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Smell-Sound Synaesthesia as Revelatory Medium: A Brief History with Emphasis on German Literature (1900-1930)

Frank Krause

Until the late 18th century, most smell-sound synaesthesiae are metaphors and similes which equate or compare evocative *effects* of one sense's impressions with those of another – or highlight *synergies* of different senses (I). German Romanticism inaugurates a different kind of smell-sound synaesthesia which presupposes an intrinsic link between different *sensory* qualities, and the use of such tropes is continued most famously by French Symbolism (II). German literature between 1900 and 1930 uses such synaesthesiae in three innovative ways: late Symbolist varieties appraise audible human expression ethically; neo-Romantic versions mark irreversible departures from pre-adult ways of life; and parodies ridicule the modern *Gesamtkunstwerk* (III). The belief that smell-sound synaesthesiae are manifestations of essential meaning is largely discarded after Modernism (IV).

I. Before Romanticism

To smell means to absorb part of the perceptible world; to hear music or speech means to perceive a meaningful expression. To blend both kinds of impressions means to suggest a link between them which lies beyond the limits of ordinary experience. Like ritual acts, literary synaesthesiae of smell and sound can thus stylise a sensual communion with the world into a manifestation of essential meaning, and this chapter will focus on such tropes. Where culture guards imperceptible values with taboos on sensual abandonment, these synaesthesiae call for symbolic readings and have heretical potential. For a long time, such rhetorical devices were thus rare – and often found in texts which advanced the secularisation of beliefs.

In his treatise *De Corona Militis* [*Of the Crown*] (c. 201), the ecclesiastical writer Tertullian vilified the wearing of flower garlands as a monstrous sacrilege:

It is as much against nature to follow after flowers by the head, as to follow after food by the ear, sound by the nose. But every thing which is against nature, deserveth to be noted as a monstrous thing among all men; but among us to be styled also sacrilege against God, the Lord and Author of nature.¹

However, *figurative* characterisations of sounds with reference to fragrance have a scriptural precedent; in the Song of Solomon, the name of the beloved man is praised with reference to ointment: 'Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.'² Orthodox Christians had to read this passage as part of an allegory about spiritual forms of love.³

Early Christians warned against the confusion of bodily senses; in the fourth century, Marcus Minucius Felix ridiculed the wearing of flower garlands, as Christians were well capable

¹ Tertullian, 'Of the Crown', in Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises*, tr. C. Dodgson (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1854), 159-87 (169) ['Tam contra naturam est florem capite sectari, quam cibum aure, quam sonum nare. Omne autem quod contra naturam est, monstri meretur notam penes omnes, penes nos vero etiam elogium sacrilegii in Deum, naturae dominum et auctorem.' Tertullian, 'De Corona Militis', in *Libri Tres*, ed. G. Currey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), 113-58 (128)].

² KJV, Song of Solomon 1.3 [Vulgata, Canticum Canticorum 1.2: 'fraglantia unguentis optimis oleum effusum nomen tuum ideo adulescentulae dilexerunt te.'].

³ In ancient myth, fragrant substances can, by contrast, form part of the love goddess Venus's epiphany; the sacred epitomy of love could still be discerned by the carnal senses. See, for example, P. Vergilius Maro, *Aeneis. Lateinisch / Deutsch*, ed. and tr. Edith and Gerhard Binder (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2017), 34.

of enjoying the smell of flowers, they just didn't drink it with their hair.⁴ In his *Confessiones* [*Confessions*] (397-401), Augustine of Hippo underlines the difference between carnal and spiritual senses and notes that God ordered the eyes not to listen, and the ears not to see.⁵ We use the word 'see' with reference to other sense impressions when we say 'See what a noise!' or 'See what a Smell' ['vide quid sonet', 'vide quid oleat'], as other senses become similar to the eyes as the most important sensory source of cognition when they search for deeper knowledge.⁶ However, according to Augustine, we never use words for other sense perceptions in this way. He states that images can be licked by hungry thought, but this gustatory trope pertains to our mind that can also taste the eternal inner light imparted by God.⁷

In the late Middle Ages, Giovanni del Virgilio specifies fragrance with recourse to sounds; he links up with Virgil's *Bucolica* [*Eclogues*] (37 BC), in which shepherds sing and praise the scent of herbs, balms and offerings near Maenalus, the Arcadian mountain range.⁸ Del Virgilio's reference to myth is justified by the Christian method of reading mythical Gods allegorically, but it reaches beyond the scope of the bible. His poem addressed to Dante Alighieri (1319-1321) imagines how a wind god blows the song of the shepherd Tityrus from the Adriatic sea to him, and he praises the 'whispering of light-blowing Eurus; that whispering whereat the fragrance of song, pouring through the lofty Maenalus, soothes the hearing and drops milk into the mouth'.⁹

