

CHAPTER IV

HARMONY IN GRIFFES'S SONGS

As important as melody was for the embodiment of the text's expression in Griffes's songs, it was obviously capable of portraying only a single dimension of the musical representation of the literary entity. Harmony was entrusted with providing another important dimension of the text's expression.

Although there is a tremendous variety of harmonic styles in Griffes's songs, these differences ally themselves closely with the three divisions--formative, divergent, and mainstream, so that harmony becomes one of the most evident criteria for the delineation of his songs into these groups. Yet there are overall traits which apply to all three divisions, and for the most part the differences are those of degree rather than kind.

Of these traits, the most universal is that each song is approached individually as to harmony. This means that the particular harmonic style of a song depends above all on the coloristic demands of the text and of the vocal melody, which has usually been composed first. In the desire to match harmonically the text's expression, Griffes provided in almost every song some unusual or unexpected harmonic effect. Despite the specific style undertaken, there is some kind of harmonic experimentation or unexpected shading in almost every song. The degree of unpredictability attained differs greatly from group to group.

Every group shows at least an occasional deviation from traditional harmony. In some instances this is illustrated only by the persis-

tent use of the modified triad, such as with an added sixth. Or the traditional tonal structure may be concealed or even ignored through the use of delayed resolutions, nondiatonic scale structures, or even atonality.

Also not predetermined is the process by which the texture of the harmony will take shape. Although his earlier songs demonstrate a reliance on a homophonic structure, there is a tendency in his later songs towards a linearity of composition, often accompanied by an increased complexity of texture.

Formative Songs

Since Griffes worked basically within the romantic and post-romantic harmonic tradition in his formative songs, it could be mistakenly assumed that the composer automatically followed the harmonic patterns established by his predecessors. Certainly there are obvious reminiscences of Brahms, Strauss, and even Schumann, but that is not to imply that Griffes's formative songs are totally predictable or in any way lacking originality. While limited to the boundaries of the predetermined traditions, his individual expression is everywhere apparent. The impression is that while he remained within the romantic vocabulary, he composed imaginatively with these established materials.

Most typically these songs exhibit the rich harmonies and ongoing modulations of the later German romantic composers. In many songs the harmonic fluctuation is rather constant due to continual chromatic alteration and enharmonic use of chords. Such a technique, though sometimes permeating the entire song, is often particularly prominent in the central section, as in "Auf ihrem Grab" (Example 16).

A more continuous modulatory process is found in "So halt'ich," in which every resolution becomes the pivotal chord for a new modulation, either as a dominant to a new tonic or through enharmonic transformation. This process never diminishes in intensity until the grand B^6_4 chord in meas. 25 and the following cadence, which resolves to the long-awaited B tonic chord.

Although Griffes closely observed the post-romantic style of harmony in these songs, he did allow for an occasional harmonic twist or unexpected combination. Perhaps the French songs are the only exceptions to this trait, as they remain almost entirely within traditional and predictable boundaries. Sometimes this unexpected twist results from a deceptive cadence. In "Es fiel ein Reif" not only is the voice introduced with such a cadence, but also the piano insists on the submediant chord while the voice continues as though in the tonic key, resulting in a clash between the high $g\#$ and the low a .¹

Quite often the surprise comes from the introduction of a totally unexpected chord, as in the second strophe of "Am Kreuzweg" (Example 21). The emphasis thus placed on the text and its expression is obvious. This is consistent with Griffes's determination to capture the spirit of the text in every way possible. Every such harmonic twist can be somehow related to the composer's desire to emphasize or clarify a poetic image.

This song also illustrates one of the two possible ways that the songs of the formative group attempt to deviate from traditional harmony. Again, as in "So halt'ich," the song opens with an insistent dominant chord which only begrudgingly resolves to the tonic C in meas. 9. Though

¹See Appendix, Song 2.

not as intensely modulatory in character as "So halt'ich," this song does clearly show the persistent delaying of the expected resolution.

