12-13 and 16-17), as shown in Figure 3.4, below. The most significant common element in both units is their rhythmic design, the pattern of long and short note values, which may be represented as "short-short-short-long-medium-long." Both units occupy two measures with the short notes as an upbeat, the same number of notes in each measure, and almost identical note values. If we reorder the pitches, the first unit (mm. 12-13) presents a symmetrical intervalic structure with the rising contour: F4+F#4--B-flat4+B-natural4--E-flat5+E-natural5. The second unit (mm. 15-17) is a descending, but not totally symmetrical, version of the previous one: F#5+F-natural5--D5+C#5--G#5+G-natural5 (in exact order of pitches, omitting the grace note).
Figure 3.4: No. 2. The symmetrical intervalic structure in mm. 11-13 and 15-17, if pitches are reordered.

The first two pitch-classes in both units are the same, only interchanged. The consideration of the pitch-class content in each of the two units shows the following: the first unit’s first three and last three pitch-classes make up a trichord -member of the X-set, and the second unit’s last three pitch-classes form a trichord that belongs to the Y-set. Both X- and Y-sets are the vertical foundation of the first piece of Scenes. Vertical and horizontal representation of the X- and Y-sets in No. 2 are shown in Example 3.7, below. Another link to No. 1 is heard in the instrumental trio for this fragment (violin, cimbalom, and double bass) that continues the open-strings musical idea.
Example 3.7: No. 2. The abundance of the X- and Y-sets in mm. 9-17
At the same time, the ensemble reacts to musical events in the voice line, emphasizing its most important structural points. First of all, there is a constant reinforcement of the wedge-center G throughout the fragment, especially in the double bass. Secondly, there is a rising and then falling melodic figure in the violin part (mm. 14-20), reminiscing the first four pitches of the voice in augmentation. Finally, there is a mensural canon between the last four notes of the voice line and the end of cimbalom part (as shown in Example 3.8).

Example 3.8: No. 2. The voice-cimbalom mensural canon
No. 2 is framed by the G sounding simultaneously in all three instruments. The occurrence of the C#-G tritone in the voice part in mm. 10-11, almost the exact middle of the fragment, fits perfectly into its large-scale form.

No. 3 “Supplication”

This fragment of Scenes presents a double canon where the violin part is paired with the double bass part, and the voice with the cimbalom. An interesting feature of these two canons is the obfuscation of the roles of the leading and the following voices, since each voice possesses its own distinctive rhythmic organization.

In the course of this piece the violin and double bass play slow glissandi bound by versions of the Y-set, F#-C-B in the violin, and F-B-C in the double-bass part. As shown in Figure 3.5, the contour of one part mirrors the other; thus, there is an inverted canon between violin and double bass at the minor second (this is an approximate interval of inversion since the glissandi in both parts are not strictly defined rhythmically).

Figure 3.5: No. 3. The contour of the violin and double bass parts
Following the text, the voice-cimbalom canonic pair can be divided into two parts, with the first half ending before the last three pitches of the voice part in the first system of the score. Even though it is the cimbalom that starts the canonic motion, the voice part may be considered the leading voice of this canon, because the cimbalom keeps repeating the chromatic melodic cell in augmentation over the course of the first part without any modifications. In the second half the cimbalom chromatically elaborates the predominantly ascending content of the voice part, in diminution.

The last three pitches of the voice line in the first part are D5, F5 and C#5. This is the culmination of the first segment, coinciding with the end of the first half of the text, and resulting in the three highest pitches so far and the longest durations (shown in Example 3.9a). This three-pitch motive represents a +3, -4 structure. Then, in the second half, we hear the same motive in the voice at T4 -- F#5-A5-F5 -- replicated right away by the cimbalom (shown in Example 3.9b). It seems that the composer wants the listener to hear this imitation, since the cimbalom repeats the same pitches in very close proximity. After that we hear an expansion of this three-note motive in the voice line, +4, -5, E5-G#5-D#5. The rhythmic design of this new version of the trichord replicates the note values from the first occurrence of the motive in the first half of the piece, only in a different order, thus strengthening its tie to the original motive. Again, the modified motive is imitated in the cimbalom part right away. This time Kurtág presents the motive in both a “composed out” form (in a distance), which is an imitation at T0 of the material just heard in the voice part on a larger scale, and also in diminution, with the order of the three pitches changed (-4, -1) (shown in Example 3.9c). This three-note motive, as well as the main chromatic melodic cell, functions as a link between the two segments of the
fragment and between the voice and cimbalom parts, and also as a key to understanding Kurtág's reading of Dalos's poem.

Example 3.9: No. 3. The +3, -4 motive and its further modifications

The voice and the cimbalom come together in unison at the very last phrase of the piece, coinciding with the last word of the poetic text. The voice part first borrows a grace-note technique from the cimbalom part, then borrows a glissando technique from the violin and double bass. Both grace note and glissandi — representing, in a sense, a "deranged" vocal style — occur on the last word of the text, "iurodivogo" ("holy fool").

The cimbalom uses grace notes to emphasize the main melodic cell of the piece, a descending chromatic line. Actually, here both voice and cimbalom parts may be thought of as a compound melody, consisting of two descending chromatic lines (shown in Example 3.10).
Example 3.10: No. 3. The two implied chromatic descents in the voice and cimbalom parts

The last dyad of the cimbalom, F-F# links it to the violin-double bass canon, since F-F# is the axis of symmetry in the latter. The significant phenomenon in this fragment is a gradual expansion of the main chromatic melodic cell over the course of the fragment. These non-chromatic eruptions at certain points are meaningful for the understanding of Kurtág's work with Dalos's text, which will be discussed below.

An interesting detail in the opening of the fragment is the pizzicato B in the double bass. This pitch-class occurs later in both the violin and the double bass lines as part of the canon, but its isolation as the only pizzicato note in the double bass part hints at its special structural significance. The first sonority heard in this fragment is the cluster B-B-flat-A (with the B in the double bass line and the other two pitches in the cimbalom part), which represents a verticalized version of the main 3-note chromatic melodic cell A-G#-G-natural. This melodic cell itself replicates the final melodic motive of the violin in fragment No. 2, B-flat-B-natural-C-B-B-flat (see above). In this fragment it descends A-G#-G-natural, and is reinforced over and over in the cimbalom part.
Thus, in the very beginning of this fragment there are two simultaneous canons going on, linked through the B in the double bass part. Moreover, the first melodic cell of one canon is, in a sense, a following voice itself with regard to the ending of the previous piece.

In sum, the two simultaneous musical processes of this fragment are not independent from each other. They interrelate by means of the playing technique that Kurtág employs. The sequence of the sliding half-steps in the voice and the cimbalom parts (in the latter reinforced by the embellishments), and dreamy sounding slow arco glissandi of the muted violin and double bass create the image of something intense, but illusory.

No. 4 “Allow me”

The content of the fourth fragment of the cycle is derived from the two previous fragments, Nos. 2 and 3. The score of this piece is similar to No. 2. As with the second fragment, the voice part in No. 4 begins by rising through chromatic motion and falls rapidly. As in No. 2, the melody in the fourth fragment is a wedging-out-from-G (shown on Example 3.11). In the first half of the voice line there is a gradual chromatic ascent, outlining the tritone G4-D-flat5. The D-flat5 (m. 4) marks the upper boundary of the wedge. Then, the building of the lower section of the wedge takes place. Similar to No. 2, some of the necessary pitches are registrally displaced, and one of them (D#) is missing.
Example 3.11: No. 4. The wedge construction

In the second fragment, one of the wedge-members (E) was missing in the voice line, but occurred in the double bass part, and then, after a delay, in the voice part. In this case, the missing D# also appears in the instrumental part (the cimbalom, m. 6), simultaneously with the E in the voice. But, contrary to what happens in No. 2, in this fragment it never occurs in the melody. The lower boundary of the G-wedge, C#4, sounding in the right octave, completes the process of the wedge-formation, as seen in Figure 3.6 (parentheses indicate octave displacement; brackets indicate a missing member of the wedge).
Both fragments also share a concitato style of instrumental writing, where the cimbalom, violin, and double bass emphasize the important pitches of the voice line by their constant repetition in short groups of sixteenth notes. At the same time, there is a hidden imitation between the voice and the three instruments throughout this fragment, relating it to the third fragment of the cycle. Moreover, all three fragments are linked to each other through the germinal chromatic cell of the voice line, G4-G#4-A4.

In this fragment, just like in No. 2, the axis of symmetry, the D-flat-G dyad, appears exactly in the middle of the wedge-building process (m. 4; shown in Example 3.12a). The "after the axis" melodic pitch content in No. 4 literally imitates the pitch content of the corresponding section in No. 2 (shown in Example 3.12b).
Example 3.12: No. 4. The correspondence between the pitch content in Nos. 4 and 2

The instrumental trio in this fragment creates a counterpoint to the melody. Each new member of the wedge in the voice part is heard in one of the instruments right after or right before its occurrence in the voice line. Because of the displacement, it provides a weak harmonic support to the melody, since it always creates a dissonance with it. All three instruments are involved in this hidden imitation, but only one at a time, which produces theocket effect.

After the voice ends with the word “rastvorit’sia” (“[to] dissolve”), the violin assumes the role of the voice, echoing the last three pitches of the melody line (E₅, D₅, and C₇₄) first at T₀ (mm. 8-10), and then registrally displaced (mm. 10-13). The other two instruments, the cimbalom and double bass, continue “echoing the echo,” repeating E₅ and D-flat₄ endlessly. The D-flat₄ in the double bass is not only an “echo” of the C₇₄
in the violin part, but also a part of the G-D-flat axis of symmetry, which begins and ends the fragment in the double bass part.

No. 11 "Again"

The structure of the eleventh fragment of *Scenes* may be described as wedging-out-from and wedging-into the center B-C. Unlike the other pieces that feature wedges, in this fragment the wedge is heard vertically and horizontally in the instrumental parts even before the voice enters. As seen in Example 3.13, the pitch-space expands linearly in the cimbalom and the violin part (for purposes of convenience the upper part of the wedge is shown in the cimbalom part, and the lower part in the violin). Simultaneously, the wedge expands twice as fast in clusters of four pitches, if we consider the cimbalom and violin together. These two instruments sound as one musical force, blending together in the timbrally “cold” sound mass (*col legno, battuto* of the violin, and *bacch. di metallo* of the cimbalom). The wedge center B-C is clearly defined, since the wedge alternately expands out from it, and then contracts into it (shown in Example 3.13). The two instruments are more than partners in the wedge-building process; in this fragment, just as in many other fragments in the cycle, Kurtág uses an imitative contrapuntal technique. The cimbalom and violin form one sound-organism by complementing each other in constant imitation.
Example 3.13: No. 11. The wedging-out and wedging-into the B-C center

The entire instrumental introduction is repeated when the voice enters. The voice part is drawn totally from the B-C wedge. It can be divided into three short sections (shown in Example 3.14).
the wedge section the compound melody section the last section

Example 3.14: No. 11. The three sections of the wedge-out from the B-C center

The first section of the voice line coincides with the first sentence of the text “La snova zhdu tebia” (the first six notes of the voice); the second section ends with F4 (the second to the last word of the text); and the third section comprises the last five pitches of the line (the last word of the poem).

In the first section, there is a horizontal wedging-out-from the B-C center. As seen in Example 3.14, D5 is “supposed” to be there in the upper part of the wedge after D-flat5, but its occurrence is postponed until the next section. Coincidentally or not, the D5 occurs in the context of the phrase “How slowly comes tomorrow.” Considering D5 is expected earlier than it actually occurs, this parallelism with the text is meaningful.

The second section of the voice part may be evaluated in terms of a compound melody. The lower part of this compound melody continues the chromatic descent of the lower part of the wedge G#-G-natural-F#-F-natural, reaching the boundary (F4) already determined by the instrumental part. The upper part, however, does not continue the ascent that starts in the first section, but rather moves in parallel motion with the lower part, creating a chain of parallel minor sixths.
The last section of the voice line is notable in many respects. First of all, in terms of pitch-class content, it completes the chromatic descent, started first in the lower part of the wedge in the first section and continued as a lower and upper part of the compound melody in the second section (as seen in Example 3.14, above, if displaced, the three-note upper part of the compound melody may be viewed as a chromatic continuation of the descent in the lower part). Also, the last section is connected to the instrumental parts of the fragment, as well as to other fragments of the cycle.

The last five pitch-classes of the melody are C-B-B-flat-A-G#. Even though Kurtág spreads them over a two-octave range (shown in Example 3.15a), these five notes may be viewed as the imitation of the five-note chromatic descent in the cimbalom and violin parts at the beginning of the, as shown in Example 3.15b. Also, it is a large-scale replica of the last descent in the violin part in No. 2 (Example 3.15c, below).

The last section of the voice part is heard against new sounds in the instrumental parts. Both the cimbalom and the violin break out of their wedge-restraints with three long chromatic bursts, ascending in the cimbalom part, and descending in the violin. Since the two lines always progress in opposite directions, their interaction results in three wedges. Each of these wedges first contracts to its center (different for each wedge) and then expands from it; the outer boundaries of the last wedge occupy four octaves. This instrumental expansion of the sound-space parallels the interval-enlargement in the development of the melodic line. In sum, since in this fragment the melody grows out of the instrumental music, the key to Kurtág’s reading of Dalos’s poem may be found in the constant process of separation in the instrumental parts by wedging-out-of a center, which overpowers each attempt at wedging-in.
Example 3.15: No. 11. The links between the end of the soprano line, the cimbalom and violin music in the beginning, and the violin part in No. 2
No. 14 “True story”

The second-to-last fragment of *Scenes* is the most intense of all because of the semantics of Dalos’s poem (“the love is dying”). Kurtág reinforces the intensity of the text in the first segment of the fragment by combining his instrumental and polyphonic techniques with a *con moto, disperato* musical character. The soprano in “True story” is an instrument capable of delivering the text, -- not as an independent voice, but part of the four-leveled voice of the heroine. If in the first section of the fragment the voice part represents just one of the polyphonic “voices,” then in the instrumental coda the multi-layered structure represents the complexity of the heroine’s inner self.

Formally the fragment superimposes contrasting bipartite and tripartite forms. There is a clear break between the first two parts, which mimics the formal structure of Dalos’s poem. The instrumental coda, which is long enough to be considered a third part, is a significant element not only in the large-scale structure of the fragment, but the overall construction of the cycle as a whole. Claudia Stahl, who views No. 14 as a sort-of large-scale recapitulation in the cycle, points to the links between this fragment and Nos. 7 and 12, among others. These links are found in the coda section of the fragment. Since both No. 7 and No. 12 belong to the intertextual circle, I will examine these connections in detail in Chapter 4.

There is a three-part strict canon at the unison between the double bass, cimbalom, and voice (in order of appearance), based on the predominantly chromatic descending line A-B-flat-A-flat-G-F#, shown in Example 3.16. The effect of infinite canon comes from the repetitive occurrence of this motive in all three parts as ostinato.

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The infinite canon breaks when the voice changes the pattern during its third canonic entrance, inserting a B-natural before A-flat (mm. 6-7). As a result, we can represent the pitch-content of the first section in “True story” as an unbalanced wedge-out from A (shown in Example 3.16):

Example 3.16: No. 14. The unbalanced wedge-out from A in the first section

The absence of C in the upper part of the wedge and the occurrence of B in just the final version of the voice’s ostinato not only makes the wedge incomplete, but also makes its lower part heavier and therefore, more important semantically.

Kurtág uses breath marks in all three parts of the canon, including the violin and double bass, emphasizing their role as a human voice. It evokes the image of a person who is so agitated that she is not even able to complete a phrase, someone who starts over and over, and repeats the same words with the same intonation. The cimbalom, which does not participate in the canon, nevertheless, plays an important role in the overall structure of the first section by playing a rhythmic ostinato on A4, the center of the wedge. It is almost as if it tries to be a part of the canon, but because of the agitation it cannot go beyond the first note. Here the composer also uses breath marks, breaking them
into groups of 3, 7, and 5 sixteenths, respectively, and repeating the pattern over and over. Kurtág chooses three units of sixteenth notes, paralleling the three parts of the canon.

The second part of the fragment, which is separated from the first by a general pause, presents a completely different character. There is a new tempo indication, new playing techniques (such as spiccato in the violin part), and a new dream-like mood. Now the soprano part assumes the voice of the heroine with a wide ranging melodic line, in contrast to the highly chromatic content of the instrumental parts. The prevailing melodic direction is ascending, as opposed to the descending contour of the first part. Still, here Kurtág also employs a polyphonic technique: all three instrumental parts participate in imitation, based on the chromatic melody of the first part. Also, starting in m. 13, the double bass imitates the last phrase of the voice line with its three large leaps up and then abrupt descent. This, in a sense, brings the voice and instrumental parts together again.