The Baroque writer and mystic Johannes Scheffler, aka Angelus Silesius, imagines the olfactory impact of a heartfelt praise of God in the epigram 'Gott's süssester Geruch' ['God's sweetest smell'] from the collection *Der Cherubinische Wandersmann* [*The Cherubic Pilgrim*] (1657/1674). 'The sweetest smell which God so much enjoys / rises from his praise given by a pure heart.'¹⁰ Scheffler values mystical silence, but also the praise of God in song. In song no. 174 of *Heilige Seelen-Lust* [*Sacred Delight of the Soul*] (1657), he imagines to suck with his spiritual mouth as the bride of Christ the redeemer's wound as a rose, the noble scent of which he incorporates; the taste of the heart's juice is equated with the fragrance of a flower. The blending of impressions is to be read as a sign that God's praise transcends the factual world; for Scheffler, the poetic imagination is a magical medium for a mystical union with God.¹¹ In 'Im Innern sind alle Sinnen ein Sinn' ['Inside ourselves all senses are one sense'] from *Der Cherubinische Wandersmann*, he can thus explain: 'The senses dwell in spirit as one sense and one use; / Who sees God savours Him, feels, smells, and hears Him too.'¹²

In the period of Enlightenment sensibility, the German poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock compares the audible speech of a biblical figure with the flow of fragrant air in his verse epic *Der Messias* [*The Messiah*] (1748): 'As dew, / When morn awakes, distils sublime from Hermon; / As fragrant odours waft on softest breeze / From th' Olive; so persuasion and conviction, / In

⁴ Marcus Minucius Felix, *Octavius. Lateinisch / Deutsch*, ed. and tr. Bernhard Kytzler (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977), 132.

⁵ Augustinus, *Confessiones / Bekenntnisse. Lateinisch / Deutsch* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2017), 474.

⁶ Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. and tr. Philip Burton (London: Everyman, 2001), 248; Augustinus, *Confessiones*, 538.

⁷ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, 420.

⁸ P. Vergilius Maro, *Bucolica. Hirtengedichte*, tr. Michael von Albrecht (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015), 17, 19, 21, 39, 49, 71, 73.

⁹ Giovanni del Virgilio, 'Carmen III', in Philip H. Wicksteed, Edmund G. Gardner, eds, *Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio* (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1902), 158-65 (161) ['quo vocalis odor per Maenala celsa profusus / balsamat auditus et lac distillat in ora' (160)].

¹⁰ My translation ['Der süsseste Geruch der GOTT so sehr beliebt / Steigt auf vom Lob das ihm ein reines Hertze giebt.' Angelus Silesius, *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000), 134].

¹¹ Hans-Georg Kemper, *Deutsche Lyrik der frühen Neuzeit*, iii: *Barock-Mystik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988), 208-244.

¹² Angelus Silesius, *The Cherubic Wanderer* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 125 ['Die Sinnen sind im Geist all' ein Sinn und gebrauch. Wer GOTT beschaut / der schmäkt / fühlt / reucht / und hört Jhn auch.' Angelus Silesius, *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, 238].

sweet discourse, flow gently from his lips.¹³ Klopstock empowered the poetic imagination to stir authoritative religious feeling by virtue of its aesthetic force, and he thus got in conflict with orthodox doctrine.

We may call the tropes cited thus far ‘synaesthesia’, but pre-Romantic literature rarely deals with synaesthetic *perceptions* of an intrinsic link between categorically different *sensory* qualities, and the *imaginary* mingling of sensory qualities does not yet aim to re-present or construct an equivalent *experiential* quality of perception.¹⁴ Pedro Calderón’s *La señora y la criada* [*The Lady and the Maid*] (1635) merely states that the wind confuses harmonies and fragrance.¹⁵ Until around 1800, Tertullian’s ban on trying to hear smells or smell sounds was chiefly relaxed in contexts of satire. When Sir Toby in William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1602) claims to hear the song of Feste with his nose, as it combines euphony with halitosis, he employs a humorous *catachresis*: ‘To hear by the nose, it is dulcet in contagion.’¹⁶ And a late seventeenth-century fable about a land of plenty by François Fénelon mentions a ‘musique de parfums’, i.e. a composition of fragrances played to stimulate the taste buds of satiated people whose abandon to immediate gratification made them cowardly, lazy, and ignorant.¹⁷

II. Romanticism, Symbolism and Naturalism

In his poem ‘An Friedrich Leopold Grafen zu Stolberg’ (1780), Johann Heinrich Voß, a member of the *Göttinger Hain* which showed affinities to the *Sturm und Drang* movement and anticipated features of Romanticism, speaks of ‘tune-fragrant wreaths’ [‘töneduftenden Kränze’] as a symbol for Homer’s poetry which serves, bedewed by a priestess with nectar in a temple, as an oracle of Nature.¹⁸ Here, the mystery of *natura naturans* is encircled with a synaesthesia as part of *figurative* speech. The Romantics also employ poesis as a medium for the self’s union with sacred nature as a creative metaphysical force; however, the mind is now empowered to bring forth autonomous imaginary worlds, which widens the scope for fictitious synaesthetic *perception*. In the fairy tale *The golden Pot* (1814), E.T.A Hoffmann’s protagonist Anselmus hears scents in the realm of poetic magic:

[...] the rose and azure-coloured birds were odoriferous flowers; and the perfume which they scattered, mounted from their cups in low lovely tones, which, with the gurgling of distant fountains, and the sighing of the high groves and trees, mingled themselves into mysterious accords of a deep unutterable longing.¹⁹

¹³ Klopstock’s *Messiah*, tr. G.H.C. Egestorff (Hamburg: Hartwig und Müller, 1826) [‘Wie von Hermon der Thau, wenn der Morgen erwacht ist, / Treufelt, und wie wohlriechende Lüfte dem Ölbaum entfließen, / Also fließet die liebliche Rede vom Munde Philippus.’ F.G. Klopstock, *Der Messias. Gesang I-III* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995), 82].

¹⁴ Daniela Babilon, *The Power of Smell in American Literature. Odor, Affect, and Social Inequality* (Frankfurt am Main u.a.: Lang, 2017), 279, helpfully distinguishes between synaesthetic perception and synaesthetic metaphors. My chapter highlights the difference between metaphors which presuppose such a perception and those which merely imagine the blending of separate impressions.

¹⁵ In *Las Comedias de D. Pedro Calderón de la Barca*, ed. Juan Jorge Keil, iv (Leipzig: Ernesto Fleischer, 1830), 503-26 (507).

¹⁶ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik (London: Methuen, 1975), 46.

¹⁷ François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon [I], ‘Voyage dans l’isle de Plaisir’, in *Œuvres*, iv (Paris: Didot, 1787), 502-9 (507).

¹⁸ My translation [in Alfred Kellertat, ed. *Der Göttinger Hain. Hölty – Miller – Stolberg – Voß* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984), 290-4 (292)].

¹⁹ E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The golden Pot*, in Evan Bates, ed., *Great German Short Stories* (Mineola, NY: Dover Thrift, 2003), 105-168 (143) [‘Dagegen waren wieder die rosenfarbnen und himmelblauen Vögel duftende Blumen, und der Geruch, den sie verbreiteten, stieg aus ihren Kelchen hervor in leisen lieblichen Tönen, die sich mit dem Geplätscher der fernen Brunnen, mit dem Säuseln der hohen Stauden und Bäume zu geheimnisvollen Akkorden einer tiefklagenden Sehnsucht vermischten.’ E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Der goldene Topf. Ein Märchen aus der neuen Zeit* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), 80].

In the inner sanctum of poesy, ‘glowing hyacinths, and tulips, and roses, lift their fair heads; and their perfumes, in loveliest sound, call to the happy youth’, so that the narrator can conclude: ‘is the blessedness of Anselmus anything else but a living in poesy? Can anything else but poesy reveal itself as the sacred harmony of all beings, as the deepest secret of nature?’²⁰ Percy Bysshe Shelley employed a comparable motif in 1820;²¹ however, his usage is framed by a scientific rather than magical explanation, as he regards scent as a musical vibration which is inaudible for the human ear but perceptible for our noses, whilst Hoffmann evokes a *simultaneous* experience of sound and smell as two manifestations of the same essence. In a similar vein, a shepherd in Ludwig Tieck’s play *Prinz Zerbino* [*Prince Zerbino*] (1819) proclaims that the goddess of fantasy unites what the gods’ will normally keeps separate, so that a voice may call itself perfume.²²

Charles Baudelaire knew the synaesthetic experience of colour, sound and smell that Hoffmann noted in the *Kreiseriana* (1810-14),²³ from which he quoted in French translation.²⁴ Baudelaire’s poem ‘Correspondances’ [‘Correspondences’] (1857) illustrates the changing function of synaesthesiae during the transition from Romanticism to Symbolism. Now, ‘Nature is a temple, where the living / Columns’ only ‘sometimes breathe’ rather ‘confusing speech; / Man walks within these groves of symbols, each / Of which regards him as a kindred thing. [...]’. Here, ‘perfumes, colours, sounds may correspond’:

Odours there are, fresh as a baby’s skin,
Mellow as oboes, green as meadow grass,
— Others corrupted, rich, triumphant, full,
Having dimensions infinitely vast,
Frankincense, musk, ambergris, benjamin,
Singing the senses’ rapture, and the soul’s.²⁵

Nature is no longer a perceptibly harmonious whole, but an overwhelming source of occasional unions of the self with its decentering other in enigmatic dream-like states fed by a spiritual back-side of factual nature.²⁶

In the Symbolist sketch ‘Le Gousset’ [‘The Armpit’] (1880) – the title refers to a triangular piece of fabric sewn into underwear –,²⁷ Joris Karl Huysmans praises the multifarious aromas of the female armpit. With this tufted spicebox, Nature helps revitalise love which routine too often renders stale. Even the armpit smells of female peasants spreading hay in the midday sun are