The other possible deviation from traditional harmony can be seen in the opening and closing chords of "Auf geheimem Waldespfade" (Example 6). In this song, the \underline{D}^b triad with the added b^b (the sixth) becomes the actual tonic chord, as nowhere in this song does this chord occur without the added sixth. Upton regards this as a foreshadowing of Griffes's later songs:

In the second (published) song, "Auf geheimem Waldespfade," we begin to perceive the shadow of the future thrown across its² very first measure, in the tonic chord colored by its sixth.

This technique is even more persistent in "Könnst' ich mit dir" (Example 27).

Yet in no way can it be implied that these two techniques of deviating somewhat from the established tonality--the delayed resolution and the transformation of the tonic chord--are actually attempts at negating the accepted tonality. The real tonal center of every song of this group is never far from being evident, though perhaps momentarily concealed. Mention of these techniques is made here only to point out that already Griffes accepted the possibility of dealing more freely with tonality; the style adopted prevented further experimentation in tonality for these songs.

There are in this group of songs, however, no such foreshadowings of Griffes's later predilection for linear writing. Almost every song in this group is composed around a vertical concept, the most obvious result being block chords, as in "Meeresstille" (Example 17). There are

²William Treat Upton, "The Songs of Charles T. Griffes, Musical Quarterly, 9:317 (1923).

frequent arpeggiations of the harmony in the accompaniment among these songs, yet they perform much the same task as the block chord. They are used mainly to create the effect of a lighter texture rather than to introduce a horizontal effect (see "Könnt' ich," Example 28).

Divergent Songs

The concept of preconceived harmony, parallel to that of preconceived melody, can be introduced in discussing both the formative and divergent songs. Generally speaking, this preconceived harmony suggests that the particular style of harmony to be used has already been chosen before the composer investigates the individual character of his text. This concept would be especially applicable to the formative songs, even though preconceived melody was not so prevalent, because the reliance on late romantic harmonic patterns is universal. In the divergent songs this concept is equally fundamental. However, as with melody, the particular harmonic style which has been assumed differs between songs.

It is with harmony in the divergent songs that Griffes demonstrates most clearly his attraction to "unusual" styles. Thus, in order to achieve the desired sound, Griffes readily accepted the limiting principles for composing in that specific harmonic vocabulary, be it oriental, modal, or more traditional. Yet, as with the German songs, his use of these styles was not mere imitation but was tempered with his own individual perspective. That Griffes was aware of the dangers resulting from too close an identification with one style is apparent from a letter written by him to Miss Bauer:

but in America people always label you and then you can't get away from it. I don't want the reputation of an Orientalist

and nothing more.³

His struggle with such stereotyping was generally successful, as many critics have agreed that "Mr. Griffes could see beyond the confines that hem in such a special cult [as the Japanese songs]." ⁴ In summary, though accepting the fixed restraints of a particular style, Griffes still maintained his individual creativity within that established style.

As with the formative songs, there is some type of unusual harmonic effect in almost every one of the divergent songs. In the case of the songs written in an oriental or modal style, the entire song was created for its novel harmonic effect. In songs such as the Five Poems of Ancient China and Japan, "In the Harem," and the three Javanese songs, the peculiar oriental chordal combinations are not incidental to the overall character but become the rationale for the song's composition.

Yet even the more traditional songs contain some unusual harmonic effect, though never as thorough-going as in the oriental and modal songs. Perhaps the most harmonically venturesome of the traditional songs is "Evening Song." The constant flux of harmony through modulations and enharmonic alterations in this song is highly reminiscent of Griffes's German songs of the formative period. That the composer discovered such a style unsuitable to his English texts is shown in the fact that he never again returned to this kind of post-romantic compositional style in his songs.

The other traditional songs, "We'll to the Woods" and "Come, Love,"

³Marion Bauer, "Charles T. Griffes As I Remember Him," Musical Quarterly, 29:369 (1943).

⁴Richard Aldrich, "Aid for American Composers," in his Concert Life in New York 1902 - 1923 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), p. 629.

are much less complicated in harmonic character. Except for the occasional introduction of an unrelated chord, there is little that is unpredictable in the harmony of these songs. The carefree character of these two poems has been realized in Griffes's use of rather straightforward and unambiguous harmony.