The end of the voice line coincides with the beginning of an ostinato pattern in the cimbalom playing a perpetual ostinato D5-E-flat6 (mm. 16-24). It relates back to the A-ostinato at the fragment’s beginning, creating a structural arch. On the large scale, the three ostinato pitch-classes, A, D, and E-flat form the Y-set. But in the coda -- unlike the beginning of No. 14, where the A-ostinato constantly interrupts itself as if in the need to breathe -- the D-E-flat ostinato never pauses; it just stops suddenly at the end of the fragment. This perpetuum mobile material of the cimbalom together with the violin’s line, constructed of minor sixths and minor seconds, is an important semantic link to other fragments of the cycle, especially those of the intertextual circle.
No. 15 “Epilogue”

Since the second and the last fragments of Scenes use the same text, one would expect them also to have distinct musical correlations. In his conversation with the author, Kurtág recalled that right after composing “From meeting to parting,” he started working on its “variation,” another fragment with the same text. The last fragment, “Epilogue,” exhibits many characteristics found in other fragments discussed above, such as imitative-canonic relationships among parts, chromatic motives as germinal melodic ideas, and gradual intervalic expansion. But the most important feature of this piece is its overall downward direction. All of the three participants (the voice, violin and double bass) function as parts of one voice (similar to No. 14) heard in canon, which may symbolize the complexity of the heroine’s inner “self.” Each line begins as a chromatic descent, which is interrupted by the entrance of another instrument, and then starts again, interrupting another voice in turn. Still, Kurtág follows the metrical organization of the Dalos poem by using a prolongation sign in the voice part at the caesura points, and therefore the voice line may be segmented into three sections (mm. 3-5, 6-8, and 9-11).

The contour of the voice line and, in a few spots, the double bass, do not always strictly or directly descend. The intervalic, contour, rhythmic, and even pitch content of the second and third sections of the voice line (Example 3.17a) relates it closely to the second part of the corresponding second fragment of the cycle, “From meeting to parting” (Example 3.17b, below).

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Example 3.17: No. 15. The intervalic, contour, and pitch connections to No. 2

There is an obvious connection between voice parts in No. 2 and No. 15, corresponding to lines 3-5 in the text, as the example above demonstrates. This correspondence is almost expected since “Epilogue” completes the large-scale 2-15 circle with the same text as the beginning of Scenes. Nevertheless, Kurtág’s reading of the same poem has changed.

Back and forth chromatic motion in No. 2 is now replaced by a chromatic descent, which is a dominating layer of the texture in No. 15. (I consider the presence of the wedge-out from G#4-A4 in No. 15, shown in Example 3.17a, a by-product of the pitch-correlation to No. 2, rather than a semantically important construction. Thus, I do not include No. 15 into the wedge circle). Because of the imitative technique used in
“Epilogue,” the caesuras in the voice, violin and double bass lines never coincide, allowing at least one of the three to continue this endless descent at any given time. And, in a favorite Kurtágian manner, there is a sudden stop – instead of closure. The semantics of the up-and-down motion, encountered in No. 2, connotes restlessness and uncertainty; but there is nothing uncertain about the descending chromatic line in “Epilogue,” which evokes complete hopelessness.

Another characteristic of “Epilogue” is its “emptiness,” which relates it back to the first fragment of Scenes, the musical epigraph of the cycle. Kurtág even uses the word “pusto” (“empty”) in the score as one of the character/tempo indications. The empty sound comes from perfect fifths and fourths, which are heard, mostly vertically, throughout the fragment. In m. 4 the violin just “hangs” on the open-fifth dyad D4-A4, a single replica of the multiple open-fifths sonorities of “Come.” And as in the first fragment, the saturation with fifths and fourths leads to sonorities-members of the X- and Y-sets (Example 3.18, below).
Example 3.18: No. 15. The abundance of the X- and Y-sets in the vertical and horizontal dimensions
Table 3.2 below summarizes the most important features found in the six fragments discussed above (Nos. 2, 3, 4, 11, 14, 15). All of these fragments share a chromatic cell as their starting point and therefore belong to the chromatic circle. In five out of six fragments we find either wedges, or the illusion of a wedge (a gradual non-symmetrical interval expansion). They all employ contrapuntal techniques, and therefore, also belong to the polyphonic circle. In this six-member group the first, third, and fifth fragments make use of the ostinato technique. Nos. 3, 11, 14, and 15 all sound either “dreamy,” or “cold,” or “empty” (glissandi of the con sordino violin and double bass in No. 3; tremolo of col legno, battuto violins and bacch. di mettalo cimbalom in No. 11; pizzicato glissandi of the double bass and the endless ostinato of the cimbalom in the coda of No. 14; empty sounding vertical fourths and fifths in No. 15). These six fragments form a mini-circle, where the first and the last member complete the circle not only by using the same text, but also by their shared musical characteristics. The concept of the “motion equals stasis” introduced in “Come,” is inherent in the large-scale organization of the chromatic circle. The repetition of the same or similar structural means in every fragment, when each time we start from the beginning and soon come to the same, or almost the same, conclusion, creates the sense of motion to nowhere.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From meeting to parting No. 2</th>
<th>Supplication No. 3</th>
<th>Allow me No. 4</th>
<th>Again No. 11</th>
<th>True story No. 14</th>
<th>Epilogue No. 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G-Aflat-G-F# chromatic cell</td>
<td>A-G#-Gnatural chromatic cell</td>
<td>G-Aflat-G chromatic cell</td>
<td>B-C-Bflat chromatic cell</td>
<td>5-note chromatic germinal cell.</td>
<td>Perpetual chromatic descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedge-out from G</td>
<td>Gradual intervalic expansion</td>
<td>Wedge-out from G</td>
<td>Multiple wedges</td>
<td>Incomplete wedges</td>
<td>An obvious contour, rhythmic and intervalic connection with No. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural symmetry</td>
<td>Structural symmetry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyphonic ostinato on G</td>
<td>“Dreamy” instrumental technique</td>
<td>Polyphonic concitato technique</td>
<td>“Cold” and “dreamy” instrumental writing</td>
<td>Instrumental ostinati; illusion-like character of the second section</td>
<td>Emptiness of perfect fifths and fourths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasi-imitative technique</td>
<td>Double canon</td>
<td>Imitative-canonic technique</td>
<td>Canonic imitations and imitation-in-a-distance</td>
<td>Three-part strict canon</td>
<td>A chain of canonic imitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 and 3-5 verticality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: The chromatic circle (Nos. 2, 3, 4, 11, 14, 15)
Nos. 12 and 13 are two more fragments with extensive use of the wedge technique, which do not belong to the chromatic circle. No. 12, entitled “Infinite sequence of Sundays,” functions as the link between the wedge circle and the intertextual circle. Because of that connection, this fragment will be examined last. No. 13, “Visit,” stands apart from other members of the wedge circle, being one of only three pieces in *Scenes* with one circle affiliation (Nos. 6, 9 and 13).

No. 13 “Visit”

There are three layers of musical structure present in this one-page fragment of *Scenes*, which correspond to the three semantic fields in Dalos’s poem. Most importantly, the underlying structure of the voice line transposes the main metrical-syntactic principle of the text into music.

The soprano part, following the three-line layout of Dalos’s poem, consists of three short phrases. Each of these phrases outlines three different keys. The first one contains the pitches of the A major-minor triad with two extra notes, D and B-flat. The second phrase may be viewed as an incomplete F major-minor triad with an added tone G. Similarly, the third phrase includes tonic and major and minor thirds of the implied D major-minor triad with an extra pitch B. Notably, the tonics of these three phrases in the voice line (A, F and D, respectively) also make up a minor triad.

If we look at other parts in a linear fashion, we discover that similar processes are taking place there too. The double bass, first, outlines the E major triad with an extra D, and then the F minor triad (substituting G# with its enharmonic equivalent A-flat) with an alien F#. In the violin part we find a melodic F major triad with an extra E; even the
cimbalom’s dyads form similar sonorities, such as an E-flat minor triad with an extra D flat at the beginning (see the first two dyads in the cimbalom’s part). The last vertical sonority, heard in this fragment, is also an incomplete triad (C major-minor) with an extra D-flat. These mostly linear quasi-triadic formations create what I call an illusion of shifting tonality.

Another structural layer seems more closely modeled on the musical fragment’s surface and, simultaneously, on the semantics of the text. There is a chain of perfect fifth dyads starting with D4 in the double bass and A4 in the violin and continuing in the violin, cimbalom, and beginning of the voice parts. The openness of fifths creates a “cold” sensation, similar to the one in the Dalos poem.

A third, hidden layer of structure in the piece requires an even closer look. There are three structural processes taking place, which may be described as wedging-out-from a central pitch. First, before the voice enters, the musical content of this fragment is a perfect chromatic wedge out-from-G#. G#4 occurs in the double bass part right after the first dyad G4-A4 in the violin line. It enters alone, unlike the other wedge members, which all occur in pairs. Also, G# breaks the unity of the first dyad, placing itself in the dyad’s center, and therefore positioning G and A on opposite sides of the central pitch. The perfection of this wedge lies in its balance, if we consider pitch-classes rather than pitches, and also in its entirely symmetrical instrumentation (shown in Figure 3.7). Notably, the double bass plays D at the end of the wedge, which forms an interval class 6 with the wedge center G#, and therefore, belongs to the axis of symmetry.
Figure 3.7: No. 13. The first chromatic wedge-out from G#

After the wedge is completed with D, the next note, occurring in the double bass part, is again the G#. Thus, at the end of the wedge we hear the representation of the two pitch-classes that make up its axis of symmetry. More importantly, G# is the starting point for a second expanding chromatic wedge-formation. As Figure 3.8 shows, here Kurtág uses a slightly different instrumentation, which is only partially symmetrical.
Figure 3.8: No. 13. The second chromatic wedge-out from G#

One more wedge can be found in the second, open-fifths structural layer of “Visit,” discussed earlier. The order of the pitches involved in the perfect fifths-motion is almost entirely symmetrical with regard to register, evenly widening the musical space in both upward and downward directions, as Figure 3.9 demonstrates:
Figure 3.9: No. 13. The fifths-wedge-out from D

The beginning of this wedge-out from D4 overlaps with the ending of the first chromatic wedge, employing the member of the axis of the latter, the D, as its wedge-center. Also, the fifths-wedge temporally coincides with the second chromatic wedge. Thus, we have, in a sense, a chain of overlapping wedges constituting one structural level of the piece.

The voice participates in all three layers of the piece, but most importantly, as was mentioned earlier, it carries a structural connection to the Dalos poem. Kurtág presents the text in three phrases, dividing the poem according to its natural metrical-syntactic pauses and therefore ignoring the poet’s use of enjambment. However, the construction of the voice line creates an analogy for the enjambment in the text in a very original way (shown in Example 3.19, where the pitches participating in this construction are boxed together).
Example 3.19: No. 13. Enjambment in the structure of the voice part

As seen in figure above, the last two pitch-classes of the first phrase and the first pitch-class of the second phrase (C, B-flat, and F) constitute a segment of the circle of fifths. Similarly, the last two pitch-classes of the second phrase and the second pitch-class of the third phrase, namely, G, A, and D, form another mini-circle of fifths. Thus, the end of each phrase and the beginning of the next one are combined into one structural unit, one that straddles the actual phrasing. Also, the last pitch of the voice part, the B₄, is connected to the beginning of the fragment by the same principle: it forms an even longer circle-of-fifths segment, D-A-E-B, which brings semantics of circularity to the music and, consequently, to the text.

No. 12 “Infinite sequence of Sundays” (Perpetuum mobile).

This fragment relates directly to Dalos’s text, musically delineating the idea of endlessness. All of the musical material grows out the three-note cell (G#-A- F₄) heard in the beginning of the piece in the violin part. The violin is the perpetuum mobile force
of this fragment; it keeps playing the three-note pattern either in its original version, or transformed, over and over again.

The whole piece may be divided into four sections, separated by pauses in all parts (mm. 1-6, 7-12, 13-17, 18-19). In the first part, the violin starts on G#3; in the three following parts, it begins on B-flat3, C4, and D4, respectively, rising by a whole step each time. The voice line, which is based on the violin part, repeats the full text, consisting of only seven words combined into two sentences, three times. The fourth time the voice stops suddenly after the first two words of the sentence (“vot opiat’” [“and again”]), as if it was making a point that it is not going to be any different at this time anyway.

Following the text of the poem, each section of the violin line is divided into two sentences. In the second sentence we see the initial three-note cell being subjected to contour transformations; however, its interval content never changes. As seen in Example 3.20, there are always two subsequent melodic intervals involved, a minor second and a minor six (except for m. 4), but their order and direction vary.

Example 3.20: No. 12. Different versions of the three-note cell
The musical tension in this fragment accumulates not only through the continuous repetition of the same melodic pattern and a gradual rising motion of the violin, but also by the counterpoint created by the cimbalom and double bass. They join the violin and voice gradually. First, the double bass enters with the descending chromatic passage, and then, with a figure derived from the violin’s minor sixth. After that, the cimbalom enters in a similar way, starting with the ascending chromatic passage and then proceeding with the elaboration of the three-note germinal cell. By m.13, we hear simultaneously the ascending three-note figure of the violin, the cimbalom in canon in diminution, and a chromatic sequence of descending minor sixths in the double bass part (shown in Example 3.21).

Example 3.21: No. 12. Polyphonic texture in mm. 12-13
There are four long chromatic passages in this piece. As I mentioned above, the first one, which descends, takes place in the double bass part (m. 5). The second, an ascending chromatic passage, occurs in the cimbalom part (m. 11). Both start with C#4, and therefore, may be viewed as constituting the wedge-out from C#, separated by six measures. In m. 17 we hear a chromatic figure in contrary motion with both instruments involved. Since this bidirectional motion begins with F4 in the cimbalom and E3 in the double bass with E3, already separated from each other by more than an octave, the theoretical center of this wedge lies half way between these two pitches, at the B-flat3-B-natural3 dyad. As always with the wedge fragments in this cycle, in No. 10 Kurtág creates a sense of distance, – one that is only implicit in Dalos’s poem this time.

The last, longest chromatic figure, one that ascends, is heard in the cimbalom part (m. 24); it spans three octaves, starting on E2 and ending on E5. Thus, the starting pitches of these chromatic passages, C#, E, and F together make up a pitch-class set [1, 4, 5] belonging to the same set-class (0, 1, 4) as the main opening three-note cell G#3-A3-F4 ([1, 2, 5]).

The last chromatic passage is at least twice as long as any of the others. This never-ending chromatic line represents the main musical idea of this fragment: all the musical events here are repetitions with slight changes of the first section -- which is by itself also a repetition, with slight changes, of the three-note pattern. The last chromatic figure raises the level of tension to an extreme by going up and never really reaching its peak.

No. 12 may be considered a rondo without episodes (A-A\(^1\)-A\(^2\)-A\(^3\)). There is one obsessive musical thought, which is repeated over and over. In this fragment, there is no
any closure. The music just stops suddenly, as if interrupted in mid-sentence, paralleling what happens earlier in the voice part.

Table 3.3 compiles the members of the wedge circle. The wedge fragments are located either at the beginning of the cycle (Nos. 2 and 4), or closer to its end (Nos. 11-14). On the other hand, most fragments belonging to the intertextual circle, Nos. 5, 7, 9, and 10, are placed in the middle part of *Scenes*, surrounding a central fragment of the cycle, No. 8, which does not belong to either circle. Since the semantics of the wedging-out is that of the separation, it seems that Kurtág “frames” the cycle with the idea of distance. This idea is introduced by the composer in No. 2 and reinforced in No. 4. The wedge-saturation in fragments Nos. 11-13 makes the distance (in time, in space) a permanent subtextual element in the semantics of the cycle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From meeting to parting No. 2</th>
<th>Allow me No. 4</th>
<th>Again No. 11</th>
<th>Sundays (Perpetuum mobile) No. 12</th>
<th>Visit No. 13</th>
<th>True story No. 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G-Aflat-G-F# chromatic cell</td>
<td>G-Aflat-G chromatic cell</td>
<td>B-C-Bflat chromatic cell</td>
<td>Four long chromatic passages</td>
<td>Illusion of shifting tonality in the voice part</td>
<td>5-note chromatic germinal cell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedge-out from G</td>
<td>Wedge-out from G</td>
<td>Multiple wedges</td>
<td>Wedge-out from C# in a distance; wedge-out from the B-flat-B-natural center</td>
<td>Multiple wedges, including the perfect wedge-out from G#</td>
<td>Incomplete wedges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural symmetry</td>
<td>Structural symmetry</td>
<td></td>
<td>A-A¹-A²-A³ repetitive structure</td>
<td>Three-layered structure</td>
<td>Contrasting two-partite form with superimposed three-partite form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyphonic ostinato on G</td>
<td>Polyphonic concitato technique</td>
<td>“Cold” and “dreamy” instrumental writing</td>
<td>Cut off ending</td>
<td>“Cold” fifths</td>
<td>Instrumental ostinati; illusion-like character of the second section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasi-imitative technique</td>
<td>Imitative-canonic technique</td>
<td>Canonic imitations and imitation-in-a-distance</td>
<td>Imitative-canonic technique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 and 3-5 verticality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3-4 and 3-5 verticality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: The wedge circle (Nos. 2, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14)
The intertextual circle

As mentioned earlier, No. 12 functions as a link between the wedge circle and the intertextual circle. The latter contains five fragments total: Nos. 5, 7, 9, 10, and 12. The intertextual circle is the most “semantic” among the five structural circles in *Scenes*, and thus it is practically impossible to consider intertextual fragments without referring to and comparing with the semantics of the text in each case.