²⁰ Hoffmann, *The golden Pot*, 167-8 [‘Glühende Hyazinthen und Tulipanen und Rosen erheben ihre schönen Häupter, und ihre Düfte rufen in gar lieblichen Lauten dem Glücklichen zu [...]]. Ist denn überhaupt des Anselmus Seligkeit etwas anderes als das Leben in der Poesie, der sich der heilige Einklang aller Wesen als tiefstes Geheimnis der Natur offenbart?’ Hoffmann, *Der goldene Topf*, 127, 130]. Catherine Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility. Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 66-84, notes that violet scent is ‘intimately tied up with recollection, commemoration, and regeneration’ in works ‘from Shakespeare and Bacon through Shelley, Keats, and their Victorian devotees, into [...] turn-of-the-century poetry’ (84); in this context, smell and sound are typically mingled as two sides of the same ‘breath’ (see also 75-6).

²¹ Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, 26, 75.

²² Ludwig Tieck, *Prinz Zerbino oder Die Reise nach dem guten Geschmack* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1828), 251.

²³ E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Kreiseriana* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), 39-40 (cf. 122-3).

²⁴ Paul Hoffmann, *Symbolismus* (Munich: UTB Fink, 1987), 85.

²⁵ In Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, tr. James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19 [‘La Nature est un temple où des vivants piliers / Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles; / L’homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles / Qui l’observent avec des regards familiers. // [...] Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent. // Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d’enfants, / Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies / – Et d’autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants, // Ayant l’expansion des choses infinies, / Comme l’ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l’encens, / Qui chantent les transports de l’esprit et des sens.’(18)].

²⁶ Hoffmann, *Symbolismus*, 75-7.

²⁷ Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, 135.

excessive and terrible, but not repulsive; as a ‘pure note’ and ‘sultry cry’ of nature, their creaturely scent of wild duck cooked in olive mixed with that of pungent shallots fits harmoniously into the melody of peasant life.²⁸ In a tamer version, Paul Verlaine continues this tradition in his poem ‘A Clymène’ [‘To Clymene’] (1890) which celebrates ‘correspondences’ of the senses effected by the presence of a beloved.²⁹ In England, Algernon Swinburne radicalises the tradition of mingling sound and smell in expressions such as ‘fragrance of sound’.³⁰

Émile Zola fully secularises the smell-sound synaesthesia in the context of scientific monism which posits a metasocial authority of factual natural life. His novel *Le Ventre de Paris* [*The Belly of Paris*] (1873) presents a concert of cheese smells in the Parisian market halls; the stench accompanies and illuminates a conversation between Mademoiselle Saget and Madame Lecœur who engage in jaundiced speculations about ways to get hold of the wealth of Gavard in case of his death. Cheese smells are frequently associated with death, decay, sickness, and depression, and the women’s repulsive greed in an atmosphere of nauseous oversaturation is thus presented as a psycho-social condition that is hostile to the nature of healthy human life. As Zola presents the changing synergies of varied cheese smells as cacaphonic music, he foregrounds the transpersonal dynamics of an overwhelmingly alienating milieu; the more pungent the smell, and the sweeter and piercing the pungence, the higher the tones, which often form forceful triads.³¹ Here, however, the imagined musicality of smells does not reveal a synaesthetically structured experiential world, but the perceptibly identical affects evoked by both, word and stench.

III. Late Symbolism, Neo-Romanticism, and Proto-Dadaism in German Literature (1910-1930)

1. Late Symbolist Variations on Audible Social Expression

Some writers who continue to employ smell-sound synaesthesiae in the spirit of Symbolism after 1900 use smell motifs to appraise audible expressive performances in exceptional moments of social practice.³² Here, the traditional method of specifying the auditive quality of poetry³³ as a kind of fragrance is transferred to accidentally overheard slices of social life. Although I shall focus on German texts, examples can also be found in other languages; for example, in *Du côté de chez Swann* [*The Way by Swann’s*] (1913) by Marcel Proust, the Vinteuil sonata, perceived by Swann as ‘airy and redolent’ [‘aérienne et odorante’], evokes his sense of being in love with Odette, who becomes attractive when he sees her in the light of aesthetically appealing figments of the imagination.³⁴

²⁸ Joris-Karl Huysmans, ‘The Armpit’, in *Parisian Sketches*, tr. Brendan King (Sawtry: Dedalus, 2004), 126-8 (126) [‘elle était la note pure, complétant par le cri de chaleur de la bête humaine, la mélodie odorante des bestiaux et des bois.’ Joris-Karl Huysmans, ‘Le Gousset’ [1880], in *Croquis parisiens, A Veau-l’Eau, Un Dilemme* (Paris: Plon, 1908), 125-8 (125-6)].

²⁹ Paul Verlaine, *Selected Poems. Bilingual Edition*, tr. C.F. MacIntyre (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 72-3.

³⁰ Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, 107.