With the modal songs, "This Book of Hours" and "Two Birds," Griffes again tried to elucidate harmonically the spirit of his texts. In "This Book of Hours," "the medieval touch is cleverly realized through the use of modal harmonization, . . . the whole having the tint of ivory and old gold."⁵ To achieve this effect, Griffes deviated somewhat from the unexpected tonal progressions and harmonized his melodies in the natural minor (or aeolian) mode. His cadences also avoid the use of a dominant and have more of a plagal sound (Example 52).

It is the East European, or more specifically Rumanian, folk song style which Griffes pursued in "Two Birds." Again he chose a modal basis, this time to capture the spirit of the folk text. Although a g minor key signature is notated, it is actually a dorian mode, not a harmonic or natural minor scale, which is used. The resulting harmonizations create a major subdominant and a minor dominant, which add to the haunting effect.⁶

In neither modal song is the feeling of diatonicism or tonality very remote. The dependence on a particular mode is understood as a slight deviation from the traditional tonal foundation, not as an attempt to destroy the feeling of tonality.

⁵Upton, "Songs," p. 320.

⁶See Appendix, Song 4.

In contrast, Griffes consciously attempted to avoid a strong tonal feeling in his oriental songs. Each of the Five Poems is based on a non-diatonic scale, usually pentatonic but occasionally with an added tone. Although a definite tonal center seems apparent at times, as the e^b minor of "The Old Temple," there are some songs for which such a tonal center is not just elusive but entirely lacking. Such is the case with "Landscape." The five-note pentatonic scale is closely observed, not only in the melody but in the harmonization of that melody as well (Example 61). A triadic, functional harmony is strictly avoided, with fourths and fifths, and occasional seconds and sevenths, comprising most of the accompaniment (Example 62).

The "restraint" of which Howard speaks concerning Griffes's Five Poems is evident here. "We never feel that the composer has done all he knew how to do; he has chosen for us only the choicest bits of his vocabulary."⁷ As usual, Robinson disagrees, considering this group more "like exalted versions of Chop-sticks."⁸

Even more restrained in harmonization are the three Javanese songs. Although some feeling for a tonal center is usually present, the emphasis on non-diatonic scales again creates a nontraditional, non-functional aura. Often the tonal center is made obvious through the constant repetition of an ostinato pattern, which emphasizes one or more notes as a sort of ground or drone (see meas. 1-10 of "Hampelas" in Appendix). As with the Chinese and Japanese songs, there is frequent use of

⁷John Tasker Howard, Charles Tomlinson Griffes (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1923), p. 18.

⁸Edward Robinson, "The Life and Death of an American Composer," American Mercury, 30:346 (November, 1933).

fourths and open fifths, with no attempt to relate chords into functional⁵⁰ progressions (Example 84). Actually, it is pointless to consider some of these accompaniments as real harmonizations, since the piano often merely doubles the vocal line with slight variation.

What this is pointing to is the frequent use of linearity in the divergent songs rather than a dependence on simultaneous composition as in the formative songs. In the oriental songs this often takes shape as the juxtaposition of two or more independent melodic lines, some of which may be ostinato patterns (Example 84). A related use of linearity is the incidence of an occasional countermelody in the accompaniment. In "So-Fei Gathering Flowers" both the vocal melody and countermelody are supported by the continuing ostinato melodic pattern in the left hand (Example 76). The transparency of the lines and the constant repetition of patterns reinforces the feeling of the nonfunctional, static harmony.

This linearity is not nearly as pronounced among the traditional songs, which depend much more on simultaneous harmony. Of them, only "Come, Love" demonstrates similar use of repeated ostinato patterns and the use of a countermelody (Example 55).

Only in "This Book of Hours," however, is linearity developed to the extent that it can be called contrapuntal in the traditional sense. As with the modal basis for this song, Griffes chose the contrapuntal style to create a medieval sound to convey the atmosphere of the text. Hans Nathan selected this song to illustrate that Griffes "showed an interest in linearity. . . .The purity that he attains here, against the raffinement of sound, stems from the tranquil motion of quasi-modal voices, regulated by a contrapuntal setting."⁹

⁹Hans Nathan, "United States of America" in A History of Song, ed., Denis Stevens (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1960), p. 429.