As seen in Figure 3.10, each of the five fragments possesses one or both of the following characteristics: a perpetuum mobile element (Nos. 5, 7, 9, 12) and/or a specific stylistic reference (Nos. 5, 7, 9, 10). Also, all perpetuum mobile fragments have a rondo-element in their form. Since Claudia Stahl offers a good overview of the main features of this group of fragments in her study, I will limit my discussion to the most significant structural elements, critical to the understanding of the interrelationships between text in music.\(^{11}\)

![Diagram](image)

Figure 3.10: Main structural/semantic features of the intertextual circle

\(^{11}\) See Stahl (1998), 98-100 and 104-105.
Most of the stylistic references in the intertextual fragments are dance-related. As I suggested above, the roots of the dance-like motion may be traced back to the first fragment of the cycle, with its illusive slow waltz in the violin part. The composer turns (very appropriately, considering his work with Russian poetry) to some landmark characteristics of music by such Russian composers of different musical eras as Glinka, Stravinsky, and Schnittke. Thus, the middle section of No. 5 “Counting-out rhyme” (poco meno mosso, tempo di Kamarinskaya), is written in the character of the Kamarinskaia, a Russian folk dance first adopted by Glinka in his orchestral fantasia of that name (1848). Notably, this fragment is subtitled “Hommage à Mahler.” The combination of the Kamarinskaia and Mahler in the same fragment may seem peculiar, but not so much if we remember that it was Mahler who used popular music genres in his large-scale dramaturgy as an ironic, or even grotesque expression of the banality and superficiality of the world. In No. 7, “Rondo,” the first episode is the waltz, which resembles the dance movements (especially “Tango”) from Stravinsky’s Istoria Soldata (The Soldier’s Tale) (1917-18). In fragment No. 9, “Hurdy-gurdy waltz,” the title speaks for itself: it is an infinite waltz, with the careless in character melody and an E-flat-major triad ostinato in the accompaniment. As the subtitle intimates, this fragment is an homage to composer Alfred Schnittke, a contemporary of Kurtág who, like Mahler long before him, was a fond of irony and the grotesque in musical expression.

Another important feature that all members of the intertextual circle share is a clearly defined form, usually with rondo elements (except for No. 10). No. 5 is an ABA\(^1\) rounded binary form, where the A\(^1\) section is a contracted version of A. No. 7, entitled by Kurtág “Rondo,” is a quintessential rondo form ABA\(^1\)B\(^1\)A\(^2\). No. 12, as I suggested
above, is an episodeless rondo $AA^1A^2A^3$. No. 9, “Hurdy-Gurdy Waltz,” with the perpetual ostinato on the E-flat major chord in the instrumental parts, is the apotheosis of sameness and repetiveness. Its form may be described as a triple period $A-A^1-A^2$, where the instrumental coda ($A^2$), which repeats the material of the main section, forms the third period.

No. 10, “Tale,” stands apart from the other members of the intertextual circle because it lacks formal rondo elements and also because it exhibits an abrupt stylistic cut between its two constituent parts. The first part of the fragment consists of the two sections (mm. 1-6 and 7-10). The first section is a canon on a lofty sounding Gregorian-chant-like melody, where the leading voice is a duet between the soprano and the violin at two octaves and a fifth (G4-D7). The cimbalom and double bass, also sounding at the octave and fifth (C3-G4), constitute the canon’s following voice. The melody in mm. 1-3, with its prevailing step-by-step motion is a perfect imitation of the Gregorian chant. Its appearance in fifths and in canon adds even more loftiness to the character. The cold, distancing effect of the fifths is reinforced by Kurtág’s registration that spans more than five octaves, between the lowest and the highest notes (the C2 pedal in the cimbalom and F7 in the violin in m.1). The loftiness of the first section corresponds to the semantics of the first part in Dalos’s text, where the poet refers to the imagined elevated world of the heroine-goddess.

The voice line in mm. 4-6, which now leaps widely in both directions, functions as the link between the two sections of the first part of the fragment. In the second section (mm. 7-10) there is a subtle turn from lofty to “pseudo-lofty” character. Starting with m. 6, the canon stops; the melody is carried in unison by the voice and cimbalom, playing
*bacchetta di metallo*; the violin enters dolce, *con bravura* with arpeggiating passages; the double bass, playing *sul tasto*, sustains D4 for almost five measures. These characteristics together produce an almost “ghostly” effect, which also may be heard as a mockery of loftiness. The ironic subtext of the second section of the first part prepares implicitly the contrasting second part of fragment, written in the style of the Kamarinskaia (*dance russe*, m. 11).

In the context of the intertextual circle, the Kamarinskaia in Nos. 5 and 10 functions as an embodiment of everything genuine as opposed to the made-up. In No. 10 the “real” (the second part) is set against the “unearthly” (the first part). In No. 5, which is a semantically homogeneous fragment, the composer uses the Kamarinskaia as the middle section of a rounded binary form ABA\(^1\).\(^{12}\) The outer sections (mm. 1-9 and 13-17) are the actual “counting-out rhyme” announced by the composer in the title of the fragment, and thus do not contrast with the middle section (mm. 10-12), since a counting-out rhyme itself is children’s folk genre. Rather, section B functions as a culmination of the grotesque celebration of sadness originating in the text. The Kamarinskaia coincides with the words “i dostalas’ mne liubov’” (“and I was left with love”), repeated two times, first with *insolente*, and then with *lamentoso* performance markings for the vocalist. Considering the fact that it takes place in the context of the energetic light-hearted dance, where the cimbalom, violin, and double bass act as a typical Kamarinskaia accompaniment, with the ground-bass and arpeggiating middle harmonic level supporting the melody, the painful sarcasm of this section becomes obvious. Kurtág reinforces the

\(^{12}\) Considering that Kurtág mentions Mahler in the subtitle, Stahl appropriately defines the form of this fragment as a scherzo with trio (see Stahl 1998, 105).
self-irony inherent in Dalos’s text, making it almost brutal. The actual musical climax in No. 5 occurs in m. 13, after a general pause in all parts, which is technically the beginning of section A¹. However, an intricate fusion of the Russian folk dance and the dramatic situation reflected in the text makes the Kamarinskaia the core element in the semantics of this fragment.

The Kamarinskaia in No. 10 possesses the same light-hearted quality as that in No. 5. Also, just like in No. 5, Kurtág mimics the typical folk dance accompaniment. However, the folk dance takes on a grotesque nature in both fragments, since most of the time the accompaniment does not really support the voice, but rather creates a dissonance with it. Moreover, in No. 10, the parallel fifths motion in the cimbalom part (mm. 11-12), combined with the careless cheerfulness of the Kamarinskaia, is a mockery of the seriousness of the first “Gregorian chant” part of the fragment.

The waltz genre in Scenes, contrary to the Kamarinskaia, is associated with semantics of superficial contentment. In No. 7, “Rondo,” both episodes are waltzes contrasting to the perpetuum mobile character of the refrain. The core element of the refrain is the motive coinciding with the word “govorila” (“I said”). The “govorila”-motive is a figure of four sixteenth notes, conforming to the four-syllabic structure of the word, with variable pitch-content and invariable rhythmic makeup. The four-note succession may be doubled, tripled, quadrupled, etc., if the word is repeated several times (mm. 16, 18, 40, 48-57, etc.), and is separated from the other words by rests. The heroine repeats the word “govorila” endlessly throughout the fragment. At some point (in the A¹ section), her intoning becomes similar to a bird’s cry, and lasts for 12 measures (mm. 60-71). The elegant gestures of the waltz-like episodes contrast sharply with the obsessively
relapsing “govorila”-motive of the refrain. Since most of the poem’s story is communicated in the episodes, it seems that the heroine is making an attempt to distance herself from the fixating “govorila”-motive of the refrain and to objectify a painful reality of her life through Kurtág’s utilization of a popular dance in the episodes.

No. 9, “Hurdy-gurdy waltz,” belongs to the intertextual circle exclusively. In this fragment a certain capriciousness of the perpetual waltz conflicts with the semantic focus of the text, the conception of the “soul.” The more exaggerated the cheerfulness of the waltz becomes, the more bitterness it adds to the context. The music in No. 9 is so semantically loaded that it is simply impossible to consider it separately from the text. A more detailed account of their relationships will therefore be given in the next chapter.

The perpetuum mobile element, found in different forms in Nos. 5, 7, 9, and 12, is also inherently semantic. The endlessness or constant recurrence of a pattern (melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic) is an assertion of the circularity, which is the main structural principle in both textual and musical organization of Scenes.

As seen in Table 3.4, which summarizes the main features found in the intertextual circle, Nos. 5, 7, and 10 also take part in the X-set/Y-set circle, No. 10 and No. 12 are members of the polyphonic circle, and No. 12 belongs to the wedge circle. Notably, the intertextual circle has no connections with the chromatic circle. The emotional intensity in the latter comes from the development of a chromatic cell, which is often associated with wedging technique. In the former, the intensity originates in the principle of intertextuality itself, in the conflict or tension of texts within a text; in the semantic tension between Kurtág’s music and Dalos’s poetry; or in the semantic tension within the music itself.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre associations</th>
<th>Counting-Out Rhyme No. 5 (Hommage à Mahler)</th>
<th>Rondo No. 7</th>
<th>Hurdy-Gurdy Waltz No. 9 (Hommage à Alfred Schnittke)</th>
<th>Tale No. 10</th>
<th>Sundays No. 12 (Perpetuum mobile)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre associations:</strong></td>
<td>Kamarinskaia (Glinka)</td>
<td>Tango (Stravinsky, <em>Histoire du soldat</em>)</td>
<td>Waltz (Gregorian chant; Kamarinskaia)</td>
<td>Quasi-Gregoriant (E-flat major)</td>
<td>A chain of the vertical perfect fifth dyads; outlines X-set in the voice at the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form:</td>
<td>Rounded binary</td>
<td>Rondo</td>
<td>Triple period</td>
<td>Binary</td>
<td>Episodeless rondo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervalic/chordal consistency:</td>
<td>Outlines X- and Y sets horizontally</td>
<td>Outlines X- and Y-sets horizontally</td>
<td>Monochordal (E-flat major)</td>
<td>A chain of the vertical perfect fifth dyads; outlines X-set in the voice at the end</td>
<td>Consecutive horizontal m2+m6 and vice versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other features:</td>
<td>Perpetuum mobile principle: repetition of the same motive</td>
<td>Perpetuum mobile principle: repetition of the same motive</td>
<td>Perpetuum mobile principle: melodic-harmonic stasis</td>
<td>Non-perpetuum mobile</td>
<td>Quintessential perpetuum mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other circles affiliations:</td>
<td>X-set/Y-set circle</td>
<td>X-set/Y-set circle</td>
<td>X-set/Y-set circle</td>
<td>Wedge circle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: The intertextual circle (Nos. 5, 7, 9, 10, 12)
The X-set/Y-set and polyphonic circles.

All fragments-members of the X-set/Y-set and the polyphonic circle, except for Nos. 6 and 8, have already been considered above. Being the most “technical” circle of all, the X-set/Y-set circle is still semantic in a sense, since both sets contain the most “semantic” interval classes of the cycle, ic 5 and ic 1, realized in the score as an empty perfect fifth and an intense minor second. As Table 3.5 demonstrates, we find vertical X- and Y-sets mostly in the chromatic and/or wedge fragments (Nos. 2, 13, 14, 15).

Conversely, X/Y sets occur linearly in the intertextual fragments (Nos. 5, 7, and 10). In other words, the intertextual fragments use X/Y sets more semantically than the chromatic/wedge fragments, in which these sets are often a by-product of other structural processes. The X-set/Y-set circle originates in No. 1, which is saturated with both sets vertically and horizontally. Then, in the X-set/Y-set circle we observe a linear progression from the mostly horizontal fragments (Nos. 5, 7, 8, and 10) to the vertical ones (Nos. 13, 14, 15). No. 2 uses predominantly vertical X/Y sets, and thus does not fit into this pattern.

The polyphonic circle, consisting of ten fragments, includes members from four other circles (shown in Table 3.6). Polyphony seems to function as an ideal musical language for Kurtág, since it is both technical and semantic. Polyphony is a compositional technique; in the context of Scenes it is also a powerful semantic force. Imitation, canon, and compound melody appear consistently throughout the cycle, allowing for the presence of multiple voices within the protagonist’s inner voice. (See Chapter 4 for the discussion of the semantic aspect of Kurtág’s use of polyphony in the fragments-members of the polyphonic circle)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X-set and Y-set</th>
<th>No. 2</th>
<th>No. 5</th>
<th>No. 7</th>
<th>No. 8</th>
<th>No. 10</th>
<th>No. 13</th>
<th>No. 14</th>
<th>No. 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present vertically</td>
<td>Present horizontally</td>
<td>Present horizontally</td>
<td>Present horizontally</td>
<td>Present vertically</td>
<td>Present vertically</td>
<td>Present vertically</td>
<td>Present vertically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other circle affiliations</td>
<td>Chromatic, wedge, and polyphonic circles</td>
<td>Intertextual circle</td>
<td>Intertextual circle</td>
<td>Polyphonic circle</td>
<td>Polyphonic and intertextual circles</td>
<td>Wedge circle</td>
<td>Chromatic, wedge, and polyphonic circles</td>
<td>Chromatic, wedge, and polyphonic circles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: The X-set/Y set circle (Nos. 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment’s number</th>
<th>Polyphonic technique used</th>
<th>Other important features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 2</td>
<td>Polyphonic ostinato; quasi-imitations</td>
<td>A part of the wedge and the X-set/Y-set circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 3</td>
<td>Double canon</td>
<td>A part of the chromatic circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 4</td>
<td>Imitative-canonic technique</td>
<td>A part of the chromatic circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 6</td>
<td>Quasi-compound melody, canonic imitations</td>
<td>An opposition of stasis and distance creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 8</td>
<td>Quasi-compound melody</td>
<td>A central position in the cycle; a part of the X-set/Y-set circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 10</td>
<td>Canonic imitations</td>
<td>A part of the intertextual and the X-set/Y-set circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 11</td>
<td>Canonic imitations and imitations in-a-distance</td>
<td>A part of the wedge circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 12</td>
<td>Imitative technique</td>
<td>A part of the wedge and the intertextual circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 14</td>
<td>Three-part strict canon</td>
<td>A part of the wedge and the X-set/Y-set circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 15</td>
<td>A chain of canonic imitations</td>
<td>A part of the chromatic and the X-set/Y-set circles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: The polyphonic circle (Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15)
Imitation and compound melody are the features of No. 6, which belongs to the polyphonic circle exclusively. The central fragment of the cycle, No. 8, is a part of the polyphonic and X-set/Y-set circles. It is the shortest setting, with the extreme concentration of a musical thought and a gesture. Both fragments will be examined next.

No. 6 “Dream”

In this fragment, the opposing musical ideas of stasis and separation are amalgamated. There is a two-layered structure in the voice line, where we find both word-painting (as in m.10), and musical expression of the subtext of Dalos's poem. The voice part in No. 6 is the carrier of the fragment’s most important structural features. Following the four-line layout of Dalos’s poem, the voice line may be divided into four phrases, mm. 1-3, 4-7, m. 8 and mm. 10-11 (shown in Example 3.22).
Example 3.22: No. 6. The division of the voice line into four phrases

Wide-range intervals are a notable feature of the first two phrases. Phrase B is a variant of phrase A. E-flat5 is a point of reference for both phrases, as both A and B start with this pitch, and it is heard in the middle of phrase A. Moreover, in phrase B, E-flat5 has the longest duration in the whole fragment. Thus, the vocal line in the first two phrases shares two elements: the static E-flat5 pedal and a wide, free-flowing melody.

