

### Grieg's Affective Landscapes: (Re)Hearing the *Stemninger*, op. 73

In a letter dated 28 August 1905, Grieg wrote to his agent Henri Hinrichsen at Edition Peters in Leipzig, enclosing a series of seven short piano pieces—the *Stemninger* ('Moods'), for publication as his Op. 73. A day later, he confided to his friend, the Danish organist Gottfred Matthison-Hansen, that the pieces were intended as 'bait' [Lokkemad], 'cast into the jaws of Mammon' in order to try and persuade Peters to produce two of his orchestral scores, the Variations on an Old Norwegian Folk Tune, Op. 51, and the instrumental versions of his Lyric Pieces, Op. 54. The whole enterprise, Grieg suggested wistfully, reminded him of Emil Horneman's waspish aside after the premiere of Johan Selmer's 1872 cantata *Nordens Ånd* ('The Spirit of North'): 'the mountains tremble: a mouse is born!' According to Grieg, his own mouse was so tiny that spectacles were required in order to be able to see it properly. The pieces nevertheless carried a more baleful meaning: 'for with this mouse, I have for the first time felt that I have aged' Grieg explained. 'There are just a couple of old Norwegian pieces that I am pleased with, but otherwise my heart was not in them'.

Grieg's deprecatory comments raise a series of interpretative problems, both in relation to the *Stemninger*, and to his music more generally. Most immediately striking is the extent to which Grieg inscribes himself within the miniaturist discourse that has been so prevalent in his critical reception: the image of Horneman's mighty mouse becomes a way of belittling his sense of creative self. Equally pressing is the idea of lateness and of late style. The *Stemninger* occupy a privileged place in Grieg's output as the last complete set of new piano works to appear in print before his death in 1907. If the idea of late style is conventionally associated with summation and the visionary, paradigmatically in the case of Beethoven's music from the 1820s, however, the *Stemninger* can appear disarmingly unadventurous, the products, Grieg's letter implies, of a worn-out imagination rather than hard-won artistic freedom. Alongside the more daringly progressive *Slåtter*, op. 72, the work that prompted admiring talk of 'le nouveau Grieg' among Parisian avant-garde circles in the 1900s, the *Stemninger* sound like a return to the cosy idiom of the Lyric Pieces with which Grieg had first made his international reputation in the 1870s. The *Stemninger*, in this sense, seem a pallid final testament.

Op. 73 nevertheless deserves a more generous critical response. Listening attentively to the set brings its own analytical rewards: the *Stemninger* are no less inventively conceived than Grieg's other works, and their musical imagery and realisation no less engaging. More importantly, contemplating op. 73 in the context of contemporary debates in Scandinavian art and literature offers richer ways of thinking about Grieg's creative response to landscape and environment, and raises pressing questions of musical subjectivity. Grieg's attempt to deflect critical attention from his work should only encourage a tighter, more attentive reading, one that is carefully attuned to what might be called the *Stemninger's* sonic geography: its sense of place, both actual and imagined. It is precisely this concern with evocation, and ultimately with place, that points to the significance of the work's title, and to the idea of 'stemning' as a critical category in Grieg's music.

The prevailing critical reception of the *Stemninger* has often followed Grieg's defensive steer. Kathleen Dale, in Gerald Abraham's venerable 1948 Symposium, for example, reinforces the familiar idea of Grieg's apparent inability to master large-scale musical form: 'The sets of *Album Leaves*, *Humoresques*, *Poetic Tone Pictures*, and *Moods* give every sign of having been written with little regard to unity of style or affinity of key. This lack of planning may possibly be considered as denoting the freshness and irresistibility of his inspiration, but it hinders the ready acceptance of many sets of unrelated pieces.' Dale's reservations can be challenged by thinking about the organisation of the *Stemninger* in a different way. The set doesn't aspire to the kind of tonal symmetry demanded by an early nineteenth-century sonata scheme (though one could ask to what extent such symmetry was normative in a multi-movement work from the 1900s in any case). Rather, the structural principle operative in the *Stemninger* is based on complementarity rather than unity, and the collection might be understood more as a sequence of contrasting character pieces, in the mould of Brahms's late intermezzi, or as a Liederkreis rather than a formal Zyklus.