Specifically, this contrapuntal setting is achieved through the use of strict canonic treatment of the vocal melody (Example 53). An identical setting is used in meas. 29-31 for the phrase "of votaries who sought His countenance of old." A variation of this, in which the vocal line is ornamented and imitated but not treated strictly canonically in the accompaniment, is found in the central section (Example 54). In no other Griffes song is the contrapuntal imitation so obvious and consistent as in this song.

Mainstream Songs

Griffes's use of harmony in the mainstream songs becomes probably the most significant delineating factor in grouping his songs. Whereas a derivative harmonic aspect is evident in both the formative and divergent groups, with the mainstream songs the composer's creative individuality is everywhere apparent. In none of the mainstream songs does Griffes restrict his harmonic expression to the demands of a particular style. When a tendency towards a certain style is suggested, Griffes succeeded in recreating that style into his own individual expression. It is in the mainstream songs that Griffes swept away the restrictions of the past and sought a more progressive harmonic expression.

Of the mainstream group, the two borderline songs again exhibit the exception to this overall statement. There is nothing striking about the opening section of "La Fuite de la lune." In fact harmonically it sounds very traditional. The first two strophes of "An Old Song Re-Sung" are only slightly more venturesome harmonically. Yet the use of less predictable chord combinations based on a whole tone scale (creating augmented triads) in the middle section of "La Fuite" reveals its affinity

with the other mainstream songs (Example 41). Likewise, the striking dissonances and nontriadic chord combinations in the final strophe of "An Old Song Re-Sung" warrant that song's inclusion in the mainstream group (Example 87). That this particular use of dissonance in the upper register is meant to suggest the "chinking" of the "broken glass" is a rather obvious incidence of Griffes's harmonic coloring of the text's expression.

The three Tabb settings have been chosen as Griffes's first mainstream songs because they illustrate a break-through in his compositional style, especially with respect to harmony. For the first time he no longer attempted to match the masters of the past but allowed free rein to his own individuality. All three illustrate the ambiguity of tonality and concise embodiment of the text's expression which earmark the songs of this group.

From the first measure of "The First Snowfall" the contrast with the formative songs is apparent (Example 30). Although the d harmonic minor scale is actually treated as the tonal center, the overlay of the strong a dominant emphasis throughout the song creates a persistent ambiguity, an almost bitonal aspect. It is really only the voice which resolves to the d center, for even at the conclusion the piano insistently emphasizes the a center (Example 32).

That the conflict created by these two centers is highly expressive of the text has been noted by several critics:

Two harmonies are implied: the tonic and the dominant ninth. When performed with the damper pedal depressed (as indicated by Griffes), these harmonies, sounded in descending eighth-note arpeggiations become interwoven as the illusion that .

falling snow creates.¹⁰

Another kind of harmonic conflict is felt in the second of the Tabb settings, "The Half-ring Moon." Again the opening measure reveals this conflict, the juxtaposition of both major and minor modes of the $\underline{C}/\underline{c}$ centers (Example 33). Yet ambiguity of mode is not the only striking harmonic effect; this song also reveals an uncertainty concerning the true tonal center. It could be either the \underline{C} Major/ \underline{c} minor center with which the song opens or the \underline{e} minor center to which all resolves in the cadence which closes the first strophe (Example 34). That the \underline{C} center should be considered the submediant of the \underline{e} center, not the \underline{e} center the mediant of the \underline{C} center, is finally determined in the second strophe, but the vacillation between the \underline{e}^{\flat} and the \underline{e}^{\natural} is persistent even to the piano postlude. As with the preceding song, such harmonic effects are created to parallel the spirit of the text, in this case the rather agitated melancholy of betrayed love.

No less venturesome harmonically than the published Tabb settings, "Phantoms" is a worthy companion piece to the two preceding songs. The piano arpeggios, which introduce the song and continue throughout most of this work, could be considered to be constructed from the \underline{c} whole-tone scale or the \underline{d}^{\flat} minor seventh with added sixth (\underline{b}^{\flat}).¹¹

A striking dissonance results at meas. 3 from the simultaneous sounding of \underline{c} in the voice and \underline{d}^{\flat} in the piano. When the arpeggios are quieted, at meas. 13, the result is no less dissonant, as a succession of

¹⁰Daniel Boda, "The Music of Charles T. Griffes" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1962), p.40.