In phrase C we hear a repeated E-natural5, which functions as the upper voice of the compound melody. There is a gradual expansion of the musical space, with the static E5 in the upper part and the descending chromatic line D5-C#5-C-natural5 in the lower part of the compound line, coinciding with the word “[ty] priblizaeshsia” (“[you] come near”) in the text. Thus, the separation between upper and lower parts of the melody in the setting contradicts the meaning of the words. The lower part of the compound melody, the chromatic descent, is emphasized by its metrical placement on the strong part of each beat in the measure.
Phrase D synthesizes the musical features from the previous three phrases. There is a compound melody with G#5 as its upper part on the word “[ia] ottalkivaiu” (“[I] push you away”). In this case, unlike in phrase C, the pedal G#5 occupies the strong part of the first and the second beat of the measure, metrically accentuating the same pitch, which is also the highest in the fragment. In addition, four consecutive pitches, starting with the first G#5, outline the pitch-class set [7, 8, 1], a member of the Y-set featured in many fragments throughout the cycle. Unlike the contradiction between the text and the music in phrase C, the fourth phrase is an example of Kurtág’s word-painting. The upper section of the melody is associated with the “I” image, whereas the lower section, falling further and further from G#5 by two large gaps (m. 10), conveys the image of the “you” being “pushed away.” The last word of the text, “tebia” (“you”), is assigned to pitches E5 and D#4. The latter represents the central pitch from the first two phrases, and the former represents the upper voice of the compound melody in the third phrase. Thus, the appearance of these two pitches at the end of the voice line summarizes the main semantic idea of this fragment, “motion equals stasis,” by concluding the musical motion of the fragment with its starting point.

As a result, the large-scale construction of the voice line consists of two layers. One layer, shown with open note heads in Example 3.23, below, links E-flat5, E-natural5, and D#4 and represents stasis. The other layer of the melody, shown with the filled note heads in Example 3.23, consistently creates distance between itself and the upper voice. Therefore, the large-scale opposition of stasis and separation echoes the contradiction between text and music found in the third phrase.
Example 3.23: No. 6. The two-layered construction of the soprano part

The content of the voice line originates in the music heard in the instrumental parts. The voice part’s compound melody is an imitation of previously heard material. Since in this fragment the voice carries the main structural characteristics, I will not discuss the instrumental parts in detail. However, it is important to mention that the cimbalom and violin play a significant role in creating a large-scale static effect. The E-ostinato in the violin part is heard in the beginning of the fragment (mm. 1-3), corresponding to phrase A in the voice. We hear E-flat5 in the cimbalom on the strong part of each beat in mm. 7-8, coinciding with the phrase C in the voice line. There are both melodic and harmonic representations of E-D# dyad that correspond to the last two pitches of the voice line in mm. 10-11. Thus, considering the instrumental parts, the
upper part of the large-scale compound melody in the fragment does not move at all (E-flat+E-natural [mm. 1-3] – E-flat+E-natural [mm. 7-8] – E+D# [mm. 10-11]).

No. 8 “Nakedness”

This fragment marks an exact middle of the cycle by its position as No. 8. It is also the shortest fragment of Scenes. The bare soprano line of this seventeen-note fragment is an iconic representation of the main semantic element of Dalos’s poem, that of the naked soul. Here Kurtág creates a melodic line, extremely short and transparent, which, nevertheless, possesses several structural layers. In “Nakedness” the composer succeeds in combining two driving musical forces of Scenes that originated in the first fragment “Come.” Namely, Kurtág blends non-tonal chromaticism with melodic and harmonic perfect fifths in a single seventeen-note line. The two dominating structural factors in No. 8 are implied polyphony in the form of a compound melody, and saturation of X- and Y-sets.

There are two phrases in this fragment (shown in Example 3.24, below) with ten and seven pitches, respectively. In the first phrase there is no pitch repetition; the second phrase draws its pitch-class content from the first phrase. Therefore, the voice line may be considered a ten-pitch series with an abbreviated variation. Also, it is structured as a compound melody with two simultaneous chromatic descents at the fifth. As seen in Example 3.24, the C4 in the second phrase does not fit the prescribed pattern. Melodic fifths dominate the second phrase, while the first phrase begins and ends with empty fifths, but includes three softer minor sixths in the middle. The first minor sixth coincides
with the word “dushu” (“soul”) of the text (F#4-D5 in m.1). Thus, the softness of this interval may be associated with the heroine’s inner self.

Example 3.24: No. 8. The two levels of the compound melody

There are several features in “Nakedness,” which emphasize its special role in the cycle. Occupying the middle position in Scenes, it also relates to the first and the last fragments of the cycle. Just like “Come” and “Epilogue,” “Nakedness” is saturated with X- and Y-sets. As Example 3.25 below demonstrates, there is a very clear segmentation according to the use of the each of the two set-classes, corresponding to the division into two phrases. We find X-sets exclusively in the first phrase; conversely, there are Y-sets only in the second phrase.
Example 3.25: No. 8. The X-set/Y-set saturation

Links to No. 1 also include the totally chromatic melody emphasizing E-flat5. The two chromatically descending contrapuntal lines, implied by the compound melody, relate “Nakedness” to No. 15 with its perpetual chromatic descent. All three fragments feature the prominent fifths motion. The connections between these create the superstructure of the cycle.

To summarize, as viewed on a large-scale, Scenes has a three-layered organization. On one hand, the cycle is structured as a system of interconnecting circles, similar to a web. On the other hand, there is the 2-15 circle coinciding with the poetic 2-15 circle discussed in Chapter 2, framed by the fragments with the same text, and with No. 1, “Come,” functioning as an introduction. Finally, a structural correspondence between Nos. 1, 8, and 15 form a basic and strong framework for the cycle.
CHAPTER 4

SCENES FROM A NOVEL AS A MUSICO-POETIC CYCLE

Introduction

Discussing four different competing models for song analysis, Kofi Agawu lists one in which a song is explained as “a confluence of three independent but overlapping systems.” According to this approach, text and music together constitute a song, but at the same time they “retain a degree of autonomy…Song retains an ultimate identity that is not reducible to word influence or musical influence…” And though Agawu himself criticizes this approach as one avoiding the difficult question of the actual identity of a song, he makes an important point. A song -- or in our case, a musical fragment -- is a complex entity, which may or may not be explained in terms of its musical and poetic constituents. Rather, each individual musico-poetic phenomenon offers its own conditions for the relationship between music and poetry, as will be demonstrated through the final step of my analysis of Scenes: the musico-poetic analysis.

As Kurtág’s listeners, we experience words sung by the soprano in each of the fifteen fragments of the cycle as part of the music, or as the text for a musical fragment, but not necessarily as a poem. In a sense, a poem loses some of its structural/semantic

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1 Agawu 1992, 7.

2 Ibid.
qualities in the process of becoming a text for a musical fragment; at the same time, it adopts some new structural/semantic features by association with its musical counterpart. A fascinating and complex subject, the transformation of a poem into a text for a musical fragment (or song) is beyond the focus of this dissertation. However, I am compelled to mention one elegant and in-depth account: David Lewin’s analysis of Schubert’s “Auf dem Flusse” from *Die Winterreise*.³

In his examination of this *Lied*, Lewin cites Josef von Sp aun, author of an 1829 Shubert eulogy: “Whatever filled the poet’s breast Schubert faithfully represented and transfigured in each of his songs, as none has done before him. Every one of his song compositions is in reality a poem on the poem he set to music.”⁴ Lewin elaborates: “The world of the song, then, is not simply a musical world. On the other hand, it is also not simply the textual world translated into music... So, if we have as text a poem on X, we should not consider the song to be another, related poem on X. Rather, the song should be considered a poem on a poem-on-X.”⁵ Thus, by association, *Scenes* may be viewed as a vocal cycle, comprising the music and text, which together represent what we can call Kurtág’s poems written to Dalos’s poems.⁶

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³ Lewin 1982.
⁴ Ibid., 48.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ For further discussion of the transformation of a poem into a song, see Ashby 1998 (considers the implications of having an “additional” [191], poetic level of meaning in Berg’s *Altenberg-Lieder*, placing music-narrative aspect of the composition first), Cone 1992 (focuses on the issue of the poetic “persona’s” identity in a song), Cronin 1992 (discusses different views on the poem-music relationship, but states that “there are no determinate meanings in the fusing of music and poetry” [16]), Frith 1996 (suggests that there is a combination of three aspects of songs as texts in popular music: the independent semantics of words, words as rhetoric, and spoken or sung words as signs of personality [159]).
Kurtág’s work with Dalos’s poetry cannot be described in terms of any fixed method or manner. Rather, he considers each poem as an individual poetic entity with an idiosyncratic means of organization. Kurtág’s approaches differ depending on his interpretation of the structural/semantic design of a particular poem, ranging from the word-painting in Nos. 1, 6, and 14 to the expression of the poem’s subtext in Nos. 9 and 11. In his musical reading of some of Dalos’s texts, the composer follows their structural/semantic premises – as in Nos. 1, 3, 5, 10, and 12, -- but never passively. Kurtág magnifies what for him is a semantic center of the poem, either by exaggerating it through both stylistic and structural means (Nos. 5, 7 and 10), or representing it iconically (Nos. 1 and 14). In No. 8 the composer reinterprets the semantics of Dalos’s text using musical structure, in No. 13 he creates a musical analogy to the poem’s idiosyncratic construction, in No. 9 -- a musical framework for the poem, foregrounding the ambiguity of the text. In fragments Nos. 4 and 11 Kurtág emphasizes the tension between their semantic fields, in No. 14 he unites its two semantic fields. In his interpretation of Dalos’s poem used in both Nos. 2 and 15 the composer shifts the poem’s semantic focus from one part of the text to another according to the fragment’s function in the overall design of Scenes.

Indeed, the large-scale aspect of the cycle adds an extra layer of meaning to each of fourteen Dalos’s poems, and to Kurtág’s interpretation of them. Musico-poetic analysis allows for the detailed account of the most fascinating, subtle links between the fragments, which either highlight, or enhance the textual semantics, or suggest a new reading of it.
In this chapter, I will consider the first fragment, “Come,” separately from the rest of the cycle, further pursuing my conviction that No. 1 functions as the epigraph to the 2-15 circle both musically and poetically. In my musico-poetic analysis of all other fragments, I will use the multi-circular, spider-web representation of the large-scale musical structure of the cycle, discussed in Chapter 3, as the starting point. It will give us the opportunity to see instantly how much or how little the musical and poetic structures relate to each other in each fragment, and in each of the five musical circles of Scenes (the X-set/Y-set, chromatic, wedge, polyphonic, and intertextual circles). Most importantly, we will be able to understand the large- and the small-scale semantic consequences of the equivalence or non-equivalence of the musical and poetic structures.

No. 1 “Come”

In “Come,” Kurtág comments on Dalos’s text by presenting us with its semantic synopsis in his own “poem,” where the text is also the music, and by foregrounding what may be considered the semantic essence of Dalos’s text as a poem.

As my poetic analysis of “Come” in Chapter 1 shows, there are two participants in the story told by Dalos, the “I” and the “frostiness” of the “you.” The binary oppositions created by different poetic structural formations (division of the poem into two parts, two cases of the two phonologically related symmetrical pairs, two different meters used, and finally, two participants in the story) is realized in the music, first of all, by having only two participants present in the fragment -- the soprano and the violin. I have mentioned earlier that on the larger scale, considering the function of “Come” as epigraph 2 to the 2-15 circle, the soprano and the violin may also be viewed as a
symbolic representation of the two main conflicts in *Scenes*. The first is a conflict between the “I” and the “you,” with the latter existing only through emotions of the “I” and in the image of frostiness. The second conflict exists within the heroine’s inner self: she knows before the fact the impossibility and the fruitlessness of reaching out to him, but is unable not to try.

Considering the musical counterpart of “Come,” it does not seem inappropriate to identify the chromatic disjunct soprano line with the voice of the “I,” and the cold-empty dyads of the violin with the “you.” But, unlike in Dalos’s poem, the semantic focus here shifts from the “I” and the illusive concept of the “you” to the idea of frostiness. Cold and empty sounding open fifths of the violin, which may be identified with the second person in Dalos’s story, dominate the musical fabric of the fragment. The image of frostiness is invoked and carried out by their constant presence; all perfect fifths occurring in the violin part are open-string fifths. The fifths not only dominate the violin part, but also appear melodically in the voice line. This leads to the extreme X-set/Y-set saturation in the vertical and horizontal dimensions, discussed earlier. The sense of overall stasis originates in the similarity between all harmonic sonorities in the fragment, and in the consistent recurrence of D#E-flat in the voice as a reference point. These factors and, most importantly, the major role of the open-string fifths in the dramaturgy of the fragment, point to the following inference.

There is no “I” present in Kurtág’s interpretation of the poem. There is only an overpowering sense of chill, coming from what constitutes the “you.” His reading of Dalos’s poem differs in a fundamental way from the semantics inherent in the text itself.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Kurtág’s careful and sensitive treatment of Dalos’s text in No. 1 has been partially discussed in Chapter 3.
In the text, the “you” is an *idée fixe*, the unreality of the heroine’s life. In the course of the poem she progresses from trying to be closer to the beloved to the realization of the uselessness of her effort. The frostiness of the “you,” proclaimed by the heroine in the third line of the poem, is its critical point. It takes the heroine back to the reality of her loneliness, and destroys a reader’s expectation of some kind of interaction between the “I” and the “you.”

In “Come” as a musico-poetic entity, the soprano carries Dalos’s story, whereas simultaneously the violin tells us a different story, a story without the words, and without the “I.” Since poetry is a diachronic phenomenon, but music is capable of being both diachronic and synchronic structurally, in Kurtág’s setting we hear his *synopsis* of Dalos’s story starting with m.1. As the result, there is a certain conflict between the text as part of the music, and the text as a poem. Two stories, one unfolded linearly (Dalos’s), and another asserted instantly (Kurtág’s), coexist, as shown in Figure 4.1, below. In “Come” the beginning and the end of the story coincide. Thus, No. 1, a musical epigraph to the 2-15 circle, may be considered a circle itself.
The chromatic circle

In Chapter 3 I consider as one group those fragments that make up the chromatic and the wedge circles, since these two musically overlap. This chapter follows the design of Chapter 3; however, a semantic distinction between the two circles is unavoidable. In my musico-poetic analysis, it is significant whether or not the chromatic motion relates to the wedging. Indeed, the very idea of chromatic wedging implies chromatic motion. Still, in Scenes there is a semantic distinction to be made between the pitch space-expansion as the result of the wedging, characteristic for each member of the wedge circle, and chromatic motion per se, predominantly descending, present explicitly or implicitly in the members of the chromatic circle.

As musico-poetic analysis of the chromatic circle will demonstrate, Kurtág links its six constituents by correlating the semantic field of “distancing, separation” (expressed by the interval enlargement, related or non-related to the wedging) and that of “lamenting.”
No. 2 “From meeting to parting” (a desperate lament)

Expansion and contraction of the musical space and pitch-class repetition, resulting in effect of overall stasis, are the main characteristics of Kurtág’s musical interpretation of Dalos’s poem. Whereas the rocking melodic motion in the soprano part is the most direct execution of the poem’s parallel grammatical construction “ot-do” (“from-to”), the idea of stasis, just like idea of frostiness in “Come,” is the essence of this Kurtág’s poem on Dalos’s poem.⁸

As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, in “From meeting to parting” the wedge-out-from-G arises from the chromatic alternating ascending and descending motion in the voice part, gradually expanding the intervalic space between pitches. The chromaticism allows for the constant return to the starting point, to the wedge center G4; a gradual intervalic enlargement produces a sense of the expanding open space between the two points. These two processes take place simultaneously and contradict each other’s objective. Still, Kurtág reinforces this tension by having a multi-registered G ostinato in the instrumental parts throughout the fragment, except for mm. 10-11 and 14-15. The constant presence of G makes this pitch-class the center of the fragment’s musical universe and emphasizes the idea of stasis, which may be thought of as the idea of the constant present, where there is no past and no future.