Evidence of large-scale structural planning, however, is not entirely absent—the numbers are arranged in tritonally-related but modally mixed pairs, spliced a third apart (e minor and Bb major; d minor and Ab major); the fifth number maintains the next step in this chain of third steps, albeit inverted (descending from Ab to f minor, rather than ascending to the expected c minor), but the sixth movement is anomalous: the 'Serenade' is in A rather than B major (the expected tritone relation from f). Although the closing 'Lualåt's' g minor notionally maintains the established pattern of tritones, third steps and modal mixture, had the 'Serenade' been tonally regular, the ultimate impression is one of looseness rather than regularity, a quality that supports the atmosphere of the final number. There is similarly a broad topical or thematic pattern evident in the disposition of the individual numbers: the outer pieces are melancholic nature sketches, whereas the inner pieces offer either a more intimate, domesticated idiom (nos. 2, 4, and 6), or turbulent, violently chromaticised episodes (nos. 3 and 5). The reflective symmetry of the design, at this level, is compelling.

For Dale, the true value of Grieg's work lies in its affective intensity, its ability to evoke particular moods or emotional responses within the listener. '[A]ll Grieg's compositions, whether they bear titles or not, are evocative in character', Dale writes. 'Even when he wrote in sonata-form, for which activity he was temperamentally unsuited, picturesqueness was never very far away'. According to Dale, large-scale structure or abstraction seems opposed to expression or the ability to inflect mood, character or tone. Smallness becomes a signal of lyric depth rather than epic expansiveness. Dale's emphasis on the *Stemninger's* affective miniaturism draws attention once again to the work's title. Grieg himself suggested to his publisher Hinrichsen that, alongside 'Stimmungen', he had considered other names for the set, including *Skizzen* and *Charakterstücke*, before concluding that 'the first name appears to me the best'. As Dale's commentary suggests, the word 'Stemning' was more than a casual convenience. The title's proper meaning only emerges after considering the difficulties of translating the term accurately in English. Conventionally rendered reductively as 'mood', the etymological origins and potential meanings of 'Stemning' and its German cognate 'Stimmung' cannot be captured in a single English equivalent. In

addition to the idea of an emotional state or condition, the word stem/Stimme refers both to a physical voice and to an instrumental line or vocal part, a musical thread within a more complex texture. 'Stemning'/'Stimmung', therefore, comes to mean an en-voicing or intonation, a sounding-forth or singing-into-being. It refers to the tuning of an instrument, its temperament or accordance (the idea of being in-accord captured by the German 'bestimmt'). And it is through this notion of a harmonious sounding-together that it also corresponds to mood, atmosphere, character or affect. Grieg, for example, was familiar with the principle in the Hardanger fiddle repertoire that certain tunings (or patterns of resonance) were in accordance with particular places, events, or times of day. And he would have been equally familiar with the doctrine of the affects, promulgated widely in early eighteenth-century music, which associated certain musical gestures, including tuning, tonality, rhythm and temperament, with specific moods or emotions. It is in this deeper, more affective sense that the title of op. 73 needs to be understood.