³¹ Émile Zola, *Le Ventre de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 336-7, 339-40.

³² For *Jugendstil* varieties of smell-sound synaesthesiae after 1900, see Else Lasker-Schüler, ‘Nachklänge’, in Else Lasker-Schüler, *Sämtliche Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004), 87, 137-8 (here, smell and sound mingle as expressive qualities of the visual), and Hermann Finsterlin, ‘Morgen’, in Reinhard Döhl, ed., *Hermann Finsterlin. Eine Annäherung* (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1988), 368.

³³ See Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, 191.

³⁴ Marcel Proust, *The Way by Swann’s*, tr. Lydia Davis (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 214; Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, i: *Du côté de chez Swann*, première partie (Paris: Gallimard, 1919), 286. Movements after Symbolism continue this method. In Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s novel *Mafarka, le Futuriste* (Paris: Sansot, 1909) of 1906, the scented sound of an inspiring male character’s voice is positive (233), whilst the cry of a seductive woman’s perfume that weakens the creative will is negative (256). In Maxim Gorky’s *Untimely Thoughts: Essays on Revolution Culture and the*

In his pre-Expressionist work, the writer, graphic artist, and sculptor Ernst Barlach conjured up scenes of revolutionary times in his *Russisches Tagebuch* [*Russian Diary*] (1906). He notes how one typically hears from afar people sing in the evening, accompanied by an accordion or balalaika, and that their song may suddenly turn into the *Marseillaise*, the revolutionary hymn. For him, the Russian variety of this hymn is not, as in French culture, invigorating, but a drunken lament that fails to suggest the thunder and lightning of battle:

And the ear nevertheless listens for the boom of exploding bombs from faraway as an accompaniment for the voice in this dispassionately suffering lament, this untempestuously blustering gust of song. Thunder and lightning seem to have been born in other regions and different atmospheres. Their accompaniment is poor, and in the end the whole smells uninterpretably repulsive, it is impossible to tell whether gunsmoke or vodka fumes prevail, and it gets on somewhat more diabolically, then a bit more dodderly, then gruesomely, soon lousily.³⁵

Hugo von Hofmannsthal's short travelogue *Das Kloster des Heiligen Lukas* [*The Cloister of St Luke*] (1908) presents life in a cloister near mount Parnassus as a realm where the spirit of Arcadia and Christianity blend. The words from the lips of a priest to a servant form part of a rhythm of life that reaches back to pre-Homeric times, and the song of the monks reveals a similar fusion of times:

In the church, mezzo forte voices began to sing psalms in accordance with ancient melodics. The voices rose and fell, there was something endless, equidistant from lament and desire, something solemn, which might have wanted to continue resounding from times immemorial and far into eternity. Above the courtyard in an open window someone sang, following the melody, passage by passage: a woman's voice. This was so very strange, it seemed like an illusion. But it set in again, and it was a female voice. And then again not. The echo-like quality, entirely faithful to that solemn, hardly still human sound, the submissive, almost unconscious quality did not seem to come from the chest of a woman. It seemed as if enigma itself, insubstantial, sang. Now it fell quiet. From the church came, together with the dark, soft, tremoloing men's voices, a mixed fragrance of wax, honey and incense, which was like the smell of this song.³⁶

Bolsheviks 1917–1918 (London: Garnstone, 1970), 'it seemed [...] that I smelled the fresh, sharp odor of new words' in the audible buzz of streets during the revolution (31).

³⁵ My translation ['Und doch erhört sich das Ohr den Knall platzender Bomben aus weiter Ferne als Begleitung der Stimme in diesem leidenschaftslos leidenden Klagen, diesem unstürmisch tobenden Singschwall. Donner und Blitz scheinen in andern Gegenden und andern Atmosphären geboren zu sein. Sie begleiten schlecht, und am Ende riecht das Ganze undeutbar widerlich, es ist unerfindlich, ob mehr nach Pulverdampf oder Wodkadunst, macht sich bald etwas verteufelter, bald etwas vertrottelter und bald grausig, bald lausig.' In Ernst Barlach, *Die Prosa I*, ed. Friedrich Dross (München: Piper, 1973), 239-89 (253-4)].

³⁶ My translation ['In der Kirche fingen halblaute Stimmen an, Psalmen zu singen, nach einer uralten Melodik. Die Stimmen hoben und senkten sich, es war etwas Endloses, gleich weit von Klage und von Lust, etwas Feierliches, das von Ewigkeit her und weit in die Ewigkeit so fortönen mochte. Über dem Hof aus einem offenen Fenster sang jemand die Melodie nach, von Absatz zu Absatz: eine Frauenstimme. Dies war so seltsam, es schien wie eine Einbildung. Aber es setzte wieder ein, und es war eine weibliche Stimme. Und doch wieder nicht. Das Echohafte, das völlig Getreue jenem feierlichen, kaum noch menschlichen Klang, das Willenlose, fast Bewußtlose schien nicht aus der Brust einer Frau zu kommen. Es schien, als sänge dort das Geheimnis selber, ein Wesenloses. Nun schwieg es. Aus der Kirche drang mit den dunklen, weichen, tremolierenden Männerstimmen ein gemischter Duft von Wachs, Honig und Weihrauch, der wie der Geruch dieses Gesanges war.' In Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Erzählungen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014), 236-43 (239)].