The composer divides the fragment into two sections according to the metrical structure of the text. The first section (mm. 1-13) comprises the instrumental ostinati and the wedging in the voice part, corresponding to the first four lines of the poem, written in dol’nik. There is a gradual increase of intervalic space with each consecutive noun of the

⁸ See discussion of this fragment in Chapters 1 and 3.
first four lines of the text, “vstrechi” (“meeting”), “rasstavaniia” (“parting”), “proshchaniia” (“leave-taking”), and “ozhidaniia” (“awaiting”), respectively. As a result, we associate “meeting” with the shortest time, and “awaiting” with the longest, which graphically may be illustrated thus (Figure 4.2):

![Diagram](image)

Figure 4.2: No. 2. The relation of the wedging to the semantics of the noun-sequence in the poem

Whereas the three words of the poem of the semantic filed “being apart,” “rasstavaniia” (“parting”), “proshchaniia” (“leave-taking”) and “ozhidaniia” (“awaiting”), are tied together by their alliteration and their length, they contrast with the only word of the semantic field “togetherness,” namely, “vstrechi” (“meeting”). Still, Kúrtág combines all four nouns into one distance-building series. Semantically, each event, or non-event (as in the case with the “awaiting”), contributes to the increase in distance between the “I” and the “you.”
The second section (mm. 14-23) corresponds to the last, iambic line of the text, "proleg my babii vek" ("that was my woman’s lot"). The voice changes its contour from rocking motion to a descent. Thus, the composer emphasizes the metrical and semantic significance of the text in the last line. Here the poet uses the past tense, as if the heroine looks at herself from a distance. The descending soprano part, carrying the text, conforms to the "end of the story" tone of the last line: the story ends, the woman’s life is over. However, the G ostinati in the instrumental parts, and the prominent role of the G4 in the structure of the voice line, which begins and ends with this pitch, suggest to us a different version of the story. In Kurtág’s “poem,” there is a definite present tense filled with something that may be interpreted as the heroine’s idee fixe, the idea of the “you.” Kurtág’s subtitle for the fragment, “plach’ otchajania” (“a desperate lament”), conforms to this interpretation.

As I mentioned in the musical analysis of this fragment, a case of Kurtág’s word-painting, where pitch-class E that was “missing” from the wedge finally occurs in the voice part on the word “ozhidania” (“awaiting”), is quite fascinating. There is another interesting structural correlation between the music and the text. Similar pitch-class constructions in mm. 11-13 and 15-17, discussed in Chapter 3 (see Figure 3.4 above), relate the fourth line of the poem “do ozhidania” (“to awaiting”) to the last line of the poem “proleg moi babii vek” (“that was my woman’s lot”). Also, as shown in Example 4.1, below, the third line, “ot proshchania” (“from leave-taking”) (mm. 9-11) is connected to the phraseological unit “babii vek” (“woman’s lot”) (mm. 16-17) by its pitch-content. The words of the semantic field “being apart” are linked to the last line.
“that was my woman’s lot,” and are once again separated from the word “vstrecha” (“meeting”), representing the idea of togetherness.

In Dalos’s poem the heroine talks about her life in the past tense, leaving uncertainty about what her present life is like. In his setting, Kurtág offers the answer to this question. Any togetherness of the “I” and the “you” is over, but the protagonist’s feelings toward the beloved are as overpowering as ever.

Example 4.1: No. 2. The pitch-correspondence between the two semantic fields

No. 3 “Supplication”

In this setting, Kurtág follows the structural/semantic premises of Dalos’s poem. He fully realizes the poem’s semantic tension between the idea of praying and the idea of the strong, “sinful” love for someone who perhaps does not deserve it.
Kurtág achieves an effect of multi-voiced praying by employing a double canon in this fragment. The soprano/cimbalom canonic pair is based on the descending 2-3 pitch chromatic cell, which, however, gradually ascends registrrally in the voice part in the first part of the fragment. This produces the impression of human speech constantly breaking off. The second voice (the cimbalom) slowly and monotonously echoes the first three-note motive of the soprano corresponding to the word “prostitue” (“forgive”). The second canon, involving the violin and the double bass, with their delimited slow glissandi in contrary motion, contributes to this humming or crying effect, which is a characteristic sound in a Russian Orthodox Church.

Kurtág incorporates the words/concepts of woman, love, and soul into one semantic group, associating it with something bigger, longer, and higher than the idea of praying, through the following musical means. The chromatic descending motion in the soprano part ceases on the word “zhenskuiu” (“woman’s”). The three pitches corresponding to this word (D5-F5-C#5) are the highest and the longest in the first part of the fragment. This new three-note motive, referred to in Chapter 3 as “+3, -4,” is imitated in the second part of No. 3 on the words “poliubila ia” (“I so loved”) and “dushoiu” (“with a soul”). In the latter, the “+3, -4” motive expands intervalically to the “+4, -5” form, thus continuing the interval expansion in the fragment. The word “poliubila” is the first word more than three syllables in length that Kurtág does not break into smaller units (the 5-syllable word “miloserdnye” [“merciful ones”] in the beginning of the fragment is divided into three musical units).

The composer emphasizes a complexity and a peculiarity of Dalos’s concept of a person with the soul of a holy fool. He joins the two words constituting the
phraseological unit “dushoiu iurodivogo” (“soul” and “holy fool,” respectively) into one musical phrase, but separates them structurally/semantically on a deeper level. The voice line and its skips, corresponding to the last line of the poem “dushoiu iurodivogo,” lack the sense of submissiveness characteristic of the beginning of the fragment. The largest leaps and highest pitch in the soprano part, B-flat5, correspond to the word “iurodivogo” (“holy fool”). Kurtág’s interpretation of this word is especially remarkable. First of all, the canon has ended between the soprano and the cimbalom, which now sound in unison. Second, the melodic line here lacks the apparent descending chromatic motion featured in the first part, but may be viewed as a compound melody consisting of two chromatic descents (see discussion in Chapter 3). In analysis of the poem in Chapter 1, I discussed two possible scansions of the word “iurodivogo,” with the stress either on the second or third syllable. Kurtág’s musical realization suggests a neutral metrical interpretation of the word, with the stress on either of the two syllables.

To summarize, the music in No. 3 parallels the sense of the protagonist’s growing emotional strength, as found in the text, by a gradually rising melody and by intervallic enlargement. The composer demonstrates an equivocal interpretation of the phraseological unit “dushoiu iurodivogo” by splitting the two words on one layer of structure while uniting them on another, and by creating a hidden descending chromaticism in the voice and the cimbalom parts at the word “iurodivogo,” thereby rightfully relating this word back to the beginning, to the fragment’s main semantic field of “praying.” Thus he realizes the lexical/semantic paradox inherent in Dalos’s poem explicitly and implicitly.
No. 4 “Allow me”

The obvious structural connections of this fragment with Nos. 2 and 3, considered in Chapter 3, result in strong semantic links. In “Allow me,” however, the coexistence of the idea of pleading (the heroine’s pleading for forgiveness in No. 3; her pleading for love in No. 4) and the semantics of pitch-separation process (wedging) produces tension.

Here the idea of pleading, inherent in the poem, is linked to the notion of anxiousness. As in the two previous fragments, Kurtág divides No. 4 into two sections, thus reflecting the bipartite phonological construction of the poem. The first section corresponds to the first two lines of the text, and the second section to the third and last line. Similar to No. 3, the melodic line in the first section of “Allow me” features short chromatic motives, gradually rising through register, but there is a difference with the previous fragment in that the contour within each of the chromatic motives in No. 4 mostly ascends. The escalation of the heroine’s emotion, reflected in the text by lengthening of each of the three consecutive lines, is mimicked in the setting through a wedging-out-from-G. At the same time, the interval enlargement, progressing from minor seconds in the beginning up to the minor ninth in mm. 7-8 on the word “rastvorit’sia” (“to dissolve”), carries an equivocal meaning.

Going back to No. 2, where a wedging-out-from-G symbolizes the expansion of the distance (in time or in space) between the two people, with their short meeting incommensurate with the heroine’s unbounded awaiting, it might be said that Kurtág follows the premises of the text. Conversely, in “Allow me,” the semantics of the space-expansion contradicts not only the idea of pleading, intrinsic in the first line of the text, but also the lexical level of the poem’s structure, the concept of lessening, innate in the
word-sequence “rasplavit'sia, rastvorit'sia” (“to melt, to dissolve”). Pleading makes the protagonist seems small, diminished, yet, the music is expanding. Likewise, the images of melting and dissolving both contradict melodic expansion. This semantic tension (represented graphically in Figure 4.3) is the realization of the conflict within the text itself, the conflict between the strength of the heroine’s passion and the idea of pleading. In this fragment Kurtág intensifies Dalos’s words by contradicting them.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.3: No. 4. The conflict between the semantics of wedging and idea of pleading**

No. 11 “Again”

In his musical reading of this poem, Kurtág combines persistent wedging-out and attempts at wedging-into with obfuscated descending chromatic motion. If the semantics of wedging-out and wedging-into may be interpreted in the context of Dalos’s text, then the chromatic descent represents the poem’s subtext. Also, both wedging and the chromatic descent here reflect the large-scale semantics of the chromatic circle, which will be discussed below.
Unlike the previous fragments with wedging, “Again” contains both space-expanding wedges and space-contracting wedges, with the former prevailing over the latter. All instrumental phrases in No. 11 are very short, sometimes no more than four thirty-second notes in length, separated by what can be considered breath marks. Kurtág associates wedging, which persists in the instrumental parts, with the image of something disjointed and broken off.

Conversely, the voice part, written in much longer note values and only partially structured as a wedge-out from the center B4-C4 has only one pause or breath mark, occurring before the last word “poslezavtra” (“the day after tomorrow”). The wedging-out in the soprano line is momentary and disguised, but still, there is a continuing enlargement of the interval space throughout the fragment, -- from the minor seconds at the beginning to the four minor ninths in the row at the end, corresponding to the word “poslezavtra.”

The voice part matches the feeling of long, perhaps endless waiting that comes from the semantics of the poem. It is supported by the sequence of the “long” vowels in its sound content and the metrical-rhythmic pattern in the second line of the text (see discussion in Chapter 1). The broken-off instrumental wedges convey a sense of apprehension, thus creating a semantic counterpoint to the ideas of lengthening and distancing. The tension that arises in the music from the interaction between these two semantic fields is not found in the text. It seems that the composer goes for the subtext, rather than explicit textual semantics, accentuating what for him is a central meaning of the poem.
Kurtág’s title “Snova” (“Again”) is meaningful. In the poem, Dalos does not foreground it by any means. However, the composer sees repetitiveness, innate in its meaning, as a key element in Dalos’s story. The gradual pitch-separation that is characteristic of the voice line may be interpreted as an inevitable semantic outcome of the multiple attempts of getting closer and breaking apart, expressed by the content of the instrumental parts.

Kurtág’s setting of the word “poslezavtra” (“the day after tomorrow”) is also notable. Consisting of five pitches, the voice line here stretches over a two-octave range. The cimbalom and the violin, finally, burst in with the three long chromatic passages in contrary motion, the last one stretching over five octaves. Conforming to the lexicosemantic design of the poem, “the day after tomorrow” in Kurtág’s setting reads as something absolutely out of reach. At the same time, unlike in the text, the composer explicitly suggests a “prehistory” to Dalos’s story in the instrumental parts of his setting.

No. 14 “True story”

The coexistence of two contrasting semantic fields, those of “separation” and “pleading,” characteristic for No. 3 “Supplication” and No. 4 “Allow me,” finds it large-scale climax and resolution in No. 14 “True story.”

Formally, Kurtág divides “True story” into two parts, corresponding to the two “lesenki” (“step-ladders”) of the poem’s graphic level of structure (see poetic analysis in Chapter 1). Considering the lexicosemantic content of the first “lesenka” (“The love conceived amid the haste of spring is dying”), it might be said that in the first part of Kurtág’s “True story” the heroine mourns the death of her love. There is a strict three-
part canon on the predominantly descending motive, which itself is the imperfect wedge-out-from-A4. The double bass, violin, and soprano canonically repeat this motive over and over throughout the first part, at a dynamic *forte*, creating the effect of a choral wail, or impassioned lament. The cimbalom with its nervous ostinato on the wedge center A4 contributes to the overall feeling of desperation. By forging correspondence between descending chromatic motion and notions of pleading (Nos. 3 and 4) and mourning (No. 14), the composer therefore relates these fragments (Figure 4.4).

\[ 
\begin{align*}
\text{forgive me} \\
(\text{No. 3}) \\
\text{love is dying} \\
(\text{No. 14}) \\
\text{allow me} \\
(\text{No. 4})
\end{align*}
\]

Figure 4.4: The semantic correspondence between Nos. 3, 4, and 14

Kurtág's choral lament connotes the genre of the Russian village lament, which, according to Margarita Mazo, “is a symbolic component of village funerals, weddings, and other rituals. Lament is also a conventional means by which a village woman expresses personal grief and sorrow on non-ritual occasions in everyday life.”\(^9\) There are several types and subtypes recognized within this genre, and the choral lament is among them. The main features of the Russian lament include “a gliding pitch contour, glissandi,

vocalized breathing.”¹⁰ Also, there is repetition of the same melodic pattern with or without any variance. Lamenting in the first part of No. 14 is based on the recurrence of the same melodic cell, descending and mostly chromatic, which may easily be compared to a glissando. The frequent “breathing” in the instrumental parts is, in a sense, also “vocalized.” Example 4.2 below demonstrates the similarities between Kurtág’s choral lament in “True story” and Stravinsky’s use of lament in Svadebka (Les Noces), where he recreates the Russian village wedding ritual¹¹. The correspondence includes the beginning A4-B-flat4 melodic cell, the repetition of this cell numerous times, and the canonic structure.¹²

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¹⁰ Mazo 1990, 126.

¹¹ The excerpt from Les Noces is borrowed from Mazo 1990, 129 and used with permission of the author.

¹² Nevskaia 1996 maintains that a repetition as the means of the organization of the folk text is especially evident in Russian village laments.
Kurtág, Scenes, No. 14

Les Noces, scene 3 at rehearsal 82

Stravinsky, Les Noces

Example 4.2: No. 14. The links to the Russian lament from Les Noces
The character of the fragment's second part is entirely different. It is a picture of “your garden” with the growing “grass of oblivion.” This is the world of the beloved: the world of coldness and separation, reflected musically by widely spaced intervals and “dreamy” instrumental techniques (see discussion in Chapter 3). If the expansion of the intervallic space in the first part is rather obscure, then in the second half it is explicit and definitive. Still, the two parts of “True story” bear some underlying similarities.

The descending chromatic motion, associated with mourning in the first part, remains constant in the second half of the fragment, where it produces the clash of the two semantic fields. The first line of the second “lesenka” (“A u tebia v sadu” [“but in your garden”]) and the last line of the poem (“zabveniia” [“oblivion”]) correspond to the descending chromatic motion in the voice part, E-flat-D-C# (mm. 8-10) and B-flat-A-G# (mm. 14-16), respectively. At the same time, the cimbalom, violin, and double bass continue imitating the two-three pitch chromatic figure that originates in the first part of the fragment (the first “lesenka” in the poem), and are therefore linked to the first part explicitly.

To summarize, mourning is the main theme and semantic focus of “True story.” By having a two-layered musical texture in the second half, Kurtág is able to paint a picture of the beloved as if through the protagonist’s eyes. Significantly, in his “choral” lament (the canon in the first part) the composer emphasizes metrically and rhythmically those syllables containing the vowel “a” in the words “umirat” (“is dying”) and “zachataia” (“conceived”). Kurtág’s choice of this vowel as the “wailing” sound unites the polar concepts of death and conception. The heroine mourns not only the end of her love, but also its beginning.
No. 15 “Epilogue” (a dispirited lament)

The last fragment of Scenes is a logical continuation of “True story.” If in No. 14 the heroine mourns the death of her love, in “Epilogue” she buries it. The descending chromatic line, which is present implicitly and explicitly in “True story,” symbolizes the loss of something (the love) or somebody (the beloved). In No. 15 there is a single, uninterrupted chromatic descent, suggesting an unequivocal interpretation of the fragment.

It is important to understand why Kurtág chose Dalòs’s poem “From meeting to parting” as the main large-scale structural factor, using it as the text for both Nos. 2 and 15, and thus constructing an arch. The poem tells the story of a woman’s life through her own eyes. In No. 2, the composer concentrates on the events or non-events of the heroine’s life, “from meeting to parting,” and “from leave-taking to awaiting,” and uses the wedge-construction to represent the semantics of the growing distance between the two people. Conversely, in “Epilogue” Kurtág emphasizes the idea of the end of a woman’s life, corresponding to the last line of the text, “proleg moi babii vek” (“that was my woman’s lot”). This time, all the other words, so important in the second fragment, are combined into one downward stream. (However, the composer still remains very sensitive to the poetic structure, foregrounding through rhythm, meter, and pitch the alliteration between the words “proshchaniia” [“leave-taking”] and “ozhidania” [“awaiting”]).