As Erik Wallrup, Michael Spitzer and other scholars (such as Andrew Bowie) have argued, the history of the term stemning/Stimmung in nineteenth-century thought draws on much wider philosophical debates concerning musical ontology and metaphysics. Translated as attunement, for example, the term implies an inclination or emotional disposition, an attentive listening-in or leaning-toward that can simultaneously be a hearing-with, a state of existential being-in-place. The term suggests tension or dynamic movement rather than stability or fixedness: its two common English cognates, mood and atmosphere, refer to an interiorisation on the one hand (the emotional condition of an attending subject) and to the external or environmental phenomena that shape or determine the subject's response on the other. Attunement thus problematizes the idea of subjective agency, the extent to which we are fully in command of our own emotional condition rather than merely passive vehicles for affective transformation. The term combines a monistic sense of autonomy or individual being with a more blended understanding of space, place, and time, one which dissolves or suspends the familiar subject-object distinction that underpins much nineteenth-century writing on music. Translating stemning/Stimmung hence becomes not merely a matter of linguistic fidelity but requires thinking through a much more foundational set of problems encountered in attempts to describe musical meaning. At the very least, therefore, the title of Grieg's set prompts a more complex series of potential interpretations than the composer's correspondence suggests.

Given the evident richness of the term, it is surprising that previous use of stemning/Stimmung in writing on Grieg's music has not attracted more attention. In Kurt von Fischer's remarkable 1937 thesis, *Griegs Harmonik und die nordländische Folklore*, for example, the idea of Stimmung appears as a recurrent thread in attempts to relate Grieg's music to notions of landscape and environment. Fischer's study is principally an attempt to assemble an analytical model of Grieg's musical syntax adapting the framework developed by his teacher Ernst Kurth: consideration of harmonic features; discussion of his treatment of dissonance (including 6/4 chords; chromatically-enhanced triads and other non-diatonic harmonies); and the interrelation of melodic and harmonic elements with particular attention to his folksong arrangements, opp. 17 and 66. Stimmung nevertheless serves as an important threshold, as 'a direct

influence of folksong and dance on art music', and, at a deeper level, as a means of mediating between music and other media, above all 'the atmospheric art of landscape [landschaftliche Stimmungskunst], which in its vague illimitability [verschwimmenden Unabgrenzbarkeit] is certainly more difficult to grasp technically'. For Fischer, the 'landscape moment of attunement' [das landschaftliche Stimmungsmomente] is an elevation of the folkloristic [volkstümlichen], founded in the experience of nature and which provides the basis for the Romantic notion of Gesamtkunstwerk; a paradigm, Fischer argues, whose origins 'can be found not in the reciprocation of opposing influences, but rather above all in a common but distant and profoundly reanimated originary union [Urverbindung] of the arts'. Fischer's analysis thus points to an underlying interdisciplinarity: a drawing-together of different stylistic impulses, musical techniques and gestures that is mediated by the hybrid idea of landscape.

At one level, we might read Fischer's work as indicating the entanglement of music, art, landscape and environment with regionality and place that had become politically very darkly tinged by 1937. But on another plane, Fischer's work represents an attempt to rethink the idea of Stimmung—as attunement, atmosphere, or envoicement—through close reading of Grieg's music at a point when remarkably little music-theoretical attention had been devoted to his work. The term is therefore held in tension, rather than providing a fixed grounding in metaphors of earth, race, and soil. Furthermore, Fischer's emphasis on Stimmung points toward the broader significance that stemning had played in writing on Scandinavian music, art, and literature in the 1890s, the years immediately preceding the composition of Grieg's op. 73 set. In particular, Fischer's analysis highlights the close relationship between music and landscape painting in Scandinavian art at the turn of the century. An important figure in this discourse is the Swedish artist and critic Richard Bergh, an enthusiastic supporter of the Fleskum school of Norwegian painters including Christian Skredsvig, Kitty Kielland, and Erik Werenskiold, who first gathered at Bærum in southern Norway in summer 1886 and whose work, such as Kielland's iconic painting *Sommernatt*, was particularly finely attuned to notions of landscape, mood, and atmosphere. Bergh's most extended discussion of stemning can be found in an 1896 essay on a Swedish colleague and contemporary of the Fleskum painters entitled 'Karl Nordström och det moderna Stämmingslandskapet'. Bergh explains the origins of the term through the life experiences of a young man, playing on the word's musical associations: 'just as a sounding string sets a sympathetic string into vibration [dallring], so the youth's inner life [själslif] is tuned according to Nature's shifting moods. Life catches hold of life. Everything around us works upon us.' For Bergh, the underlying significance of stemning lies in this sense of sympathetic vibration: an echo becomes not merely a re-sounding but a deeper sign of the blending of self and landscape.