The motifs of bees and thyme-scented honey often served as symbols for poets and the poetry of ancient Greece, and the smell of wax and honey alludes to these topoi;³⁷ Stefan Zweig's praise of Hofmannsthal's style as a way of giving shape to the 'fragrant wax of Hymettos',³⁸ a thyme-covered mountain-range near Athens, plays with such associations. In Hofmannsthal's narrative, which evokes the fragrance of thyme at the beginning of the journey to the cloister, wax, honey and incense mingle Christian and arcadian associations.

2. Neo-Romantic Views on Pre-Adult Life

Between 1915 and 1930, some German writers revive the Romantic ideal of a self reconciled with Nature – and the related sound-smell-synaesthesia – in a downgraded version; it no longer pertains to the telos of universal history, but to pre-adult life.

Hermann Hesse's poem 'Verlorener Klang' ['Lost Sound'] (1917) employs this neo-Romantic synaesthesia to conjure up the spirit of childhood:

Once in childhood days
I went along the meadow.
Quietly came, carried
In the morning wind, a song,
A note in blue air,
Or a scent, a flowery scent,
Which smelled sweet, which resounded
For an eternity,
For all my childhood.

I no longer was aware of it –
Only now, in these days,
I hear it inside, in my breast,
Beat again covertly.
And now the world is all one to me,
Don't want to trade with the happy,
Just want to harken,
Stand still and harken
How the fragrant sounds go,
And whether it is still the sound from thence.³⁹

In the tale 'Iris' (1916/18), smelling flowers and listening to music or some poems can conjure up a lost homeland related to childhood as a phase in which synaesthetic perceptions render the spiritual essence of life unproblematically familiar.⁴⁰ In his fairy tale 'Piktors Verwandlungen' ['Piktor's Metamorphoses'] (1925), Hesse imagines a re-entry into paradise, in

³⁷ For a comparable motif in early twentieth-century English poetry, see Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, 81.

³⁸ My translation ['[...] wie duftendes Wachs vom Hymettos [...]']. Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1990), 56].

³⁹ My translation ['Einmal in Kindertagen / Ging ich die Wiese lang, / Kam still getragen / Im Morgenwind ein Gesang, / Ein Ton in blauer Luft, / Oder ein Duft, ein blumiger Duft, / Der duftete süß, der klang / Eine Ewigkeit lang, / Meine ganze Kindheit lang. // Es war mir nicht mehr bewußt – / Erst jetzt in diesen Tagen / Hör ich innen in der Brust / Ihn wieder verborgen schlagen. / Und jetzt ist alle Welt mir einerlei, / Will nicht mit den Glücklichen tauschen, / Will nur lauschen, / Lauschen und stillestehn, / Wie die duftenden Töne gehn, / Und ob es noch der Klang von damals sei.' In Hermann Hesse, *Gesammelte Schriften*, v (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 628-9].

⁴⁰ Hermann Hesse, 'Iris', in *Die Märchen*, ed. Volker Michels (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 143-162 (147, 151).

which one flower ‘smelled of the garden of childhood; like the voice of mother sounded their sweet smell’.⁴¹ Hesse wants to encircle the spirit of pre-adult life in a contemplative inwards turn.

Similarly, in Hermann Scheffler’s short story ‘Pia’ (1928) about a 16-year old girl of the same name, the protagonist’s ‘soul’ [‘Seele’] is governed by a sense of beauty typical for female adolescents, and the sound of her Spanish is as intoxicating as ‘resounding fragrance’ [‘klingender Duft’] that exerts its ‘sound magic’ [‘Klangzauber’] on the male adult narrator who does, however, perceive this as a prelude to promising womanhood.⁴²

In Hans Henny Jahnn’s novel *Perrudja* (1929), the chapter ‘The Song of the Yellow Flower’ [‘Der Gesang der gelben Blume’] deals with a sudden synaesthetic perception of nature:

[...] not only balmy and mild was the air. Almost sultry with sweetness. It smouldered in the yellow fragrance of blossoming lupins. In the valley there must have been a field with rising steams. Resplendent candles. A sound of fragrance spread. And it seemed to him as if he clearly understood the song.⁴³

The song of the smell, rendered with musical notes for an instrumental piece, evokes the image of a temple of peace and reconciliation as the sacred spirit of Perrudja’s early youth.⁴⁴ However, this peace has become unattainable in a society of exploitation and war. Hesse, Scheffler and Jahnn reckon with, and imagine solace from, irreversibly disenchanting spheres of social life.

