

Rethinking Wagner's "*Kunst des Übergangs*":

A Compound of Techniques in Scene 2 of Act 2 from *Tristan und Isolde*.

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Richard Wagner's "*Kunst des Übergangs* (art of transition)" is the most important compositional technique in his "*Tristan und Isolde*". Nonetheless, it had never been analyzed until Carl Dahlhaus' study in 1974, after which there have been only two studies: the one is by Klaus Ebbeke in 1990 and the other is by Yukio Miyake in 1990. In this article, I attempt to rethink the "*Kunst des Übergangs*" and to indicate other techniques that have been overlooked in preceding studies.

The term "*Kunst des Übergangs*" appears in Wagner's letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (29.October 1859). According to the letter, he applies "*Kunst des Übergangs*" to all of his musical dramas and the genius of this technique is in the transition from the exuberant 'life' to the innermost desire for 'death', as in *Tristan's* Scene 2 of the Act II.

My analysis demonstrates that the "*Kunst des Übergangs*" is a complex combination of several techniques. One of the most fundamental of them is to avoid clear ending of each *dichterische-musikalische Periode*. For example, when Wagner connects a musical structure formed by the "rejoicing"-motif with that by the "day"-motif, he makes a distinction between the unit of the text structure and that of the musical structure, and also makes two musical structures cross each other. Moreover, while he constructs the musical unity of the "day"-motif, he achieves a transition by varying the instrumentation of this motif. In addition to these, Wagner uses many other subtle techniques in the larger framework of this scene.