Webern and the transformation of nature

This book is not about the capacity of music to imitate birdsong, the flowing of streams, or the morphology of the landscape. It is fundamentally neither about nature itself nor about any potential relation that music may have to it. Rather, it is about the way in which a society constructs an idea of nature and the role that art, and specifically music, may have in the articulation of that idea. It explores such an idea in relation to Webern, whose music has been almost exclusively portrayed as abstract and autonomous. In opposition to the exclusively formalist concerns of post-Darmstadt Webern reception, this book argues that abstraction in music is understood fully only in relation to the material, historical reality from which it abstracts, and that musical modernism is more fully understood by exposing its underground roots in the aesthetics of romanticism.

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Webern and the transformation of nature

Julian Johnson
For my mother

and in memory of my father
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