3. Proto-Dadaist Parodies of Avant-Garde Performances

In Huysmans’ novel *À rebours* [*Against Nature*] (1884), the protagonist des Esseintes composes perfumes and sequences of scents in the light of musical principles, and he thus tries, amongst other things, to capture auditive qualities of poetry; he also builds a taste-organ on which he plays symphonies for the palate with liqueurs.⁴⁵ In 1902, the German-Japanese artist Sadakichi Hartmann tried to stage a scent concert at the New York Theatre, which consisted of a series of smells blown into the audience with the help of fans, supported by visual and auditory effects, but the performance flopped in a smoky room with an impatient crowd, and the stage composer was forced to abandon his project half-way through.⁴⁶ And in his story ‘The Eighth Deadly Sin’ (1905), the American writer James Huneker imagined ‘orchestration[s]’ of ‘odours’ which evoke the sound of specific musical works.⁴⁷ Christian Morgenstern may not have known these books or that concert project,⁴⁸ but he parodied comparable concerns in his collection *Der vermehrte Palmström* [*The expanded Palmström*] (1912). In the poem ‘Die Geruchs-Orgel’ [‘The Smell-

⁴¹ My translation [‘Eine roch nach dem Garten der Kindheit, wie die Stimme der Mutter klang ihr süßer Duft.’ In Hesse, *Die Märchen*, 217-22 (217)].

⁴² My translation [Hermann Scheffler, ‘Pia’, *Die Frauen-Illustrierte* (March 1928), 17].

⁴³ My translation [‘[...] nicht nur lau und milde war die Luft. Fast schwül vor Süßigkeit. Sie schwelte im gelben Duft blühender Lupinen. Im Tal mußte ein Feld sein, das heraufdampfte. Prangende Kerzen. Ein Schall von Geruch breitete sich aus. Und ihm war, als verstünde er deutlich den Gesang.’ Hans Henny Jahnn, *Perrudja* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1998), 522].

⁴⁴ Jahnn, *Perrudja*, 524-5.

⁴⁵ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *À Rebours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1912), 62-4, 155-7.

⁴⁶ Christina Bradstreet, ‘A Trip to Japan in 16 Minutes. Sadakichi Hartmann’s Perfume Concert and the Aesthetics of Scent’, in *Art, History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present*, ed. Patrizia di Bello and Gabriel Koureas (London: Routledge, 2016), 51-65 (51-3).

⁴⁷ James Huneker, *Visionaries* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1905), 23-43 (39).

⁴⁸ Cf. Ernst Kretschmer, *Die Welt der Galgenlieder Christian Morgensterns und der viktorianische Nonsense* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1983), 74, note 101.

Organ’], he debunks the pathos of translating synaesthetic fantasies into an embodied performance:⁴⁹

Palmström builds himself a smell-organ
and plays on it von Korfs Sneezeroot-Sonata.

It starts with an alpine herb triplet
and pleases with its acacia aria.

But in the scherzo, suddenly and unexpected,
between tuberose and eucalyptus,

follow the three famous sneezeroot-passages,
which gave the sonata its name.

During these A-ti-shoo-syncopations,
Palmström always almost falls off his chair, whilst

Korf at home, sitting safely at his desk,
churns out opus after opus on paper ...⁵⁰

The attempt to capture the essence of reality through the immersion in a total work of art that combines sight with the musical emission of smells in order to evoke a sense of taste is ridiculed in ‘Der Aromat’ [‘The Aroma Automat’]:

Inspired by von Korf’s smell *sonate*,
friends launch th’ aroma automat.

A room in which, to put it briefly,
one doesn’t swallow but smell chiefly.

The slotting of small change does call
balsamic trumpets from the wall,

which toot in wide blown-nostrils of the guest
joyfully and with ease all they request.

Whilst on a board, with much appeal
appears the image of the meal.

People but now, to get this straight,
in their hundreds dishes delectate.⁵¹

⁴⁹ For an earlier fantasy about correspondences between music and alcoholic drinks, see Hoffmann, *Kreisleriana*, 48.

⁵⁰ My translation [‘Palmström baut sich eine Geruchs-Orgel / und spielt darauf v. Korfs Nieswurz-Sonate. // Diese beginnt mit Alpenkräuter-Triolen / und erfreut durch eine Akazien-Arie. // Doch im Scherzo, plötzlich und unerwartet, / zwischen Tuberosen und Eukalyptus, // folgen die drei berühmten Nieswurz-Stellen, / welche der Sonate den Namen geben. // Palmström fällt bei diesen Ha-Cis-Synkopen / jedesmal beinahe vom Sessel, während // Korf daheim, am sichern Schreibtisch sitzend, / Opus hinter Opus aufs Papier wirft ...’ Morgenstern, ‘Die Geruchs-Orgel’, in *Galgenlieder, Palmström und andere Grottesken* (München, Zürich: Piper, 1983), 161].