Bergh elaborates this idea in a close reading of Nordström's work that locates his painting within an interdisciplinary domain. Taking his cue from a translation of Henri Frédéric Amil's epithet that 'any landscape is a condition of the soul' ['Hvarje landskap är ett själstillstånd'], Bergh argues that:

These words explain why, in our time, besides music, landscape painting is the only art form which has brought about something that the preceding age has overlooked. The vague spiritual moods [själstämningar] of our century, its indeterminate longing, its doubts and yearnings, the natural complement to our sober life so limited by science—

have found in music and landscape art exactly that vague intangible expression they need to become alive and audible to our consciousness. The means of expression in all the other arts are such that they specify their content too *precisely*.

Bergh is in essence arguing for a particular mode of musical and visual semiosis—a form of connotation or associative meaning distinct from the more deterministic or denotational signification of language or portraiture. But he is also arguing for a more psychological reading of music and landscape. Bergh's notion of *stemning* becomes a trace of the emotional curve that underpins and animates music and that shapes the shifting tones and contours of the landscape. It is through this apparently contradictory combination of ambiguity and insight, Bergh's essay maintains, that both music and landscape painting are so closely allied in the modern psychological age. Significantly, however, Bergh's discussion can be read not simply as a diagnosis of the modern condition but also as a form of acoustic ecology, which relies both on an intimate communion between artist, musician, listener and landscape (here expressed in pointedly gendered terms), and also upon precisely that notion of attunement, or *envoicement*, that underpins the idea of *stemning* more broadly:

Instinctively man locates an inner life, like his own, behind the shifting contours of Nature's outer life. Instinctively the mood painter [*stämningmålaren*] seeks an illumination, a mood in Nature, a region beyond which he can locate a spirit that possesses the sufferings and joys of his own soul, in light or dark dreams. In this way he endows Nature with a spirit, and gives her a speaking voice whose language his art can then interpret. And this spirit reveals itself in the stems of grass, when the wind rustles them. She dwells within the forest in its lofty elevation, in its fragrance, its silence, its half-light. She lives in the sea-storm, which whips the waves foam-white. She breathes out calmly across the lake on a June evening. Yes, she sparkles with the slightest reflex that plays in the dark corners of her abode at twilight. She is eternal life and movement. She is shifting mood. She is above all precisely that: *stämning!*

It is through this complex interplay of place, mood, atmosphere, landscape, and sound that Bergh's understanding of *stemning* emerges most clearly. In turn it demands a particularly heightened form of close listening, to the materiality of sound (the Orphic rustling of the grass) and to the act or moment of invocation that embodies the feeling of being-in-place at its most immediate and intense. Attending to Grieg's *Stemninger*, with these sounds in mind, provides a means of beginning to account for the music's particular resonance, the multiple senses of presence, loss, and absence that seemingly motivate its response to landscape and environment.

On closer listening, in fact, the whole of Op. 73 pivots around moments of instantiation, embodiment or *envoicing*, alongside gestures of absence and loss: indeed, it is arguably the continual shifting between these opposed expressive poles that provides the collection's underlying background *stemning*. The first number, for instance, is entitled 'Resignasjon', a term that already suggests a sense of retrospection and that provides a curious threshold for the complete set. Grieg's sketches, held at BOB, show that the movement's original title was the more neutral 'Prelude', but an earlier draft of the piece, dated 9 April 1905, was subtitled 'Sehnsucht nach Julius' and sent to Grieg's close friend, Dutch composer Julius Röntgen, on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday on 9 May. The movement is hence already marked by distance or a sense of things past, the tribute to an