¹¹This song is Song 3 of the Appendix.

chords built also on a nondiatonic scale creates the ghostly feeling suggested by the preceding text--"the winds a-mourning go." Nor is this ambiguity quickly resolved at the song's conclusion. From meas. 21-22 the voice appears to have resolved to the key of F Major, but again the piano postlude continues noncommittally. It introduces a \underline{c}^b (meas. 22) and cadences to F Major through the rather remote \underline{B}^b seventh, which is heard as the dominant seventh of \underline{E}^b instead of the subdominant of \underline{F} Major.

With such an auspicious opening to his mainstream group, it is no wonder that by the time of his Four Impressions Griffes embraced a harmonic style totally removed from his more traditional beginnings. Yet the composer himself considered this a natural turn of events:

It is only logical that when I began to write I wrote in the vein of Debussy and Stravinsky: those particular wide intervalled dissonances are the natural medium of the composer who writes today's music.¹²

Such a description clearly fits this set of four Wilde songs. Though dissonances and nondiatonic progressions are evident throughout most of "La Mer," the central section is a worthy example of Griffes's textual expression through harmonic coloring (Example 36). The pianissimo juxtaposition of augmented, chromatic, and whole tone lines in a swaying movement is well-suited to the text at this point.¹³

Though all four of these settings are replete with such harmonic embodiments of the text, a particularly gripping effect is created in the

¹²Edward M. Maisel, Charles T. Griffes: The Life of an American Composer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), p. 112.

¹³The asterisk in this example indicates the possibility of a missprint. The manuscript of the other version of this song suggests a $g^\#$ should be used instead of g^b ; this would be more consistent with the whole tone progression of this upper voice.

final section of "Impression du Matin." The stark chords, the dissonance, coupled with the sustained, pianissimo character, aptly complete the description of the "pale woman" (Example 60).

It becomes evident, then, that many of the mainstream songs are created almost entirely from unusual harmonic effects. Griffes's contemporary critics were not oblivious to this fact and often protested loudly against such "radical tendencies."¹⁴ The Rupert Brooke setting, "Waikiki," seems to have been a frequent recipient of such criticism. Dissonant clashes, parallel chords, and nonfunctional progressions are the rule rather than the exception, though all is handled so smoothly that the flow appears natural (Example 73). Yet such composing led one rather disturbed critic to write:

If this be the music that he has felt from knowing this poem, then indeed is he the American Stravinsky, as he has been dubbed by his disciples in the nether regions of Greenwich Village! To us he seems to have missed the warmth, the languor of the "murmurous, soft Hawaiian sea." There is too much of the experimental handling of chords, of the shifting of plans-- in short, one feels that Mr. Griffes is more interested in raveling and unraveling the material of which modern music is made than saying what he has to say straightforwardly.¹⁵

Perhaps this critic was uncomfortable with the avoidance of a tonal center and the constant chromatic shifting, especially evident in phrases such as meas. 16-17 (Example 73). Other critics, in their dislike for this song, were still capable of seeing its expressive qualities. Upton comments "that the song almost instinctively repels," due particularly to "the uncouth character of much of its harmonization." Yet he

¹⁴Howard, Charles T. Griffes, p. 18.

¹⁵A. Walter Kramer, "In a Myrtle Shade, Waikiki, Phantoms," Musical America, 27:40 (March 30, 1918).

can conclude that "this may well be a part of the composer's plan in expressing the psychology of the text."¹⁶ Later critics have been more judicious concerning this song; one even calling it "probably the best song written by Griffes," especially for its "dissonant and haunting background to the Rupert Brooke sonnet."¹⁷

Whereas with the formative and divergent songs an occasional unusual harmonic effect could be easily distinguished from modifications of tonality, such a distinction is not so simple with the mainstream songs. Thus the particular examples cited above as "striking" effects are not necessarily divorced from the simultaneous deviation from tonality in the same songs. Actually, as has been pointed out, each of these songs is ambiguous towards tonality to some extent. Now it is important to specify what techniques Griffes used to break with tonality in the mainstream songs.