The clear metrical, rhythmic, grammatical, and lexico-semantic division between Dalòs’s first four lines (the “from-to” model) and the last gave the composer an opportunity to create two settings of the same text. In a sense, he splits the poem into two
parts (four lines plus one), even though formally he uses the full text both times. Indeed, in its five lines, the poem tells the whole story of Scenes, and by dividing the poem semantically, Kurtág was able to use it as the cycle's framework. In “Epilogue” we find ourselves in a very different time frame than in No. 2, where there is a sense of the constant present tense, with no past and no future (see discussion of No. 2 above). The perpetual descending chromatic line in No. 15 amalgamates the words of the two opposite semantic fields, those of “togetherness” and “being apart.” Now, unlike in No. 2, we perceive them as one semantic group, that of the heroine’s “past.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. 2</th>
<th>No. 3</th>
<th>No. 4</th>
<th>No. 11</th>
<th>No. 14</th>
<th>No. 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From meeting to parting (a desperate lament)</td>
<td>Supplication</td>
<td>Allow me</td>
<td>Again</td>
<td>True story</td>
<td>Epilogue (a dispirited lament)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pleading for forgiveness</td>
<td>pleading for love</td>
<td>“desperate” wedging</td>
<td>“desperate” lamenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.5: The semantic design of the chromatic circle

As seen in Figure 4.5, Kurtág subtitles No. 15 “plach unyniaia” (“a dispirited lament”), as opposed to “plach otchaiania” (“a desperate lament”) in No. 2. The fact that he uses the subtitle “a desperate lament” for No. 2 (“From meeting to parting”) rather than for No. 14 (“True story”) is significant. Indeed, by doing so the composer emphasizes the textual arch between the second and the fifteenth fragments and, most importantly, the difference between his two readings of Dalos’s text. Still, as I have shown above, by its musical and semantic context, “True story” is the real “desperate lament.” The semantic fields of pleading and lamenting are found in fragments other than
Nos. 2 and 15 -- namely, in Nos. 3, 4, and 14. But, Kurtág unites Nos. 2 and 15 with the other members of the chromatic circle by giving the subtitle “a desperate lament” to the “wrong” fragment and connecting it to “a dispirited lament,” No. 15. Also, he suggests a different interpretation of the wedge-building rocking motion in the second fragment, where the process of separation is associated with lamenting.

Consequently, the association of No. 11 with No. 2 may enhance our semantic interpretation of the former. The short, nervous instrumental attempts at wedging-out and wedging-into in “Again” could be considered a musical realization of the “from-to” model from No. 2 and might be related to the heroine’s desperation. Thus, the apprehension expressed in the music of No. 11 links this fragment to the “desperate” fragments (Nos. 2 and 14). The subtextual descending chromaticism in the second part of “Again” relates it to the “dispirited” “Epilogue.” The connection of the “desperate and lamenting” No. 14 to the “pleading” fragments (Nos. 2 and 3) completes large-scale semantic design of the chromatic circle (as shown in Figure 4.5, above).

The wedge circle

In the context of Scenes the wedging may be thought of, first of all, as the representation of growing distance (in time, in space) between the heroine and the beloved. Secondly, in each particular case, wedging may have some additional structural/semantic functions. Thus, in No. 2 “From meeting to parting” a wedging-out-from-G puts an emphasis on the semantic field of “being apart.” In No. 13 “Visit” two chromatic and one fifths-wedge create a background for the soprano within the semantic fields “cold, empty” and “from inside – to distant,” where only the former is explicit in
the poem. Likewise, in No. 11 “Again” the wedging represents not only the poet’s explicitly expressed semantics of time-distance and circularity (periodicity) of the “awaiting,” but also the protagonist’s own apprehension as the result of all the above, which is Kurtágh’s own semantic inference. In No. 4 (“Allow me”) a wedging-out-from-G corresponds to the heroine’s emotional escalation, as implied by the text, but also produces tension with its lexico-semantic aspect (the idea of the “lessening”). In No. 12 (“Infinite sequence of Sundays”) wedging uncovers the subtextual layer of the fragment’s structural/semantic construction, bringing together two semantic fields and producing the resulting third one (see discussion of No. 12 below). Finally, in No. 14 “True story” the incomplete wedging is a by-product of other structural/semantic processes.

**The wedge circle members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. 2</th>
<th>No. 4</th>
<th>No. 11</th>
<th>No. 12</th>
<th>No. 13</th>
<th>No. 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From meeting to parting</td>
<td>Allow me</td>
<td>Again</td>
<td>Sundays</td>
<td>Visit</td>
<td>True story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Wedging produces pleading/separation tension
- Wedging is entirely subtextual
- Wedging reflects both Dalos’s semantics and Kurtág’s subtext
- Wedging is a by-product of other structural/semantic processes
- Wedging emphasizes “awaiting”
- Wedging offers subtext related to the large-scale structure of the cycle

Figure 4.6: Multiple structural/semantic functions of wedging in the wedge circle
Through musico-poetic considerations one discovers many apparent semantic implications of the wedging process. Figure 4.6, above, shows multiple structural/semantic functions of the wedging in all six members of the wedge circle.

No. 13 “Visit”

The most obvious aspect of Dalos’s poem, and one that seems to drive so much of its shape and discourse, is its threefold division; especially its immediately obvious division into three lines, which in turn spawns its semantic threefold division. The musical analysis reveals that the tripartite structural idea is also basic to Kurtág’s setting. At the same time, in “Visit” the composer demonstrates that the music is capable of changing the sequence of processes (poetic or psychological) that happen in linear fashion in a text; in a word, music can be more freely synchronic than a text, which is usually diachronic.

For Kurtág, the three structural layers coexist in time. He overlays two chromatic wedge formations, the “empty” fifths wedge, and quasi-triadic melodic phrases. Semantically, a wedging is about creating space from a lack of space, moving from “inside and close” to “distant,” but here the goal ends up as the starting point. The bare sound of perfect fifths also conveys feelings of space, coldness and emptiness. The three quasi-triadic phrases in the voice part, - in a sense, three attempts to belong somewhere, - are, nevertheless, destined to remain “unreal”: the two perfect fifths in the very beginning of the soprano part define its “empty, illusory” semantic content.

The most fascinating structural connection between the text and the setting’s vocal line is the musical enjambment that Kurtág creates as an analogy to Dalos’s poetic
enjambment, which has been discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Figure 4.7, below, graphically demonstrates the interrelations of the three semantic fields of the poetic and the musical counterparts of “Visit.”

![Diagram of semantic design]

Figure 4.7: No. 13. The comparison of the semantic design of the text and music

According to my interpretation, the three structural/semantic layers in the music of “Visit” correspond to, but are not necessarily equivalent to the poem’s threefold semantic division, where we find a very clear relationship of contrast and affinity between three semantic fields. Using music as his means of expression, Kurtág represents all three semantic layers at one and the same time. Thus, his setting both carries the tripartite formal characteristics of the poem and at the same time demonstrates that the seemingly opposite semantic forces of “cold” and “warm” and “distance” and “closeness” in Dalos’s poem are not necessarily linear phenomena, but rather one simultaneous, complex whole. In that way, perhaps, Kurtág’s setting might be thought of as more representative of the text than the text itself.
No. 12 “Infinite sequence of Sundays” (Perpetuum mobile)

As I have maintained in the analysis of this fragment’s musical structure, No. 12 provides the most apparent and the most direct representation of the poem’s semantics, namely, the idea of endlessness. The music takes Dalos’s idea of continuous sameness much further through various means: the perpetuum mobile character of the fragment, its four-section “episodeless rondo” form, where each section is a sequential transposition of the previous one with the repetition of the full text of the poem, and the main motivic cell of the violin, periodically rising by a half step. Indeed, the lexico-semantic content of the poem implies periodicity, but Kurtág magnifies the image of the passing Sunday, and consequently, each of the next coming Sundays, to the level of the *idée fixe*. The perpetuity of the three-note cell of the violin and the uniformity of the fragment’s four sections produce a sense of accumulating anxiety. It may be interpreted as the heroine’s restless waiting for the next Sunday (in this case Sunday is a good thing), or her despairing realization of how fast time passing (making Sunday not a good thing). Also, taking into consideration the semantics of other fragments in the cycle, on the larger scale the protagonist’s obsessive expressiveness is related to the image of her beloved.

The musico-poetic analysis of the seemingly decorative chromatic passages in Kurtág’s setting offers a deeper and more comprehensive interpretation of Dalos’s text than musical analysis alone. In each of the four sections of the setting composer interjects a chromatic passage on the last word of the poem’s first sentence, “proshlo” (“is over”), (The last chromatic figure is heard without the soprano, after the latter ceases on the second word of the text “opiat’” [“again”] in section A³). The first two chromatic passages put together constitute the wedge-out from C#4; the third chromatic figure is the
wedge-out from the center B-flat-B-natural; the last chromatic passage is the “infinite” ascent, interrupted by the double bar line at the end of the fragment. The probable key to the deeper understanding of the semantics of No. 12 lies in the directionality of these four chromatic passages (Figure 4.8).

![Diagram of illusiveness, infinity, separation, C#4, is over, and B-flat7-B-nat.3]

Chromatic passages: m. 4 m. 10 m. 15 m. 19

Figure 4.8: No. 12. The directionality and the semantics of the four chromatic passages

The word “proshlo” ("is over") is associated with the chromatic descent in m. 4, and with the chromatic ascent in m. 10, both times starting with C#4. “Proshlo” is also associated with the third chromatic figure, presented in contrary motion (m. 15), with the cimbalom and the double bass first merging and then moving apart in opposite directions. The last, ascending chromatic passage (m. 19) stresses the semantics of the “infinite sequence” by being sequential to the three previous chromatic figures, and by its openness (in the sense of endlessness). I interpret the descending direction of the first chromatic figure as the confirmation of the cessation of something (“another Sunday,” or
maybe, on a larger scale, the heroine’s love). The upward direction of the second and the fourth chromatic passages may be interpreted as the illusiveness, non-materiality of what is left after “another Sunday is over.” The bi-directional wedging of the third chromatic figure bridges these two semantic fields, and introduces a resulting semantic field of “separation.” The last, endless chromatic figure contradicts semantically the idea of termination, carried by the word “over.” This time, the chromatic passage occurs without the text, underscoring the main idea of Dalos’s poem, the notion of life’s cyclic periodicity.

The intertextual circle

As a whole, the intertextual circle contributes to the overall semantic design of Scenes through the amalgamation of the notions of perpetuity, lamenting, obsession, self-blame, and self-irony. In other words, the intertextual circle manifests the heroine’s “self,” her conscience and subconscious. Unlike in the chromatic and the wedge circles, where we find the footprints of the beloved in the notions of emptiness, coldness, and separation, here we are immersed in the protagonist’s inner world exclusively and entirely.

As I have maintained in Chapter 3, it is virtually impossible to analyze the fragments-members of the intertextual circle without discussing music-text relationships, since these fragments are semantically loaded (intertextuality presupposes semantic complexity). In that sense, musical analysis of the intertextual fragments is simultaneously musico-poetic analysis. However, in a broader sense, the notion of intertextuality pertains not only to the interior design of this circle, defining the principal
characteristics of its five members, but also to the overall construction of *Scenes*. Since the intertextual circle is the richest semantically in the cycle’s multi-circular network, it plays a crucial role in the large-scale construction of the cycle. The proof of this is found, first of all, in the discernible links between the two members of the intertextual circle, Nos. 7 and 12, and the member of the chromatic/wedge circles, No. 14.

No. 7 “Rondo,” No. 12 “Infinite sequence of Sundays,” and No. 14 “True story”

On one hand, the last section of No. 14 “True story,” the instrumental coda, combines the structural/semantic elements of the first two sections: chromatic lamenting, ostinato, and glissandi. On other hand, in the coda these characteristic features are transformed on a very subtle level, giving way to a new interpretation of the fragment.

As seen in Example 4.3, below, demonstrating the connection between Nos. 7 and 14, the cimbalom’s ostinato in the first section of No. 14 is modified in coda into the figure that resembles very much the perpetual higher-registered “govorila”-motive from No. 7 “Rondo” (see discussion of No. 7 and No. 14 in Chapter 3). In “Rondo,” the last “govorila”-motive in the soprano part is notated as D4-D4-E5-D4 pitch sequence; at some point it starts resembling a bird’s cry and lasts for 12 measures (mm. 59-70). Moreover, D4 remains constant in the cimbalom part as an ostinato from m. 81 (section B^1) for forty-two measures up to the end of the fragment. In the coda of No. 14 the cimbalom synthesizes the perpetual D-ostinato and the D5-E-flat6-D5 “govorila”-motive, this time “flattened” by E-flat, which adds a mournful quality to the motive itself.
Example 4.3: The connection between the “govorila”-motive in No. 7 and coda in No. 14

Another element from the coda in No. 14 “True story” ties it to No. 12 “Infinite sequence of Sundays,” as shown in Example 4.4, below. In No. 14 short chromatic motives dominate the violin line in the second section, and in the coda evolve into a melodic gesture that replicates the three-note germinal cell of No. 12. In No. 12, this melodic cell is subjected to contour transformations throughout the fragment, but its intervallic content always remains invariable. In mm. 19-21 of No. 14 we find a similar process taking place in a compressed time frame, involving the same two melodic intervals, a minor second and a minor sixth, in different order and direction.
No. 12, the initial melodic cell

No. 14, coda, mm. 19-21

Example 4.4: The motivic links between Nos. 12 and 14

The motivic interrelationships among fragments of the cycle could be considered as an almost banal compositional method, but the question here is: “What do these intertextual connections signify?” If one accepts a linear approach to the large-scale structure of *Scenes,* as Claudia Stahl does, No. 14 “True story” functions as the “recapitulation” for the work. But there is also a backward-looking connection that should be taken into account, one that enriches our interpretation of the intertextual circle by associating its members with “True story.”

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The link between Nos. 12 and 14 brings to the latter the semantics of perpetuum mobile, central to the structural/semantic design of No. 12, and reflecting the very essence of the large-scale construction of the cycle: the notion of repetitiveness. The semantics of “True story” deepens through its affinity with the “govorila”-motive of No. 7. The instrumental ostinato in the coda of No. 14, related to the image of the beloved, appears not only as the heroine’s idee fixe, but also as the protagonist’s obsessive self-blaming thought as expressed in the mourning-like text of No. 7 “I said: it cannot be, I said: it will pass, I said, I said…” Thus, it might be said that in No. 14 “True story” the “govorila”-motive combines concepts of endlessness and lamentation into the one semantic field of “perpetual lament.” The notion “perpetual lament” is further reinforced in No. 14 by the presence of the three-pitch motivic cell originating in No. 12. These quasi-vocal, broken melodic phrases of the violin sound like a sorrowful echo of the past, and thereby contrast with the forceful non-stop motion in “Sundays.”

The semantics of “True story” is extended and intensified by its links with Nos. 7 and 12. Inversely, through the association with No. 14, both the “govorila”-motive of No. 7 and perpetual three-note cell of No. 12 acquire semantics characteristic of the fragments-members of the chromatic circle (Nos. 3, 4, and 14), where the semantics of lamentation becomes metamorphosed into the semantic field of “perpetual lament.” Hence, for Kurtág, intertextuality is a semantics-building tool, where the diachronic and synchronic perspectives on the cycle are combined (Figure 4.9).
Nos. 7 and 12 are two out of the four total perpetuum mobile fragments of the intertextual circle (Nos. 5, 7, 9, 12). In Nos. 5, 7, and 9 Kurtág combines the notion of endlessness with stylistic cross-references. The core semantic element of these three fragments is the protagonist’s self-irony. No. 10 “Tale” -- the only non-perpetuum mobile fragment among the fragments with some stylistic allusion -- is the apotheosis of this self-ironic sequence. Nos. 5, 7, and 9 occupy the mid-position of the cycle and function as a framework for the most condensed portrait of the heroine in the central fragment of Scenes, No. 8 “Nakedness.” In No. 8, the notion of irony is disguised, and could be revealed only through close musico-poetic analysis (see discussion below).

Another important semantic element in Nos. 5 and 10, closely related to the notion of self-irony, is a sense of exaggerated light-heartedness, even bravura.
No. 5 “Counting-out rhyme,” No. 10 “Tale,” and epigraph 1

Musico-poetic analysis of No. 5 reveals that over the course of this fragment the heroine is trying to humor herself, but her irony becomes as desperate as the realization of her loneliness. For the purposes of analysis, below I am offering both original Dalos’s text with English translation and Kurtág’s version.