absent friend. This blurring of temporal and physical boundaries is intensified, however, by the music's strong allusions to an earlier piece, 'Aften på Høyfjellet', from the ninth book of *Lyric Pieces*, op. 68 (1898-9). Like 'Resignasjon', op. 68/5 was intimately associated with Röntgen—the piece was conceived as the memory of an earlier walking trip in the Jotunheim mountains, and is constructed exclusively around a mountain herding call or *lok*, played solo in the opening strophe and amplified by a series of increasingly chromatised echoes. Op. 73/1 is strikingly similar in design, key, and affect, and, like op. 68/5, is coloured by the modal instability of  $\hat{6}$  and  $\hat{7}$ , and the frequent intrusion of a chromatically raised  $\hat{4}$ . Indeed, much of op. 73 is flavoured by the juxtaposition of 'perfect' intervals (fourths and fifths) with more dissonant intervallic elements such as tritones and false relations. Structurally, the piece is straightforward: the movement is a compact rounded binary form (ABA') with an elided middle section (bb. 15-30) and a highly compressed reprise. Like op. 68/5, the piece plays with the suspension of regular temporal boundaries and with register as a structural parameter. The opening bar, for example, which consists of a single note in the left hand ( $\hat{5}$ ), serves both as an anacrusis, and also as a striking-up or tuning-in: the pause effectively defers any sense of metrical organisation until the following bar, so that the whole set begins, figuratively, in mid-air. This pitch also serves as a registral catalyst, elaborated in the following bars by its registral displacement in the right hand: the gapped descent which follows regains its original registral level at the end of the appoggiatura in b. 4, only to be projected upwards again to form a raised ceiling ( $b^2$ ) in b. 14, punctured by the climactic  $c^3$  in b. 15. Equally striking is Grieg's subtle use of asymmetrical phrase lengths: the initial bar is followed by 2 x 3-bar units [rather than more normative 4-bar blocks], which harmonically suggest a bass arpeggiation: i—III—V. The third (dominant) phrase, beginning in b. 8, initially suggests a more regular 4-bar pattern, but the expected repetition is interrupted after only 3 bars by a new 4-bar unit, bb. 15-18, which swerves dramatically onto bII, picking up the lower bass range of b. 2 in the left hand. This is the harmonic and registral crux of piece: a dramatic octatonic opposition of V and bII (based on octatonic collection II), intensifying the tritone/perfect interval tension of the opening phrase. This progression also serves as an intensification of the music's underlying modal-diatonic tensions (lydian in b. 17-8; pentatonic in bb. 23-4), and provides the movement's sharpest moment of registral contrast, between the dark lower range of bb. 19-20, and 25ff, and the brighter, more luminous upper range of bb. 15-8 and 21-24.

Bb. 15-24 assume a landmark significance within the context of the work. The richly arpeggiated texture of bb. 21-24 is a *Naturklang*, an enchanted nature sound or acoustic sonority that conventionally suggests liberation or open space. This opening-out provides a strong narrative trajectory in the middle section, the ecstatic quality of bb. 21-4 drawn toward the crushing dissonance of the structural imperfect cadence in bb. 29-30, with a final passing reference to  $f\sharp$  at the very last moment of the phrase (b. 30, beat 4). The phrase structure of this transition, 2 x 3-bar units, metrically reinforces the *ritardando* from b. 28, pulling back any sense of forward motion gained by the registral expansiveness of bb. 15-24 and applying the musical/harmonic brakes as the movement works back toward a point corresponding to b. 2. The reprise is drastically curtailed. Structural closure is achieved almost immediately, in b. 34, with a 5-bar

elaboration whose registral range (up to a stratospheric  $b^3$ ) recalls the middle section and the melodic prominence of  $\wedge^5$  in the opening. Here, however, the sense of opening-out suggests an afterglow or Tristan-esque melancholy rather than ecstatic union or apotheosis. The final system, bb. 39-45, is consequently a desolate coda (4 + 3 bars). The closing bars registrally reground the tonic and negate the disruptive effect of the movement's fss (at least until the following number). The placement of the rests either side of final tonic chord is a pause for breath and a hollow silence.