While in the formative songs the modification of the triad through the addition of an added tone in no way disturbed the sense of tonality, the modified triad in the mainstream songs is indicative of a transformation in Griffes's concept of harmony. Usually it implies the use of some scalar structure other than diatonic, or it signifies that chords now progress according to sound rather than function.

"Symphony in Yellow" exhibits perhaps the most obvious use of modified triads, emphasized through their sustained, block presentation, which creates a tolling impression (Example 43). Apparently, these chords, though sounding like a triad with added second and sixth tones, are actu-

¹⁶Upton, "Songs," p. 320.

¹⁷George Arnold Conrey, "The Published Songs of Charles Tomlinson Griffes: A Stylistic Examination" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Chicago Musical College, 1955), p. 97.

ally built on a pentatonic scale: B C# D# F# G#. However in this song Griffes uses such a scale very freely, unlike his oriental songs. There is considerable shifting of harmony in the middle section. The A' section reclaims the original scale but with more chromatic vacillation. Again all is undertaken for the most suitable expression of the text. In writing of Opus 3, from which this song comes, Peterkin considered this song "the best of the set, the harmonic scheme envisaging the peculiar atmosphere of the poem in a very apt manner."¹⁸

Such a handling of chords is highly suggestive of the impressionists, with whom Griffes's name was constantly being associated:

His vivid imagination, his sense of color, his frequent use of a sort of tone cluster effect, creating a subtle, blurred atmosphere, assimilates well with the French school. . .¹⁹

Perhaps no song illustrates this affinity as thoroughly as "In a Myrtle Shade." As in the preceding song, the free use of a pentatonic scale forms much of the harmonic basis for the song. Similar modified triads result, but an underlying tonality is almost always present, despite the parallel chords and "blurred atmosphere." This is due particularly to the avoidance of grating dissonance and the reliance on functional progressions which are more traditional in nature, such as the frequent use of the dominant. This does not mean that the expected resolutions follow the approach from the dominant, however. The B Major seventh chord of meas. 6 is followed by an a minor chord in meas. 7, and the song is concluded with an unresolved dominant ninth.

¹⁸Norman Peterkin, "Charles T. Griffes," The Chesterian, n.s. 30: 162 (March, 1923).

¹⁹Alice Gerstl Duschak, "Interrelationship of Impressionism and Symbolism," NATS Bulletin (October, 1967), p. 20.

Less impressionistic in its use of the modified triad is the Giovannitti "Phantoms." The grating harmonic clash created by the simultaneous sounding of minor seconds with the triad is one of the most frequent demonstrations that this is Griffes's most dissonant song to date (Example 74). Yet this altered triad is not an occasional harmonic event for variety's sake, as it appears to be in the formative songs. It indicates a new perspective on tonality which permeates the entire song. In his dissertation, Boda explains that "chord progressions are formed from various harmonic combinations of tones from this artificial scale," apparently $d e^b f g\# a b^b c\#$.²⁰

Diatonicism and consonance are consistently avoided, except for brief sections of more traditional and predictable harmony to accompany a more lyrical melody and text (Example 75). Then, in opposition to songs in the other groups which use occasional dissonance for effect, "Phantoms" uses occasional consonance as a contrasting effect for text expression.

Critics were neither oblivious nor sympathetic to such dissonance. Upton, usually more than charitable in his appraisals, considered it "far-fetched" and "a veritable tonal nightmare."²¹ To Peterkin, the piano was not "the right medium for these aced (sic) and sometimes merely ugly progressions."²² Though intending to be uncomplimentary in his assessment, the critic in New Music after the song's first performance most nearly summarized Griffes's new outlook on the possibilities of harmony:

²⁰Boda, "Music of Griffes," p. 42

²¹Upton, "Songs," p. 322.

²²Peterkin, "Charles T. Griffes," p. 164.