Dalos’s text (transliterated):  
Vse vybirala --  
   vse progliadelala.  
I dostalas’ mne liubov’  
   izriadno potrepannaia.

English translation:  
Here and there I picked --  
and missed.  
And I was left  
with this ragged and frayed love.¹⁴

Kurtág’s version:

Vse vybirala –  
   vse progliadela.  
Vse vybirala –  
   vse progliadela.  
vybirala, progliadela,  
progliadela, vybiralala, vse!  

I dostalas’ mne liubov’,  
i dostalas’ mne liubov’  
izriadno potrepannaia.  
progliadela, vybiralala,  
vybiralala, progliadela vse  

In the first section of “Counting-out rhyme” (mm. 1-9) Kurtág repeats the first two lines of the text “Vse vybirala – vse progliadela” (“Here and there I picked and missed”). He then extracts two verbs, “vybirala” (“picked”) and “progliadela” (“missed”), and also repeats them two times, alternating their order (“picked and missed,” “missed and picked”). This time he misplaces the word “vse” at the end of the section, after a pause, thus separating it from the two verbs “missed” and “picked.” As a result,

¹⁴ English translation is mine.
“vse” is perceived as a somewhat autonomous unit. Section A¹ of “Counting-out rhyme” (mm. 16-18) is a contracted version of section A, with only a backward variation of the text (where Kurtág places “vse” at the end of the sentence instead of the beginning). This time the composer plays with the word order again: in comparison with section A, he interchanges the first and the second versions of the two-verb sequence (“missed and picked,” “picked and missed” instead of “picked and missed,” “missed and picked”).

Therefore, regarding the form of section A, we find both a forward and a backward version of the text; in section A¹ there is only a backward order (with “vse” at the end), also presented backward. The context, with the word “vse” occurring at the first section’s end and at the end of the fragment, not only suggests a different interpretation of the word itself, but also offers Kurtág’s subtext to Dalos’s text.

In the context of the poem the word “vse” may be translated as “here and there.” It means precisely the same when it appears in the beginning of the setting, but not at the end of the first section or the end of the fragment, when it appears at the end of the sentence. By itself, without being a part of the phrase, or if separated from the rest of the phrase by a pause, “vse” asserts the meaning “is over,” which indeed carries quite different semantics from the interpretation of the word as “here and there.” On her utterance of the word “vse” at the end of the first section, the soprano intones C5 as a grace note with a downward glissando to D-flat4, which produces an exaggerated, caricature-like effect (m. 9). At the end of the fragment, “vse” corresponds to the grace note C#5 preceding D4, this time without glissando, invoking not a caricature-like image, but rather a bitterly definite closure to the story (m. 17).
In the middle section of the rounded binary form of the fragment, written in the Kamarinskaia style, Kurtág also repeats the phrase “I dostelas’ mne liubov’” (“and I was left with this love”) two times, each time with different articulation -- insolent and lamenting, respectively. He foregrounds the phraseological unit “izriadno potrepannaia” (“ragged and frayed”) in mm. 13-14 by isolating it from the rest of the phrase, and by its rhythmic-metrical characteristics, thus emphasizing its idiosyncratic lexical features (see discussion in Chapter 1). Still, semantically, the scream-like quality of the musical realization of “izriadno potrepannaia” is a climactic point of exaggerated and ironic build-up.

In No. 10, the composer stylistically differentiates its two constituent parts, with the first part, sounding “too solemn,” and the second “too cheerful.” Again, the notion of exaggeration is characteristic of this fragment: the protagonist, in a sense, laughs at her own desire to be seen by the beloved as a “goddess.” The combination of the Gregorian chant (first section) with the Kamarinskaia (second section) is inherently explosive, but in the context of the poem’s semantics it takes on an almost masochistic quality. In Kurtág’s hands, the heroine is not simply looking at herself ironically; rather, she punishes herself for having illusions toward the beloved.

The two stories in Kurtág’s cycle, Nos. 5 and 10, are actually the same story told twice -- in a masquerade-like manner, with the heroine laughing at herself exaggeratedly. In both fragments the composer alludes to children’s folk genres, which is by itself a semantic choice, intensifying the overall self-ironic mood through external means. Most importantly, these “children’s” fragments are semantically linked to the cycle’s silent
epigraph 1, the excerpt from Lermontov’s *A Fairy Tale for Children*. The function of epigraph 1 as the composer’s message has been discussed in Chapter 2. The genre associations of Nos. 5 and 10 serve the similar purpose of disassociating the composer from the dramatic situation. It seems that Kurtág needs to express this disassociation several times across the cycle, after the points where the composer merges with his heroine completely. As seen in Figure 4.10, below, this semantic superstructure of *Scenes* is entirely symmetrical, with the two “tales” placed five fragments before and five fragments after “Counting-out rhyme,” and spread as evenly as possible in the cycle.

![Diagram of semantic connections between epigraph 1, No. 5, and No. 10](image)

**Figure 4.10: Semantic connections between epigraph 1, No. 5, and No. 10**

No. 9 “Hurdy-gurdy waltz”

No. 9 is another instance of the protagonist’s self-ironic outburst, this time highly controlled emotionally: the brilliance of the non-stop waltz masks her deep bitterness and desperation. As I have maintained in Chapter 1, the complexity of the “tramcar poem’s” semantics allows for different, even contrasting readings. Kurtág’s solution here is as simple as it is ingenious. The monotony of the E-flat harmony heard throughout the fragment is enriched by the synthesizing melodic structure (the violin in section A².)
synthesizes the pitch-content of the voice line in sections A and A₁). Together, these two factors create a very clear-cut, integral construction, – unambiguous formal counterpoint contrasting with the poem’s semantic ambiguity.

The soprano melody in section A₁ of “Hurdy-gurdy waltz” is a free inversion of the melody of section A. In A₁, the rhythmical and metrical conditions remain the same, but either melodic contour, or the registration and the order of the pitches, or both, are inverted. This playful reinterpretation of the melody is, in a sense, an iconic representation of the possible plural interpretations of the text. But, whatever the subtext of Dalos’s poem, we are apt to find it for ourselves; in his setting, Kurtág suggests only a framework for our personal inferences.¹⁵

Other than conveying the sense of mechanical, non-stop motion in the framework of a trivial waltz, the music does not really interpret Dalos’s poem. Rather, it creates a repetitive background, which has intertextual connotations considering the overall semantics of the cycle (No. 2/No. 15 textual arch, repetitiveness of the dramatic situation). The up-lifting cheerfulness of the waltz with its superficial positiveness surpasses the bitterly careless Kamarinskaia sections in Nos. 5 and 10 precisely due to its “sophisticated” manner of expression. In both No. 5 “Counting-out rhyme” and No. 10 “Tale” Kurtág’s music functions as an exaggerator of the bravura implied in the heroine’s light-heartedness, which is inherent in Dalos’s text. On the other hand, in No. 9 the

¹⁵ In her conversation with the author (Budapest, 19 March 2000) Dalos admitted that “Hurdy-gurdy waltz” is her favorite setting in the cycle. As I have already mentioned in Chapter 2, she said that Kurtág was able to see the infinity beyond her “tramcar poem,” making its semantics more powerful and its form more complete.
composer takes a step back, in a sense letting the words speak for themselves and enjoying the textual ambiguity as is.

No. 7 “Rondo”

As I discussed in Chapter 3, episodes B (mm. 23-37) and B¹ (mm. 74-89) of this fragment are both waltzes, where the soprano line in B¹ is a variant of the melody in B. In episodes B and B¹ Kurtág uses Dalos’s sections Y and Y¹, respectively, from her overall XYY¹X poetic structure. The intricate phonological and semantic relationships between sections Y and Y¹ in Dalos’s text have already been discussed in Chapter 1, where I suggest that there is a semantic progression from the metaphoric generalization in the Y-section to the more “personal” prosaic summary in Y¹. The variance of the two waltzes in Kurtág’s setting also points to the semantic differences between episodes B and B¹ of the ABA¹B¹A² rondo form.

In episode B the Stravinskian in style instrumental part of the waltz creates a stylistic tension between itself and metaphorical text of the poem’s section Y. In contrast, the soprano’s melodic line, with its broad leaps and spacious contour, fits the text perfectly. Kurtág brings irony into the “obsessive thought (the “govorila”-motive)/attempt at an elegant objectification (waltzing)” semantics of “Rondo” through this slightly sardonic instrumental accompaniment of the soprano’s waltzing. There is no sense of the heroine’s self-irony — as is characteristic for Nos. 5, 9, and 10 — in Dalos’s text for this fragment. But, the composer, in a sense, splits the waltz’s personality: in episode B he makes the protagonist reason with herself in a more abstract manner than in
the obsessive “govorila” refrain (the soprano line), while her alter-ego laughs at her own attempt at reasoning (the Stravinskian instrumental accompaniment).

In his setting, Kurtág separates sections Y and Y¹ of the poetic form.¹⁶ Because of this temporal distancing, and because of the fact that the poetic section Y¹ is a contracted variant of section Y, in the setting, the second waltz (episode B¹) is perceived as an echo of the first one. There is no longer sarcasm in the dolcissimo instrumental accompaniment, which this time blends with the soprano melody completely. Moreover, the composer changes Dalos’s construction of section Y¹, adding one more line of the text from section Y, unit c “za minutami schast’ia” (“beyond the moment’s bliss”), but not including the continuation of this sentence, phraseological unit d “boli razluki” (“pain of parting”). By doing so, Kurtág de-trivializes completely Dalos’s use of ellipsis at the end of section Y¹, “Bylo schast’e u nas, i razluka byla…” (“Bliss we had, a parting too…”), as discussed in Chapter I. In the composer’s “poem,” the protagonist remembers the “bliss” that she had with the beloved, three times (once in episode B, and twice in B¹), but is not able to say the painful word “parting” one more time, in order to finish the sentence. Instead, she interrupts herself with the “govorila” refrain, accompanied by the perpetual ostinato D⁴ in the cimbalom, invoking the heroine’s self-blaming fixation.

To summarize, the four fragments-members of the intertextual circle, belonging to the “stylistic references” subgroup, Nos. 5, 7, 9, and 10, convey the heroine’s bitterly ironic look at herself, each time with the different shade: an exaggerated cheerfulness in No. 5, a brutal self-irony in No. 10, irony as an alter-ego in No. 7, and irony as a

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¹⁶ See Chapter I for the internal analysis of Dalos’s sections Y and Y¹.
framework in No. 9 (as shown in Figure 4.11). Thus, these fragments present the protagonist of *Scenes* as an obsessed, but nevertheless strong woman, for, as Rimma Dalos communicated, “only a strong person is able to look at him- or herself with the sense of irony.”

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**Figure 4.11** The “ironic” fragments of the intertextual circle: Nos. 5, 7, 9, and 10

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**The X-set/Y-set and polyphonic circles**

Musico-poetic analysis of the chromatic, wedge, and intertextual circle reveals that there are three main semantic fields found in *Scenes*, those of the “separation,” “lamenting,” and “self-irony.” These semantic characteristics pertain automatically to the both X-set/Y-set and polyphonic circles, since they overlap with the three other circles. From a musico-poetic point of view, the X/Y sets seem more loaded semantically than the polyphony per se. The combination of the “cold” fifths and “mournful” minor

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17 Rimma Dalos, conversation with the author, Budapest, 19 March 2000.
seconds in the fragments-members of the X-set/Y-set circle is the expression of the cycle’s main idea, that of the impossibility of the closeness between the heroine and the beloved. Conversely, the composer uses polyphony as a semantic/technical tool on the smaller scale of the cycle, within one or another setting (such as, for instance, the canons in Nos. 3, 10, and 14, and the quasi-compound melodies in Nos. 6 and 8). Thus, through careful examination of the both poetic and musical structures in Scenes, and their interaction, the X-set/Y-set circle appears as no less semantically charged than the other circles.

More than in any other fragments of the cycle, in No. 6 “Dream” and No. 8 “Nakedness,” the musical structure functions as the palette that Kurtág uses to paint two portraits of the heroine -- the musical portrait of her subconscious in “Dream,” and the most revealing portrait of her exposed self in “Nakedness.”

No. 6 “Dream”

The intricate relationship between the music and Dalos’s text in this fragment, where we find both a case of the word painting (phrase D, m. 10) and the contradiction between music and text (phrase C, m. 8), have been partially discussed in Chapter 3. To summarize, the overall structure of the soprano line, composed of four phrases A (mm. 1-3), B (mm. 4-7), C (mm. 8-9), and D (10-13), consists of the two layers. A static upper layer E-flat-E-natural-D♯ stretches over all four phrases; the lower layer is constructed of the ascending and descending leaps in phrases A and D, of the predominantly descending leaps in phrase B, and of the chromatic descent in phrase C. The two-layered designa of
the melodic line may be defined as a macro compound melody. The soprano part in phrases B and C comprises the two essential micro compound melodies.

Thus, in No. 6, there are several levels of the formal links between phrases present: the “leaps” link (phrases A, B, and D), the “descending motion” link (phrases B and C), and the “compound melody” link (phrases C and D). The descending motion becomes more organized intervalically as the melody progresses from phrase B to phrase C. Also, the pedal part of the compound melody in phrase D is, in a sense, a metrical inversion of the pedal in phrase C. E4 always occupies a weak part of the beat in C, contrary to what happens in D, where we always hear G#5 on the strong part of the beat. As a whole, the two-layered (macro compound) soprano part is structured as a system of the three levels of the interrelationships between its four constituent phrases, as shown in Figure 4.12.
The interrelationships between phrases A, B, C, and D have an impact on the musico-poetic semantics of the fragment. On one hand, the story is quite simple: the heroine experiences a recurring dream in which she wants the beloved to come near her, but when he approaches, she pushes him away. On other hand, the idiosyncrasy of the musical structure offers, in a sense, a semantic context for what happens in the dream.

Dreaming is a static phenomenon; all events taking place in a dream are really non-events. Still, being a play of one’s subconscious, a dream is the manifestation of one’s feelings, senses, emotions, and intellect. Thus, as related to the psyche, a dream is as real as one wants it to be. In Dalos’s poem, the heroine experiences a recurring dream every night, which is already evidence of her preoccupation with one particular thought,
image, or feeling. The two-layered structure of the voice part represents the duality of the concept of dreaming itself, -- a phenomenon where stasis and motion coincide. Phrase A of Kurtág’s setting, corresponding to the first line of the text, “Snitsia odin i tot zhe son” (“Every night the same dream”), is the introduction to the story. The story itself (the dream) is told in the next three lines of the poem, coinciding with next three phrases of the fragment. Simultaneously, each new phrase contributes to the unveiling of the story’s subtext.

Phrase D of the setting, corresponding to the last line of the text, “ia ottalkivaiu tebia” (“I push you away”) comprises a compound melody with a “jumpy” lower part “pushing away” from the pedal G5, and expresses the meaning of the words as an explicit word-painting. In phrase C, with the text “ty priblizaesh’sia” (“you approach”), the process of the pitch-separation, the result of the interaction between the two levels of the compound melody, contradicts the notion of the nearness intimated by the text. In phrase B, corresponding to Dalos's second line “blizosti tvoei prochu” (“I beg for you to come near”), we find the two largest leaps in the fragment, A-flat4-G5 and G-flat5-F4. This creates a conflict between meaning of the words and its musical execution; more importantly, it excludes the notion of nearness and togetherness from the semantics of the fragment. The only unequivocal text-music consonance is found in phrase D. Thus, Kurtág’s interpretation of Dalos’s poem reveals itself retrospectively, when the text is read backward (shown in Figure 4.13).
Every night the same dream

I beg for you to come near

I push you away

you approach

stasis/motion
duality of the
melody

text/music conflict:
“nearness” is
associated with wide
leaps

word-painting:
“ottalkivaiu”
(“push away”)

text/music conflict:
“approaching” is
associated with
separation

Figure 4.13: No. 6. Kurtág’s interpretation of Dalos’s poem, as revealed through a backward reading

In Kurtág’s setting, the distance between the two people is so great, so insurmountable, that even in the dream togetherness is impossible. There are two semantic fields found in Dalos’s poem, those of “inside, inner, near” and “distance, separation.” Kurtág, however, makes the latter the focus of his “poem,” its essence, but expresses it explicitly only in the last phrase. The musical construction of this fragment is progressive, with the large-scale arch-like link between phrases A and D, and the two pairs of the micro-links between phrases B and C, and C and D, as illustrated in Figure 4.13, above. Conversely, the musico-poetic structure of “Dream” is regressive, manifesting Kurtág’s interpretation of Dalos’s poem.