⁵¹ My translation [‘Angeregt durch Korfs Geruchs-Sonaten, / gründen Freunde einen ‘Aromaten’. // Einen Raum, in welchem, kurz gesprochen, / nicht geschluckt wird, sondern nur gerochen. // Gegen Einwurf kleiner Münzen

As Morgenstern, who anticipates methods of Dada,⁵² celebrates playful poetic subversions of objective reasoning as holy ecstasies,⁵³ he still believes in the world's ensoulment by an inherent force.⁵⁴ The performance of a parodic demise of synaesthetic pretensions remains an index of an ineffably authoritative alterity. A contrasting example for ludic *sobriety* can be found in Virginia Woolf's *Flush* (1933), the biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel. The dog merely sniffs where humans employ abstract ideas: for Flush, 'music and architecture, law, politics and science were smell' – and only smell. Woolf's narrator refuses to stylize Flush's life into 'a Paradise where essences exist in their utmost purity, and the naked soul of things presses on the naked nerve.'⁵⁵

IV. After Modernism

Uses of smell-sound synaesthesiae after Modernism largely tend to collapse distinctions between essence and appearance.⁵⁶ With reference to the smell of the burning Palace of Justice in Vienna during the July revolt of 1927, Heimito von Doderer spoke as late as 1956 of a symphony of smells and qualified the olfactory as metaphysical.⁵⁷ In postmodernist synaesthesiae, however, the musicality of smells consists in their factual dynamics. Grenouille's first olfactory composition in Patrick Süskind's *Das Parfum [Perfume]* (1985) is as complex as a 'Sinfonie',⁵⁸ but it evokes visual and auditive figments which expand rather than transcend the perceptible world's limits. In Paul Auster's story *Timbuktu* (1999), the dog Mr Bones lives with his master Willy, a mad poet and tramp, who tries to create 'olfactory art' 'for dogs'; the smell installation is enjoyable for Mr Bones, but Willy's attempt to transcend the limits of experience through this art is futile:

For a dog, he would have said, for a dog, dear master, the fact is that the whole world is a symphony of smells. Every hour, every minute, every second of his waking life is at once a physical and a spiritual experience. There is no difference between the inner and the outer, nothing to separate the high from the low. It's as if, as if...⁵⁹

Symbolist, Naturalist and Neo-Romantic writers had subscribed to occultist, scientist or spiritualist varieties of the belief that reality's essence consists in the perceptible world's ensoulment by an inherent force.⁶⁰ Postmodernist synaesthesiae no longer require justification as a medium for such essences – they persuade by virtue of their ludic richness.

treten / aus der Wand balsamische Trompeten, // die den Gästen in geblähte Nasen, / was sie wünschen, leicht und lustig blasen. // Und zugleich erscheint auf einem Schild / des Gerichtes wohlgetroffenes Bild. // Viele Hunderte, um nicht zu lügen, / speisen nun erst wirklich mit Vergnügen.' Morgenstern, 'Der Aromat', in *Galgenlieder, Palmström und andere Grottesken*, 161-2].

⁵² Hans-Georg Kemper, *Vom Expressionismus zum Dadaismus* (Scriptor: Königstein, Taunus, 1974), 150-2.

⁵³ Morgenstern, *Galgenlieder, Palmström und andere Grottesken*, 13.

⁵⁴ Rainer Maria Rilke associates sound and smell through synaesthetic links with a third sense or through similes (for examples, see Monika Fick, *Sinnenwelt und Weltseele. Der psychophysische Monismus in der Literatur der Jahrhundertwende* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), 211, and Silke Pasewalck, 'Die fünfjüngrige Hand'. *Die Bedeutung der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung beim späten Rilke* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2002), 86).

⁵⁵ Virginia Woolf, *Flush* [1933] (London: Penguin, 2006), 86, 88.

⁵⁶ The motif of loud scent in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) refers to *experiential* qualities of olfaction and feeling (Babilon, 253, 288).

⁵⁷ *Der Spiegel*, 23/1957, 53-58 (58).

⁵⁸ Patrick Süskind, *Das Parfum* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1994), 111.

⁵⁹ Paul Auster, *Timbuktu* (London: faber and faber, 1999), 41, 44.

⁶⁰ Fick, *Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*.

By contrast, the German writer Ralf Rothmann still aims to encircle metaphysical origins of our minds' lives,⁶¹ and his novel *Wäldernacht* [*Night of the Forests*] (1994), which values the eternal that rests in the soul's silence,⁶² employs a smell-sound synaesthesia as a sign that a particular slice of social life conjures away redemptive forces. With a potato storage box in his family's cellar, the narrator associates a musty smell and its verbal equivalents that name and classify the edible tubers: 'Hansa, Grata, waxy, floury.'⁶³ This synaesthesia remains indebted to the idea of poetic revelation at the moment of its demise.

⁶¹ See the interview with Sebastian Hammelehle in *Der Spiegel* 18/2018.

⁶² Ralf Rothmann, *Wäldernacht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 302.

⁶³ Rothmann, *Wäldernacht*, 262.