If ever there was a poem that clamored for rich and warmly felt music it is this "Phantom." Mr. Griffes writes for it an essay on the validity of the minor second as a factor of beauty in musical art.²³

This approach towards atonality through the emphasis on chromaticism and dissonance continues with Griffes's later songs. Throughout most of "Sorrow of Mydath," tonality is ambiguous, blurred by chromatic cross relationships and unresolved chords, yet there is a cadential feeling for b minor or even f# minor occasionally in particular at the close of sections. Again Griffes displayed a preference for a plagal approach to cadential resolution. In this song, harmony coincides with melody in its use of approximate rather than actual pitches. Though notated, the dissonant tone clusters give the impression that it is a force of block sound, rather than specific pitches, which is sought for its dramatic effect (Example 80).

Of Griffes's final three songs, the settings of Fiona MacLeod, only the last, "The Rose of the Night," exhibits a thorough-going approach to atonality. With "The Lament of Ian the Proud" and especially "Thy Dark Eyes to Mine," the identity of tonal center is never in doubt. The exception is the contrasting section of "The Lament" in which a more agitated and atonal setting is an attempt to match the hallucinatory aspect of this section of text (Example 89).

It is only the more subdued dynamics of "The Rose of the Night" which make it sound less atonal and clashing in its dissonance than "Sorrow of Mydath." Actually, Griffes's last song is also his most consistently atonal. So nontraditional is it in its harmonic vocabulary that it led the reviewer at its first performance to write:

²³Kramer, "In a Myrtle Shade," p. 40.

All of them were modern in the fullest sense of the word, those of Messrs. Prokoffieff and Griffes being "ultra."²⁴

The opening emphasis on the diminished octave, negating any strong feeling for tonal center, continues to the final measure of the song and becomes Griffes's "tonic" chord for this song (Example 94). Both melody and harmony avoid the diatonic scale in preference for a more chromatic basis. When Griffes did allow more traditional harmony, he refused to resolve it in the expected way, so that even the more diatonic chords assume an atonal character. Yet most common again is the tone cluster effect, in which the pounding clash is more desired than the specific pitches (Example 96). For Griffes, this undefined tonality must have been the carrier of the mystical, intangible nature of the text.

The preceding example also displays the composer's tendency towards linearity in his mainstream songs. Of this group only "The Rose of the Night" is consistent in its use of a countermelody, which becomes like an ostinato pattern in its persistence (Example 94, right hand figure). Although other songs have an occasional countermelody or canonic treatment of voices, the linearity of this group takes shape as constantly moving simultaneous lines rather than strict imitation. So noteworthy was Griffes's talent for this kind of writing that it led Upton to consider it one of his most outstanding qualities:

More specifically we find in his technique one item of superlative charm--his skill. . .in modelling appropriate and effective contrapuntal passagework for the piano. Here it seems to me he has few equals and no superiors.²⁵

²⁴A. Walter Kramer, "Vera Janacopulos Presents New Songs," Musical America, 29:44 (March 29, 1919).

²⁵Upton, "Songs," p. 324.

There is some evidence of this technique in Griffes's earlier mainstream songs, in particular the Four Impressions. But it is in his last mainstream songs, especially the MacLeod settings, that this technique becomes a consistent factor throughout the song.

It is in reference to "The Lament" that Griffes's contrapuntal skill is most often mentioned.²⁶ Though in evidence throughout most of the song, it is at the climax that the linearity is most complex and intense (Example 90). One often finds in Griffes's songs the coincidence of intensified contrapuntal lines and the text's expression of strong emotion. Thus, the coloring of Griffes's text can be accomplished harmonically not only through the shifting of chords but also through the complexity of texture.

Although the approaches to harmony in each of the three groups may differ greatly, the overall concern on Griffes's part in each song was to find the appropriate harmonic vocabulary to match the text's expression. With his romantic texts, his vocabulary was similarly romantic. With his oriental or folk texts, his vocabulary was similarly pentatonic or modal. It was the more contemporary English texts which allowed Griffes more freedom to experiment harmonically, and thus he discovered an expression which closely approached atonality. Yet within this freedom there is the utmost respect for the expressive demands of the text.

²⁶"An Evening of Vocal Entertainments: 1849-1971," program notes for recital of Elizabeth Suderburg, Illinois State University, March 19, 1975.