[Play op. 73/1]

The first number of op. 73 is concerned, like 'Aften på Høyfjellet', with the opening-out and subsequent closing-down of registral and affective space. It furthermore operates as a template for the remainder of the set: the following numbers either operate within these structural and expressive boundaries, or pointedly expand them (almost to breaking point), suggesting saturation (in the third movement, 'Nattlig Ritt'), or dissolution (the final movement, 'Lualåt'). 'Nattlig Ritt' is a broadly conceived ternary form (ABA), with a contrasting major-key middle section suggesting a hymn-like benediction. The outer sections of the ride are also broadly ternary in design: a strongly articulated dynamic/registral central arch is flanked by two harmonically closed sentences (4 x 4-bar units), pivoting around the disruptive effect of a chromatically raised  $\wedge^4$  ( $g^\#$ ,) bb. 3-4 initially heard without any harmonic support and subsequently reinterpreted as an implied secondary dominant in b. 13. Despite the music's energetic foreground motion, therefore, the ultimate impression is of structural-harmonic inertia. The most nightmarish quality of the ride is its inability to achieve any real sense of progress. The middle section is launched by an extended rising chromatic sequence with dominant pedal, essentially a long prolongation of V (bb. 17-49), but with a seemingly unstoppable increase of harmonic and registral amplitude. This process is supercharged by the drastically elided chain of consecutive seventh chords, bb. 67-73: D-G-C-F-Bb-[no Ab/G#! although this step possibly indicated by erased bar in Stichvorlage]-C#-F#. This 'Mephistophelean' sequence attempts to tonicise F# through sheer force of emphasis alone, the maximally smooth voice-leading pointing to the neo-Riemannian geometry of whole structure, circling around the hexatonic poles of D, Bb and F#. The alternative system of pitch relations determined by this sequence is nevertheless subordinate to the larger-scale preparation of the tonic return, b. 85. This is a structural and dynamic Höhepunkt, the loudest and most brutal music in the whole set, marked *fff feroce*. In essence, the passage is simply an extended perfect authentic cadence, ambiguously approached via Bb. It is a terrifyingly brief revelation. A swift decay curve follows this moment of disclosure, bb. 85-133, with residues of the opening subject and its insistent iambic ostinato ride rhythm, and with Bb elements still persistent. The final bars registrally reground the music so that opening sentence returns unchanged as a closural unit, the notated rests, as in 'Resignasjon', serving as a distancing device and a brake mechanism.

'Nattlig ritt' is conceived not simply as a balanced symmetrical design, but as a more complex negotiation between different modes of harmonic organisation

and competing notions of forward propulsion, registral expansiveness and structural stasis. Its underlying stemming can be located not in a sense of synthesis, the blending into a single shade implied by Bergh, but rather the anxiety generated by the friction between these different parameters. Its instability becomes a source of creative energy. A similar edginess and ambiguity underpins the final number of the collection, a 'Lualåt from Jotunheim' which Grieg labelled 'Gebirgsweise' or 'Fjeldljom' ('The sound of the mountain': French/Eng translations added in *Stichvorlage* are 'Air montagnard' and 'Mountains Air'—suggesting the voice of the mountain, not the mountaineer). As with the opening number, 'Resignasjon', the 'Lualåt' suggests more complex multiple temporalities. In an early draft of the piece, a separate folio now held at BOB, Grieg described the work as a 'Sommerminde fra Tyin' (the site of a Norske Tunist Forening mountain hut at Tyinvatnet, in southern Jotunheim near Gjendine). The ms is subtitled 'Til Frants [Beyer], Julekvald 1901, fra din gamle [music cipher: G semibreve, with hairpin dynamics, suggesting a lok or lur call]'. Its date of composition (19 August 1901) predates the remainder of the set by at least 4 years. The piece is on one level a weary march or walking piece that invokes a Schubertian frozen landscape: the opening of *Winterreise* or its concluding number, 'Der Leiermann'. But the 'Lualåt' is simultaneously a study in echo sounds and sympathetic frequencies: this is perhaps where the mountain itself 'sings'. Of particular interest in this context are Grieg's autograph pedal directions. Both manuscript sources, and the *Stichvorlage* held at the Peters archive in Leipzig, indicate a first pedal marking at b. 11, lending additional resonance to the codetta at the end of the first phrase as the swinging sixths (d-bb) exchanged between the two hands fade away. This is followed by the *una corda* and *tre corda* directions as in the published score, establishing a pattern of call and distant response; but no pedal release at bb. 40 or 45 (and b. 44 is entirely missing from the *Stichvorlage*). There are further pedal releases indicated halfway through bb. 70 and 73, accentuating the punctuating silence of the notated rests in bb. 71 and 74.