The impossibility of togetherness is a leitmotive of Scenes, implied by the semantics of each of the fourteen poems. The protagonist’s attempts to get close to the
beloved, however, are limited to fragments Nos. 1, 4, 6, and 11. The semantics of the cycle is summarized in the introduction to the cycle, No. 1 “Come,” where the heroine asks the beloved to approach her, while realizing the senselessness of her pleading. She begs for his closeness in No. 4 “Allow me,” not being able to keep inside her passion and despair. In No. 6 she only dreams of him being near. Finally, the heroine is waiting for the beloved in No. 11 “Again,” with both anxiety and sadness, because she knows that this waiting will last forever. No. 6 “Dream” is a part of the group of fragments, defined by the heroine’s desire to be near the beloved. Thus, being a member of the polyphonic circle exclusively, No. 6 nevertheless is semantically linked to the members of the chromatic and wedge circles, as Figure 4.14 demonstrates. The notion of the perpetuity, implied by Dalos’s poem (the recurrence of the dream every night), reflects the large-scale recurrence of her desire of his closeness.

![Diagram of semantic links between Nos. 1, 4, 6, and 11]

Figure 4.14: The semantic links between Nos. 1, 4, 6, and 11
No. 8 “Nakedness”

While listening to No. 8, one may be surprised by the unexpectedly potent, almost vigorous ending of the fragment on the words “i ubegu iz raia” (“and flee paradise”). “Nakedness” is about loneliness, expressed by the empty sound of the melodic perfect fifths in the framework of the two sliding chromatic descents implied by the compound melody, as discussed in Chapter 3. The “positive” character of the fragment’s ending seems puzzling at first. However, a musico-poetic aspect of this fragment suggests the additional tonal layer of its structure, contradicting the pseudo-serial design of the two phrases.

I hear the last note of “Nakedness,” D4, as the tonic, even though the tonal interpretation of the pitch content in the second phrase of the fragment points to G as its tonic (shown in Figure 4.15).  

The second phrase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-flat5</th>
<th>A-flat4</th>
<th>D5</th>
<th>G4</th>
<th>C4</th>
<th>F#4</th>
<th>D4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Function in D: T

Functions in G: S (Neopolitan) T D7

Figure 4.15: No. 8. The tonal interpretation of the second phrase in G

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18 In my view, the ambivalent tonal interpretation of No. 8 does not contradict the atonal analysis of the fragment offered in Chapter 3. In the contrary, it reflects the fragment’s semantic ambiguity.
The tonic function of the last D is supported by its combination with the upper mediant F#, preceding the D. D5 occurs two times in the second phrase, breaking its pseudo-serial pattern, and assuming the higher status than the other notes. In the course of “Nakedness” the D is heard after its major mediant F# twice, on the word “dushu” ("soul"), and on the last word of the text, “raia” (“paradise”). These two words belonging to the semantic field of the “spiritual” constitute a musico-poetic focus of “Nakedness,” its semantic center. Kurtág relates the first and the last line of the text by their almost identical pitch-class content (see Figure 3.24 in Chapter 3), and thus creates a parallel construction, instead of entirely symmetrical sound-structure, as in Dalos’s poem. This parallelism leaves out the second line of the poem, “figovym listkom” (“by a fig-leaf”), and makes it a somewhat autonomous unit within phrase a. Even though the composer couples the first two lines of the text into one musical phrase, he breaks this phrase apart considering the idiosyncrasy of the musico-poetic construction.

“Nakedness” as a musico-poetic phenomenon offers a new interpretation of the text. The vitality of the fragment’s ending, and at the same time the sense of the finalization, coming from the last F#4-D4 melodic dyad, expresses the heroine’s strength. Moreover, the structural characteristics of “Nakedness” point to rather ironic interpretation of the paradise-concept, which is not present in the poem’s semantics. In the context of the fragment, “paradise” is not at all a place of the highest joy, since “to flee paradise” becomes a positive thing that brings back the heroine’s strength and her self-confidence. Half way through Scenes the composer presents the listener with the heroine’s the most subtle, but “uncovering” portrait, -- in a sense, contradicting the literal meaning of the text (“I cover my soul”). The notions of emptiness and coldness, on one
hand, and/or irony, on the other hand, are common to the majority fragments of the cycle; they are expressed in the most laconic, condensed form in No. 8. In Kurtág's web-like multi-circular construction of *Scenes*, “Nakedness” is the “spider” itself, the musico-poetic heart of the cycle.

As illustrated in Figure 4.16, below, the total musico-poetic structure of *Scenes* based on the tri-circular poetic construction of the cycle comprises all the interrelationships between the fifteen setting, discussed in this chapter. Some important characteristics of the musical structure, such as the existence of the chromatic, wedge, and intertextual circles, also found their confirmation in the cycle’s musico-poetic designs. The links between the fragments within each of these circles are both technical and semantic. However, the multiplicity of the connections within and between the musical circles are revealed only through the comparison and correlation of the musical and poetic structures. In Kurtág’s “spider web,” the notions of separation, coldness, obsession, pleading, and mourning are cunningly interwoven.
Figure 4.16: Musico-poetic connectedness in *Scenes from a Novel*¹⁹

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¹⁹ Figure 4.17, even though comprising all the connections between the fragments, discussed in this chapter, is intended only as a representation of the musico-poetic connectedness in the cycle. I do not really expect the reader to trace the strands of the web.
CONCLUSION

"...Why play with circles?
Weren’t we playing with ourselves?"¹

I have attempted to disentangle the complex network of interrelationships between the constituent elements of Scenes by looking at Kurtág’s music through Dalos’s poetry, at her poetry through his music, and at everything as if with a magnifying glass. It was not my purpose to understand the composer’s mind; it was my purpose to interpret what came out of it. My analysis of Scenes is -- to paraphrase David Lewin -- my “poem” to Kurtág’s “poems” to Dalos’s poems.² Or, my analysis is a metaphor for Kurtág’s composition -- following Nicholas Cook, who writes that “analyses represent music, but the mode of that representation is fundamentally metaphorical.”³ Without a magnifying glass, the structural complexity of Scenes might seem arbitrary and questionable. However, the idea of complexity would be arbitrary in itself.

On one hand, there is nothing complex about the large-scale arch Kurtág creates by using the same Dalos poem in Nos. 2 and 15. This structural arch, as well as any construction where the beginning and the end coincide, may metaphorically be

¹ Toyama 1991, 19.
² See introduction to Chapter 4.
³ Cook 1999, 257.
represented as a circle. By using a circular structure to control the large-scale organization of a set of songs, or vocal fragments, Kurtág is a follower of Schumann. Discussing Schumann’s cycle Frauenliebe und -leben, Ruth Solie writes: “The postlude to Frauenliebe, a recapitulation of the music of the first song, is no mere epilogue in Schumann’s customary manner... it is rather a representation, perhaps one might say a symptom, of cyclicity itself and of the Ewigkeit that mythically stands for the feminine...”4 Schumann’s arch is a purely musical one -- the music of the first song returns at the end of the cycle as the epilogue, stressing “the endless repeatability of the woman’s experience, the ‘all-encompassing and infinite’ time that, as Julia Kristeva has told us, represents the feminine in many cultures throughout history.”5 Denoting the same idea of the cyclicity in a woman’s life, Kurtág returns to the beginning at the end of his cycle in a simpler, and simultaneously, in a more sophisticated way: he does so through poetry.

On the other hand, in Scenes, we find a complex, intricate system of circular musico-poetic constructions, and it is precisely their interrelationships and interconnections that define the structure of this cycle. I see the large-scale arch in Scenes as an embodiment of the predominant structural/semantic principle of the cycle, affecting all levels of its organization -- musical, poetic, and musico-poetic. In technical terms, the main structural feature of Scenes is the connectedness of the elements within and between its fifteen fragments, which I arrange in conceptual, concentric circles. I propose that this

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5 Ibid., 228 quoting Kristeva 1982, 35.
connectedness is Kurtág’s compositional goal, whereas structural circularity is Kurtág’s aesthetic accomplishment.

As I have suggested in Chapter 2, each of the fourteen poems, in a sense, is a repetition of the story told in all the others. I believe that Kurtág chose these particular poems not only because of their concentrated expressiveness, consonant with his own way of communication, but also because of their thematic similarity. The repetitiveness of the poetic situations in Dalos’s texts gives Kurtág a chance to explore and musically highlight the discrepancies within the poetic similarities, and vice versa, the similarities within the poetic discrepancies. Kurtág intensifies the already intense structural/semantic tendencies of Scenes as a poetic cycle through the connectedness within his musical structure. His interpretation of Dalos’s texts allows for an overall circular poetic form; my interpretation of Kurtág’s cycle reveals the multi-circular musico-poetic construction.

The role of the lotmanesque method of structural poetic analysis in my study of Scenes is difficult to overestimate. The understanding of the inner construction of each of the fourteen Dalos poems helped me interpret their semantic similarities and non-similarities, and consequently, to find the means of poetic cyclic organization. Indeed, by performing musical analysis of Scenes, one can find that Kurtág’s musical structures are often influenced by poetic structural or semantic features. However, the structural/semantic (as opposed to structural and semantic) indivisibility of text and music becomes apparent only when both text and music are examined and compared. In his approach to the text-music equilibrium in Scenes, Kurtág appears as a composer who approaches text as a creative reader and interpreter. He brings Dalos’s poems to their full potential, expanding the boundaries of the poetic words. I propose that it is precisely the
deep involvement of the composer in the world of poetry that makes Kurtág’s vocal music one of immense depth and intricacy.

As I stated in the Introduction, the second objective of this study is to test my new method for studying the text-music relationship in a vocal-instrumental composition. I am convinced that it is the only approach suitable to examine Kurtág’s vocal cycles. This method of analysis does not discriminate between music and poetry: both arts are viewed as partners in the structural/semantic design of a vocal composition. But, as I mentioned in the Introduction, this dissertation makes only the first step in this direction. My claim of a new, comprehensive method of text-music analysis, applicable not only to Kurtág exclusively, should be validated by further analytical steps, for "the basic project of music theory [is] to validate masterworks, and in turn, to be validated by them."6

I envision the second, necessary step in the validation of my approach to be more trial analyses of well-known compositions by, for instance, Schumann, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky. These three composers represent three different trends in the treatment of the text in their vocal works: the undeniably close relationships of the text and music in Schumann’s compositions; the supposed ignorance of the poetic processes in Schoenberg’s vocal music; and finally, the "prosodic distortion"7 of the text in Stravinsky’s works. I anticipate that Schumann – because of his close affinity to the contemporary Romantic literary aesthetics of his time – will be a perfect candidate for

6 From an anonymous letter of evaluation of the book Listening to Modernism, ed. Arved Ashby (in consideration at University of Rochester Press). Used by courtesy of Dr. Arved Ashby. The reader intended this statement as a criticism of music theory and analysis, but I do not see anything wrong with what he/she defines as the goal of theorists and analysts.

7 Taruskin 1987, 174.
such a musico-poetic analysis, for “in opposition to either poetic ignorance on the one
hand, or musical realism on the other, Schumann’s settings demonstrate the kind of
imaginative reading that increases the poetic function of the poem such that its potency is
realized through the language of music.”

Perhaps, we can learn something new about 
_Dichterliebe_ by putting Heine’s poetry through Lotman’s magnifying glass, and then
viewing the poetry and music through each other.

Schoenberg, on the other hand, claimed not to be deeply interested in the texts he
set, writing “I had composed many of my songs straight through to the end without
troubling myself in the slightest about the continuation of the poetic events…, and that
only days later I thought of looking back to see just what was the real poetic content of
my song.”

At the same time, finding “a way into Schoenberg’s Opus 15, Number 7,”

David Lewin begins with the analysis of Stefan George’s poem (resembling a psycho-
analysis of a person) and then reveals some fascinating interrelationships and interactions
between text and music in this Schoenberg song. Lewin’s analysis has entirely changed
the way I listen to No. 7 from _Das Buch der hängenden Gärten_; it has shown that even
though Schoenberg supposedly did not care about the poem’s idiosyncrasies, it did not
prevent him from writing a song where the text and music interact on deep semantic and
structural levels. With my analytical approach, we might be able to go even further, and
consider the full potential of the structural/semantic implications of the text-music
relationship in this Schoenberg cycle.

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8 Perrey 1996, 179.

9 Schoenberg 1950, 4.

10 Lewin 1981.
Stravinsky's treatment of the text is not comparable with any other composer's. In Taruskin's words, "The texts he [Stravinsky] chose were often very far from what is normally considered 'artistic.' His settings of them were often deliberately and seemingly arbitrarily misaccentuated, distorted as to phrasing and punctuation, dislocated in meter..., and so calculated as in no way to blend with the word."\(^{11}\) I am struck by Taruskin's statement not so much because it sums up the composer's method of working with the text, but because I see Taruskin's words also as a good description of Stravinsky's compositional style. Taruskin's goal is "to trace the process of Stravinsky's self-liberation from the Russian prosodic tradition, born of realism, to identify the sources of his inspiration and of his methods," etc.\(^{12}\) I believe that we could find the most fascinating links between Stravinsky's approach to text and his compositional method through the separate, and then comparative analysis of music and text in each composition where such textual distortions occur. Employing Lotman's method of poetic analysis we would be able to determine structural/semantic features of the text, for, as Lotman teaches, all structural levels of the text (including prosody, but not exclusively) contribute to its semantics. We might be able to find a new interpretation of the idiosyncrasies of Stravinsky's musical language, if viewed through the distortions of the text, and vice versa, to understand better the roots of Stravinsky's approach to the poetic text through the comparison with his musical style.

Kurtág's sensibility for poetry is truly exceptional. Schumann comes closest to him because of his affiliation with the poetic movement of his time. Schoenberg's and

\(^{11}\) Taruskin 1987, 168.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 169.
Stravinsky’s conscious distancing from the poetic language is a matter of their compositional aesthetics, but there is always an “unintentional” creative result of a composer’s work with the poetic text. Claude-Edmonde Magny writes: “There are two parts in every book and every work of art – on the one hand, the author’s conscious and expressly intended message, the effect for which he has purposely fitted out his machine…; on the other, the truth which he reveals without realizing it, the aspect of the world which he has discovered almost in spite of himself, in the course of the actual experience of composition…”\(^{13}\) The method of musico-poetic analysis that I suggest in this study is aimed to uncover and to interpret that special layer of text-music interaction in a vocal composition that may be hidden even from a composer himself.

There is always something special about a poetic text that leads a composer to choose it for his or her setting, -- it can be the sound of a word or the shape of a line. No matter what it is, a song is a synthetic composition. In my view, the immediate product of the marriage of these two arts into a song is a musico-poetic symbiosis that should be approached by scholars with an adequate set of analytical tools. In this study I suggest one. Maybe music analysis is not just a game after all.

\(^{13}\) Wright 1968, 85 quoting Magny 1945.
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APPENDIX

THE SCORE OF *SCENES FROM A NOVEL* WITH WRITTEN-IN

TRANSLITERATED TEXT
СЦЕНЫ ИЗ РОМАНА
JELENETEK EGY REGÉNYBŐL

I. ПРИДИ
4. ПОЗВОЛЬ МНЕ

Андо, чутко (Vivo)

Canto
Поз- воль мне при- кос- нуться к те-

Cimbalom

Violino

Contabasso

pp ppp
leggiero sub.

sempre simile

225
СКОРО, ДИКО (Fieramente, allegro)

ВСЕ ВЫ-БИ-РА-ЛА ВСЕ ПРО-ГЛЯ-ДЕ-ЛА.

1. въ-би-ра-ла,
2. про-гля-де-ла,

ВСЕ ВЫ-БИ-РА-ЛА,

ВСЕ ПРО-ГЛЯ-ДЕ-ЛА.
8. НАГОТА

Con moto, semplice

Прикрой душу фи́го́вым лист-вом
и убе́гу из ра́я.

 PRI-kró-yó dushu fí-go-vóym list-kom
i yu-bé-gu iz rá-yá.
9. ВАЛЬС ДЛЯ ШАРМАНКИ
(Hommage à Alfred Schnittke)

per la Lyvola

Canto

per la 2 volta

Cimbalo

Violino

Contrabasso

Tempo di Walzer meccanico, molto irregolare

И в пих-ча-сы

И в пих-ча-сы

* buchetta di metaño

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10. СКАЗКА

Canto

Cimbalom

Violino

Contrabasso

*бачетта нормале
15. ЭПИЛОГ

(Плач уныния)

Медленно, уныло, впусто (Lento, desolato)

[Lasso, kietlenill, sivran]

Canto

Violino

Contrabasso

5

10