The 'Lualåt' structurally resembles the ternary design of the 'Nattlig Ritt': a harmonically closed opening sentence (bb. 1-14), juxtaposing a minor pentatonic first unit and more chromaticised middle phrase, is balanced by a symmetrical return at b. 52, and a 10-bar coda. The middle section is a sequential chain of descending fifth-steps, from IV-v/IV; via III-v/III; to bII-V. The final step is intervallically augmented so that it lands on a dominant preparation of tonic, rather than Eb. But the sharp registral juxtaposition, sonorous bar-long silences, and the Sibelian motivic residues of the movement's quaver figuration, bb. 42-4, recall precisely the climatic octatonic crux at the centre of 'Resignasjon'. In retrospect, it is this passage which in fact serves as the referential source for the whole collection and is its most essential structural and expressive gesture. The subsequent upbeat into the structural return at b. 52 is greatly extended by the melismatic ornamentation of  $\wedge^5$ , recalling the same sense of invocation or singing-into-being with which the whole set began in the first bar of 'Resignasjon'. *Lualåt's* coda is heavily plagal, but texturally expansive,  $\wedge^5$  left hanging at different registral levels. Grieg's use of silent bars again has a distanced, deadening effect, the final attainment of the left hand's lower bass g, registrally prepared by the end of the sequence in b. 31.



Dale writes evocatively, in these final bars, of a sound object that ‘seems to reverberate around the mountain-tops before eventually dying away into the stillness of vast spaces. It is a touching farewell, and most satisfying as a pianist’s last word.’ Returning to late style, as Dale’s commentary implies, is a convenient way of accounting for the *Stemninger*’s sense of melancholic introspection. But this paper has argued for a more complex and nuanced response, which builds on the affective associations of the work’s title. The idea of ‘stemning’ in late nineteenth-century Scandinavian thought provides a richly ambiguous framework for thinking through issues of presence, instantiation, and agency in Grieg’s music. This interpretative approach draws broadly on an interdisciplinary framework, without seeking overly deterministic parallels between different media. It nevertheless responds positively to the prominence of music, sound, and landscape in the work of contemporary Nordic critics such as Richard Bergh, and later writing on Grieg’s music. It further draws us toward what British cultural geographer John Wylie has described as the ‘geographies of love’. Wylie discusses the intimate relationship between presence, absence, and the experience of landscape as a mode of encounter rather than a theoretical method:

The shreds and patches of things, whether treasured possessions or soiled ephemera—handled, venerated or discarded—all the traces of presence of those now absent are worked in such a way so as to show, synchronously, the absence of presence, the presence of absence, and so in the final analysis the threshold assumes the status of an enlarged, uncannier zone of indiscernability and dislocation, disrupting all distinctions.

Framed by two eloquent gestures of recollection and remembrance, a birthday greeting to Julius Röntgen and a musical postcard to his walking companion Frants Beyer, Grieg’s *Stemninger* can be best heard as an intensive exploration of this topography of loss, exposure, and concealment. It is through attuning to the music’s particular affective affordance, its stemning, that we can momentarily locate ourselves acoustically within Grieg’s geography of love.

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